

CHALLENGE



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PLP'ers Bare Union Hacks' Sellout Racist Bosses Demand Cuts; Hospital Workers Say 'FIGHT'!

"Run, Bruce, Run! You can run but you can't hide!" sang hundreds of spirited Brookdale Hospital workers about CEO Bruce Flanz as they picketed outside of the hospital's main entrance on June 15th. PLP brought support and CHALLENGEs to these workers, who lost their insurance coverage when Brookdale violated the labor contract and stopped paying into their insurance benefits fund six months ago. This forced the workers onto a more expensive plan under Blue Cross Blue Shield (see CHALLENGE, 6/22). More than that, their very jobs are at stake, as the workers face union decertification, bankruptcy and possible closure. Brookdale workers are mostly black and Latino, and all together over 1,000 workers picketed at some point during the day as workers came out in uniform on their lunch break from almost every department.

We distributed our CHALLENGEs quickly, and realized we had not brought nearly enough. At the same time, some hospital workers and members of the main hospital union 1199-SEIU (Service Employees International Union), distributed 400 leaflets that exposed the attack on Brookdale workers as a racist ploy to increase profits on the backs of the majority black and Latino workers that live in the Brookdale community. The anti-racist leaflet called on workers, patients and community residents to unite and called on the Brookdale bosses to pay up. Both CHALLENGE and the leaflets were greeted with positive responses from the workers. On a couple of occasions, PL'ers were asked for more copies of the paper. We made several contacts, and will bring more literature next time.

The conversations we had with workers described a hospital that has been sucked dry by the bosses for years. A nurse who worked there since 1982 told us: "We serve the poor but the bosses don't give us anything! We never have supplies or nearly enough staff. We're gonna have to take the hospital back!" Under-staffing was the unanimous complaint with every worker in every department, especially among the janitors and food and nutrition workers.

This is also a sexist attack on the Brookdale workers, who are mostly female, not to mention gambling with the health and lives of women workers who live in the Brownsville community. They depend on Brookdale for OB/GYN and pre- and post- natal care, in addition to emergency care for pregnan-



cies, obstetric emergencies, and complications.

Union Official Wants to Save the Bosses

Local 1199's president, George Gresham, made an appearance and shared his disappointment that the bosses weren't playing fair: "Two years ago we saw that times were tough, so we offered to forgo our pay raises to keep our benefits...Management must come to its senses! We'll help them save money if they would listen to us!" Gresham's argument was 'if only' the bosses would listen to reason, everything could be resolved at the bargaining table.

Workers shouldn't look to the 1199 leadership for solutions! Every hospital that Gresham has "vowed" to keep open has shut down. But the problem isn't just bad union leadership; under capitalism, no deal, contract, treaty or law is worth anything when profitability is at stake. Union misleaders like Gresham serve the bosses' interests by controlling the rank-and-file through empty promises and symbolic gestures.

The Progressive Labor Party is fighting for a society run by the workers worldwide. PL'ers are in the struggle building support for the Brookdale workers from the majority black and Latino workers in Brownsville, and spreading their fighting example to other hospitals and communities experiencing similar struggles. By making contacts and building hospital worker-community unity, PLP is building a mass Party to serve the workers' interests and, instead of relying on misleaders like Gresham, encourages every worker to become a leader.

PLP calls on the Brookdale workers to go all the way in defending their contract through job actions, like sit-downs and strikes. Maximizing profits at all costs is what the capitalists want, and job actions like strikes can temporarily deny them their profits. The 1199 leadership is surely terrified of the prospect of thousands of angry black and Latino workers shutting down a major hospital.

Win or lose, contracts can still be taken away. In Greece, the waves of heroic general strikes have frustrated the bosses there attempting to carry out massive cutbacks. However, getting off the treadmill of reforms and ending wage slavery requires a revolutionary party that can ultimately lead an armed struggle for state power. The sharpening struggle at Brookdale can be a step in that direction.

Local 1199 announced a chartered bus trip to the home of Brookdale CEO Bruce Flanz in New City, NY on Sunday, June 26th, to hold a picket line. We invite all PL'ers and friends to meet at the main entrance of Brookdale Hospital (corner of Linden Blvd and Rockaway Pkwy) at 11:30 AM to board the bus and continue the struggle!✊



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Libya Invasion Exposes Obama's Turn to Fascism, Dogfight in U.S. Ruling Class

Centralization of power — military, political and economic — is a hallmark of fascism, the deadly necessary tool capitalists employ when they can no longer hide behind the façade of “democracy.” Obama’s Libya power grab reflects desperate efforts by the dominant — but embattled — imperialist wing of U.S. bosses to retain its grip on foreign policy. One aim of fascism is for the dominant capitalists — who must protect the long-range survival of their system — to discipline those bosses who are only out for immediate profits and disregard how negatively that might impact the system in the long run.

But Obama’s masters have a big problem. The U.S. is a big country, made up of many competing capitalists with competing interests. All employ politicians in Washington. The biggest bosses, such as the Rockefeller-bloc — owners of imperialist firms like Exxon, JP Morgan and GE — require the

U.S. war machine to guard and help expand their far-flung operations. Liberal Democrats, including Obama, as well as a number of interventionist Republicans, serve them.

War-maker Obama Must Skirt Polarized, Partisan Congress

Seeking to turn part of the Arab Spring into a Khadafy-free oil free-for-all on behalf of Big Oil, U.S.-led NATO has conducted over 4,300 air strikes so far in Libya. One, on June 17, killed seven civilians. Yet Obama insists this bloodshed does not amount to “hostilities” under the War Powers Act and thus needs no Congressional consent.

In 1973, when their Vietnam genocide was failing and masses of workers and GI’s were turning against this imperialist invasion, U.S. rulers cooked up this Act in order to blame the war on Presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon personally rather than on U.S. bosses’ need to counter their then rising state capitalist rivals in the Soviet Union and China. The Act’s purpose was also to put a “democratic” face on future U.S. wars by demanding Congress approve a president’s military action within 90 days. After all, the bosses’ Big Lie goes, Congress “represents the whole nation,” even though it is mostly a ruling class rubber stamp. But today Obama claims a license to kill without a thumbs-up from either Senate or House.

Oil-based Domestic Splits Sharpening

But some businesses, like Koch Oil, have primarily a short-range, domestic focus. Koch’s main push today is to build a pipeline from Canada’s burgeoning oil and gas tar fields that will connect with its existing Minnesota line. It runs through the district that Koch-backed, Tea Party presidential hopeful Michele Bachmann represents on Capitol Hill. Opposing Obama’s War Powers move, she told ABC News (6/19/11) the U.S. has “no vital national interest” in Libya. In addition, smaller business owners, seeking tax relief as a way out of the current recession, bankrolled successful anti-Obama, Tea Party candidates for Congress in 2011.

Obama also faces less ideologically consistent Republican opportunists, like front-runner Mitt Romney, trying to cash in on mass anti-war sentiment. His calls for “bringing the troops home,” designed to defeat Obama, echo Obama’s own fake 2008 campaign “peace” appeals aimed at Bush, Jr., designed to capitalize on mass disgust with the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

U.S.-led Alliances Faltering

However much they need it, the main, imperialist U.S. rulers have been unable — since 1941 — to unite Congress to declare war. Similar dysfunction besets them internationally. Retiring Pentagon chief Robert Gates spent a good deal of his worldwide farewell tour berating NATO “allies” for not ponying up in troops, money or supplies. Germany, for example, chiefly dependent on Russian energy, is sitting out the mainly U.S., British and French slaughter in Libya. Washington’s NATO funding, moaned Gates in a recent speech in Belgium, has soared from a one-half to three-quarters share.

As for Libya in particular, Gates said, “While every alliance member voted for the Libya mission, less than half have participated at all, and fewer than a third have been willing to participate in the strike mission.” (Defense Department, 6/10/11) And Gates wasn’t even talking about potentially necessary invasions of Syria, Iran or Saudi Arabia — in the latter’s case to protect Exxon’s

U.S. Afghan Aim All About Oil, TAPI Pipeline

N.Y. Times, 6/20 —The United States government has spent hundreds of millions of dollars to build large diesel generators and exploit the country’s oil, gas and coal reserves... The bulk of the profits will likely flow overseas or into the pockets of a few warlords and government officials....

Along with advocating the construction of a pipeline (TAPI) to carry natural gas from Central Asia, across Afghanistan and into Pakistan, the United States is also helping to fund a 20th-century-style power grid that will compel Afghanistan to purchase the bulk of its electricity from neighboring former Soviet republics for decades to come....

oil — in which “allies” have divergent oil and gas interests and therefore different levels of loyalty to Washington.

But U.S. Rulers' Need for World War Persists

A week later in Singapore, however, formerly pessimistic Gates chirped merrily in a veiled way about a possible allied World War III victory over potential imperialist enemies: “[W]hen America is willing to lead the way; when we meet our commitments and stand with our allies, even in troubling times; when we prepare for threats that are on the ground and on the horizon, and even beyond the horizon; and when we make the necessary sacrifices and take the necessary risks to defend our values and our interests — then great things are possible, and even probable for our country, this region, and the world.” Who might be “on or beyond the horizon” but Chinese and Russian imperialists?

To survive amid intensifying rivalry, U.S. capitalists will do what they can and must to keep profits flowing. This mean widening wars of every kind, accompanied by an increasing police-state crackdown in the U.S. A principal face of fascism is evident in U.S. bosses’ need to intensify the squeeze on U.S. workers to pay for these wars through wage-cuts and speed-up, employing less workers to produce more; through huge budget cuts in social services; through fending off possible resistance by the tens of millions of unemployed; through the maintenance of racism in all these areas to extract super-profits from black, Latino and immigrant workers; and through the exploitation of workers worldwide to keep U.S. capitalism afloat.

The international working class’s survival, then, depends on building one united international communist party — PLP — that can function under conditions of war and fascism with the aim of overthrowing the murdering billionaire class. It is towards this goal that PLP members throughout the world must build our Party in every area of class struggle in which we are involved.☺



OUR FIGHT

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

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

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

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

★Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. Everyone will share in society’s benefits and burdens.

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

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

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

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

★Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

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Why Articles Are Not Signed

The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP’s criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a “following” around any particular individual. While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual’s writing of an article.

Dallas Students Walk Out vs. Racist Cuts, Teacher Firing

DALLAS, June 15 — This year there has been an upswing in student and teacher activism against school cut-backs at a high school here. A combination of anger over the cuts plus talk with students about fighting back has sparked a militant spirit among many students and teachers, one absent for many years on this campus. The fact that these cuts affect a predominantly black and Latino student body reveals their racist nature.

The school bosses fired a veteran English teacher and, having no intention of hiring another teacher, rotated substitute teachers in and out of the class every day. With no curriculum, students created their own lesson plan: using the wasted time in class to make protest posters and organize a rally and walk-out.

The following day, about 30 students walked out of class during 2nd period, the one used to calculate the average daily attendance. As students streamed out they chanted to bring back the fired teacher.

Students held their ground throughout the period and into the next one. Then 40 more students joined the rally. A few teachers, including a PL'er, stood nearby to show solidarity with the protest. As the rally grew, administrators became increasingly worried and sent cops to threaten students with \$500 fines. Most students then returned to class.

Back in the classroom students told their stories: about how the media refused to cover the event and how administrators made threatening and degrading remarks to individual students. The rest of the day we discussed how the budget cuts would bring even

more layoffs and the need for more student fight-back. For the first time many students began to see the real impact of the cuts on the school as well as their own power to fight the cuts.

The challenge since the walkout has been to maintain this heightened level of struggle and student confidence in their power to make change. Even though the teacher was not rehired, it was a learning experience showing the potential to build a movement against the cuts and eventually for communism, a system without profiteers.

In the following weeks, the level of fight-back has been uneven. While activity died down after the walkout, several faculty and students have participated in off-campus rallies and demonstrations opposing the cuts. Primarily the liberal teacher unions and other liberal misleaders, with the explicit message of "voting for change," have led these actions.

At one rally, the local teachers' union organizers held up signs displaying the phone numbers of congressmen. They told the crowd right then and there to call "their" legislators to "save our schools." Instead of phoning these political phonies, PL'ers and our friends began chanting, "No cuts, no way! Make the bosses pay!" Soon the entire crowd joined our chant and, in order to save face, even the union misleaders did so.

As this school year ends, several faculty are being laid off or placed in "excess" pools from which their hiring is questionable. At a final faculty meeting, a PL teacher publically denounced *all* the layoffs in the entire school

district, pointing out to those in attendance that they may not have a job next year, saying we should hold the administration and school board accountable.

While many teachers agreed with this speech, very few said so publically. The fear that these fascist cut-backs bring is evident; the majority of teachers are afraid to simply talk about the cuts for fear of losing their jobs. This is the paralyzing grip of fascism, a fear forcing one to accept worse and worse conditions, and bite the bullet one more year, even as everyone around you is being laid off. This grim reality means we must re-double our efforts. Despite heightened levels of fight-back throughout this school year, there is still much work to be done.

PL'ers and the new friends we've made are planning to continue the struggle into the summer with a study group to discuss the relationship of the cuts to capitalism and imperialism. As was revealed during the struggle, the ruling class's inexorable drive to finance its imperialist wars is behind the constant cuts in budgets allotted to workers' and students' needs, especially for blacks and Latinos. We will make these connections by showing CHALLENGE to more people and developing CHALLENGE study groups out of these summer groups.

In order to raise the level of class struggle even higher, we must do more to involve parents and win more students and faculty to a spirit of unity and fight-back like never before. This will enhance our ability to recruit them to the Party.✪

Racist Philly Cops Murder Unarmed Black Youth

PHILADELPHIA, June 15 — On May 9, a racist Philadelphia cop murdered a 19-year-old unarmed black worker, Albert D. "Audi" Purnell, Jr. This young man was shot in cold blood after he had followed police orders and raised his hands in the air and surrendered. He was shot in front of a number of witnesses. The KKKops claimed he had a gun and "fit the description" of a suspect they were searching for. The witnesses have all declared that the police murdered him.

Audi's father, Albert Purnell, Sr., a hospital worker and friend of PLP, and his mother Tracey are demanding justice for their murdered son. Hahnemann hospital workers are mad as hell and supporting this struggle against the racist cops.

Audi had just graduated from high school and begun working in the mechanical engineering section of the Department of Welfare. He was the father of a young daughter whom he loved dearly. He was on his way to visit his fiancé and their daughter when he was killed. The police and district attorney are doing everything they can to cover up this racist murder, including arresting and trying to intimidate the witnesses and seizing any video surveillance cameras in the area. They're refusing to reveal the names of the cops and other details of the investigation.

Since this police murder, they have shot seven more black men in Philadelphia, including a SEPTA bus driver. PL members, along with their friends among the hospital workers, are taking an active part in the growing movement against this racist police terror. (More details in future issues.)✪

Palestine: Racist Israeli Rulers Steal Workers' Land

AL-WALAJA, EAST JERUSALEM, June 8 — A group of PL'ers visited the village of al-Walaja guided by a village council member. The village is near the Har Giloh neighborhood and the Knesset (Israel's parliament), and is home to 2,600 workers in Palestine. There is a separation wall between the village and its fields. There is a separate entry gate for Israeli settlers to al-Walaja and Beit Jallah. These settlers from Susya occasionally come to attack the village — to close the water line, poison the vegetation or burn trees. Across the apartheid-style "separation" wall, there is a new Israeli settlement called "Givat Yael"; this is the Zionist dream of "Greater Jerusalem" — stealing land all over the place.

Until the wall was built in April 2010, al-Walaja was open to Jerusalem. It is still relatively easy to get to al-Walaja from the Knesset, but when the wall is completed, access will be permitted only through an Israel Defense Forces (IDF) checkpoint.

There is also a bridge connecting Giloh to the Israeli settlements, which can only be used by Jews. Last year, this was brought to court because it was built on private Palestinian land. Its racist exclusion of Palestinian vehicles could not be justified by "security"

excuses. The main reason it exists is to freeze Palestinian land development and push Palestinians away from their homes by making their lives intolerable.

One third of al-Walaja's houses were demolished or heavily fined due to alleged "construction permit violations!" Half of the village is within Jerusalem's municipal jurisdiction, while the other half is controlled by the IDF's "Civil" Administration. The residents of al-Walaja have Palestinian IDs and thus no civil rights under Israeli law, despite the fact that they could prove that they lived on their lands since before the 1948 war. Al-walaja needs two schools, but in practice there is only one. The infrastructure is also terrible.

The only solution is the dictatorship of the proletariat worldwide. In a communist state, workers will receive according to need and work together to build a better future for everyone. The capitalist racist Israeli regime is colonial by definition: it enforces the exploitation and division of the working class, both Jews and Arabs. Therefore, it must be replaced by communist workers' state.✪

Calif. Supermarket Workers Vote Strike; Union Sellouts say NO

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, June 13 — Bravely refusing to buy into the rhetoric of “shared sacrifice,” 62,000 members of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) voted overwhelmingly to authorize a strike against the three major Southern California supermarket chains: Ralph’s, Albertson’s, and Vons.

The workers’ contract expired in March, and a strike could start in June or early July. It is critical for workers throughout Southern California, the United States and the world to support this strike. Progressive Labor Party should take the lead in organizing support from workers in other unions and from non-unionized workers, from community organizations, churches, schools...everywhere.

The supermarket chains are out to take another bite out of workers’ health benefits and pensions, as they did in 2003. That was when they introduced a two-tier wage system, which divided workers and gave the bosses an incentive to get rid of better-paid veteran workers. The workers’ willingness to strike is especially noteworthy given the defeat they suffered in the five-month strike/lockout in 2003.

When members of our church talked to workers at a nearby supermarket, they were excited to hear that we wanted to support them on the picket line and serve meals to striking workers at the church. Activities such as these could build class solidarity and create an environment in which we can win workers to the need for communist revolution, which would be the most important outcome

of this strike.

This outlook is the opposite of the approach of the UFCW leaders. The union helped elect Jerry Brown governor of California by donating members’ money — which should have gone into their strike fund — and by organizing telephone banks. Brown wants to shore up the declining capitalist economy by pushing “shared sacrifice,” meaning working people sacrifice while bosses take more and more. (The LA Times reported that UFCW Local 770 President Rick Icaza was paid \$273,404 in 2002—the last year his salary was made public.) Furthermore, it looks like the UFCW leaders, along with the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, are ready to replay the strategy that led to the 2003 defeat:

- No national union strategy to counter the national strategy of the supermarket chains, which used profits from stores throughout the U.S. to continue despite losses of \$2 billion locally;
- Too little too late in organizing local support from other unions and community organizations;
- Allowing supermarkets to operate with scabs (who were paid almost double the wages of union workers). With mass support on picket lines, workers could have prevented access to the stores or even occupied them and shut them down;
- Returning to work despite the chains’ firing of over 600 militant workers for “misconduct” during the strike.

Icaza has repeatedly said that he thinks strikes

are old-fashioned and should no longer be necessary. A few months ago he said in a radio interview, “I think the employers are gonna look at this and say to themselves, ‘We have the authority to go forward,’ and instead of what they’ve been doing in the past — stalling — they’re gonna sit down and bargain in good faith.”

On June 11, Icaza said, “We compromised on the pension issue. Now is the time for management to compromise on health care.” In other words, the union leadership has already agreed to give-backs on pensions in return, so far, for nothing. In fact, the supermarket chains are demanding give-backs in healthcare that could cost each worker \$7,000 a year. No doubt Icaza is getting ready to announce a “victory” — workers will lose “only” \$1,000 or \$2,000 in healthcare benefits.

The average veteran full-time supermarket worker makes less than \$30,000 a year — barely enough to live in high cost-of-living Southern California. Most workers make far less, as they get only 24 hours of work per week. Many keep their jobs only because of the health benefits.

This is a great chance for us to support and build class struggle and working-class unity. We can use this struggle to win workers to the real solution to their problems: dumping capitalism, with its profits and bosses, with communist revolution. Let’s get out to the picket lines (or supermarkets outside Southern California) — with our friends — and support our fellow workers!✊

Israeli Cops Attack Rail Workers’ Wildcat vs. Privatization

ISRAEL, May 12 — Railway workers here went on a wildcat strike protesting the arrest of their union leaders during a demonstration held the previous day. That action was protesting the railway management’s decision to privatize car maintenance service, transferring it to private manpower companies. This caused hundreds of railway workers to be laid off and, in the process, damaging and endangering the public safety.

Israeli police, always ready and eager to serve local bosses, violently attacked the workers, arresting ten of the railway workers’ union leaders. The next day, the courts — another organ of the bosses — issued a decision forbidding the workers to strike. The railway workers defied the court’s decision and wildcatted, demanding the immediate release of their comrades from jail.

This is a typical example of creeping fascism: the use of a police force to intimidate and break down the spirit of workers struggling to defend their jobs. The railway workers showed us the way to fight fascism — they challenged the bosses and their rotten capitalist system.

In recent years we have witnessed a process by all Israeli governments, right and “left,” aimed at destroying organized labor. “Public” companies are handed over to private bosses and manpower companies, the modern slaveowners. Thus, workers are forced to work for slave wages with no collective contracts.

The capitalists and their servants in government have wanted to privatize Israel Railway for a long time and hand it over to a private local tycoon. To achieve this, they are leading a campaign to de-legitimize railway workers. They cut the public safety budget endangering passengers while putting the blame on the railway workers, setting the public against the workers.

Privatization of public services, including transportation, has failed in other countries and proved ineffective. Despite this, the bosses are determined to transfer the railway service to one of their own in order to extract maximum profit.

We in PLP strengthen and support the railway workers in their struggle to block the bosses’ aims. In their brave actions, the railway workers proved that workers’ unity and determination to fight for a just cause can defeat the bosses’ police and courts.

We support their firm stand to prevent manpower companies from bringing in cheap slave labor to replace fully-experienced and trained workers and in doing so endangering the public safety. But under capitalism workers never win. Even if these reforms are won, they will eventually be taken away in the name of profit. Only when workers hold state power, will we have control to make decisions that will truly benefit all workers and not just a few rich bosses.✊

PLP’ers: Racist Capitalism’s the Problem N.J. State Workers: ‘Cut Bankers and Bosses’

TRENTON, N.J., June 16 — Thousands of state workers rallied at the state capitol against massive cutbacks in pensions, and increases in insurance contributions. The state is also making huge racist cuts in welfare programs for mainly black and Latino workers. Four Democratic members of the legislature, including Senate President Sweeney, added their votes to those of the Republicans to pass a deal made with New Jersey Governor Christie.

Christie announced the deal to a standing ovation of business executives last night. Under the bill, retirees would lose Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) for at least 30 years, the retirement age would go from 60 to 65, and pension contributions would go up by a third. Health insurance costs would double or triple, and unions won’t be able to renegotiate contributions for at least four years.

The best the union leaders could muster in response was “civil disobedience” by a few union leaders inside the hearing chamber, and complaints that state bosses are “trampling on our fundamental democratic rights.” Capitalism is a dictatorship of the bosses over the working class, not the other way around. The union leadership has no plan to reach out to and ally with private-sector workers, much less organize massive strikes to shut down the bosses’ government. Instead, they are relying on “friendly” Democrats in the Assembly to “kill the bill.”

PLP members and CHALLENGE readers attended the rally. A flyer was given out calling for unity between employed and unemployed workers against racist cutbacks in the state budget targeting unemployed workers. The flyer was received positively and several good conversations were had with our fellow workers. Here are some excerpts from the flyer:

“Last year at this time, thousands of workers were protesting state budget cuts. One of those, the General Assistance (GA) program was put back on the chopping block in late June, 2010. But, right after the restoration, the state welfare ad-

ministration sent “review teams” into Essex County welfare offices servicing GA clients. Since then there has been a “slash and burn” approach to GA, directly coming from the review teams. The latest attack is the “discovery” by the state that hundreds of “employable” GA recipients are at the end of their time limit. These clients face termination of rental assistance, followed by eviction.

“The GA program is the last resort for tens of thousands of mostly black and Latino urban unemployed workers without children. Many long-term recipients have serious medical issues. Others have social problems which prevent them from getting jobs. But the real problem for those who are able to work is that there are no jobs, and there haven’t been any for some time. This results in systemic unemployment among black and Latino workers, double what it is among white workers. Because of this built-in disparity, we in PLP say unemployment is racist.

“Capitalism, an economic system based upon huge profits for bankers and bosses, actually needs unemployment. Unemployment helps keep wages down by providing a ready market of the unemployed willing to work for less. Passivity in the face of unemployment gives the bosses the flexibility they need to relocate their businesses when their profits aren’t high enough. Only a communist system would eliminate the need for unemployment since workers would produce in order to meet the needs of the whole working class, not for the profits of the bosses.”

Instead of sitting back while our most vulnerable brothers and sisters face the wrath of the budget-cutters, employed workers should unite with our natural allies — unemployed workers who occupy a position we may soon be in ourselves — to resist these cuts. N.J. PLP members and friends are beginning a campaign to fight the cuts and build the party in the process. Stay tuned!✊

'We're not Nazis' Says Health Board Boss; Cook County Cuts Say You Are!

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, June 15 — "These cuts make one wonder whether the Cook County Board of Health is malicious or just incompetent," a physician stated at a recent hearing. One of the latest budget-slashing moves by the Cook County bosses is to not re-apply for WIC (Women, Infants and Children) program. Mostly funded by federal money, WIC provides nutritional support to pregnant women and their infants or small children. Yet the Board is aiming to literally take milk away from babies!

At a recent hearing on this issue, pediatric healthcare providers spoke out against the cut. One pointed out that it was racist because it will affect mostly black and Latino children. A hospital board member felt compelled to criticize the use of words like "racist" or "Nazi" (a term used by the public to characterize the board at previous hearings). This time around, the Board voted down this particular cut. But keep in mind that these Board members are the same people who are going all out to try to close two of the County's three public hospitals. They may yet scuttle the WIC program when they meet again on June 24.

Under instructions from recently-elected Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, a liberal Democrat, the Board of Health has advanced a plan to close Oak Forest and Provident hospitals, which serve primarily black and Latino patients on the city's South and West Sides. Multiple hearings on the closure of Oak Forest have brought out many residents to demand that the hospital remain open (see CHALLENGE, 5/11). After the Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board (IHFSRB) denied permission for the closure, Preckwinkle pushed a bill through the State Senate to close the hospital without IHFSRB approval. The bill failed to reach the House floor before the General Assembly adjourned this spring.

Despite this stay of execution, Oak Forest services had already been drastically decreased. Only about a dozen patients are slated to remain at the hospital. There will be no surgeries, no intensive

care, no acute rehabilitation; the "hospital" will be a glorified emergency room. And there is no guarantee that it won't be completely closed in the near future.

The bosses explain that these cuts are necessary to keep the state fiscally solvent, even if it means targeting the workers at the bottom. But budget shortfalls do not exist in a void. According to Joshua Holland of U.S. Labor Against the War, "Forty-six states face budget shortfalls in this fiscal year, totaling \$130 billion nationwide. The supplemental requests for fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan this year add up to \$170 billion — that doesn't include the Pentagon's base budget, nukes or Homeland Security."

The priorities of those ruling the U.S. have nothing to do with providing decent healthcare or pensions to workers, the two items most often blamed for the state's budget woes. This past year, the County allocated \$126 million in their capital budget to build administrative offices at the old Cook County Hospital — enough to fund inpatient care at Oak Forest for more than five years. At every level, capitalism is full of disconnects between its relentless drive for profit and the basic needs of workers for a decent life.

Despite the cutbacks, there are positive aspects to this struggle. A number of dedicated and principled people have come out repeatedly to try to save what's left of healthcare in Cook County. Their example is inspiring, and none of our minor victories could have happened without their speaking up and banding together. In addition, everyone involved has learned some important lessons from the fight over Oak Forest, which has laid bare the illusions of voting and "democracy." Preckwinkle was billed as "more competent" and "less corrupt" than her predecessor, Todd Stroger, but she is fighting tooth and nail to strip the County of healthcare services.


Finally, it has become clear that capitalism is at the root of these problems. A system that

places profits before people requires imperialist wars to be funded above all else, leaving workers in the cold. Although we will keep fighting to keep our hospitals open and our children fed, we know that only the complete destruction of this capitalist system will lead to healthy outcomes for all.✪

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France: Union Hacks Back Bosses' Plan to Tax Workers

PARIS, June 18 — In order to boost the competitiveness and profits of French companies, the government is moving to lower the social security contributions paid by private business. Taxpayers — most of whom are workers — will have to make up the shortfall through a value-added tax on consumer goods. This amounts to a sales tax, and since the tax is the same no matter what one's income, it will cost workers a greater percentage of their income than rich people.

Moreover, this is a racist tax since workers of Arab and African origin are disproportionately poorer and will pay a larger percentage of their income than higher-income people.

The idea was advanced in a June 8 report co-authored by three bosses' organizations and three sellout trade union confederations.

This week, both the Industry Minister and the ruling UMP party's general secretary pushed debating the scheme, the first step in passing a law. To win public backing, the measure is billed as an "anti-offshoring value-added tax." They claim that wages in France are "too high" because of the social security contributions the bosses have to pay. The bosses pretend they won't move their factories to low-wage countries if they get what amounts to a wage-cut for workers — the new tax would cut into workers' wages.

Blackmail

This is straightforward blackmail: telling workers their jobs will disappear overseas if they don't cough up.

Industry Minister Eric Besson said, "The idea of shifting company social security contributions to a tax on another tax base, like consumption, merits debate. The cost of labor is one of the key elements in competitiveness."

By cutting social security contributions, French bosses hope to lower their costs and undersell their imperialist rivals, increasing their competitiveness. But once the new "anti-offshoring value-added tax" has been established, the second round will surely see the politicians cutting social security benefits in order to lower taxes.

Co-authoring this scheme, set out in a 40-page report entitled "Approach to French Competitiveness," represents yet another betrayal by three sellout union confederations. It highlights the bankruptcy of the unity-at-any-price strategy pursued by the supposedly "class-struggle" unions.

In 2009, the three sellout unions — the CFDT, the Roman Catholic CFTC, and the business executives' union, the CGC — began working with the bosses to collect data on economic indicators. Now they've gone a step further. They want the bosses' government to "rethink the tax base that finances social protection."

A worker's income is composed of wages and benefits, including social security benefits. The proposed cut in our income will increase the boss's profits. The three sellout unions are quite simply urging the government to change the tax laws so that the bosses can steal more of the wealth that we — and we alone — create!

Union Leaders in Bed with the Bosses

This attack on the working class is accompanied by nauseating class collaboration. The bosses and union leaders announced in chorus that they had "gone beyond ideological approaches." CFTC president Joseph Thouvenel trumpeted that "confronted with a fall in competitiveness, we have exited the class struggle to look reality in the face."

For the past three years, the three openly

sellout union confederations have been working hand-in-glove with the bosses to concoct this report. Now they intend to use the document to indoctrinate their members and as a basis of reference in wage negotiations.

Throughout last year's fight against raising the retirement age, the leaders of the so-called "class-struggle" union confederations — particularly France's biggest confederation, the CGT (which represents 34% of all workers) — insisted on preserving unity with these sellouts (who together represent 38% of workers). They claimed this was "the key to success."

But in effect, this strategy gave the sellouts a veto on any possible actions. It guaranteed the struggle would never exceed symbolic one-day strikes. It nixed any possibility of an unlimited general strike. The struggle against raising the retirement age was lost.

Clearly this "unity strategy" was nothing but a fig leaf. It concealed the unwillingness of the "class-struggle" union leaders to really organize against the attack on the retirement age. It allowed them to sabotage the millions-strong movement while shifting the blame to the more open sellouts. So-called "progressives" like CGT leader Bernard Thibault are no better than CFTC's Joseph Thouvenel.

When masses of workers here understand the pro-capitalist nature of all the reformist union leaders, of whatever stripe, it will provide the basis to develop the needed revolutionary communist leadership. Organizing to convince workers of this reality is one of the important tasks of communists in France.✪

LETTERS

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

PLP Active in El Salvador May Day

We're starting to see the results from our political work here, having recruited new CHALLENGE readers and developing a base amongst Salvadorian workers.

We've been discussing PLP's politics in comparison with the FMLN (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front) which negotiated and handed over the struggle of super-exploited Salvadorian workers to the bosses. Our struggle has been to hoist high our communist PLP flags and not abandon our revolutionary ideology as did the old communist movement in Russia and China where the workers had power and were betrayed by phony revisionists who allied with the bosses.

On this May Day, we workers in El Salvador commemorated the 125th anniversary of the courageous battle of Chicago's workers out of which May Day was born. PLP members were part of the demonstration, distributing more than 1,500 of our Party's fliers, in which we exposed the atrocities of the capitalist system and the need for a communist revolution.

We also called on workers to unite with us to build an international communist Party that can deepen the organization of the world's working class. For this CHALLENGE is essential.

It's necessary for PLP to participate in the class battles of workers against bosses, to motivate the workers to take on the struggle with strength and courage towards a global communist revolution.

Comrade from El Salvador

FMLN: The Guardian of Capitalism

This May Day workers, farmers, students, teachers and their unions were present in the principal streets of San Salvador to celebrate the heroism of Chicago's workers repressed by the capitalist system which tries to still the voices of oppressed people. But their struggle broke the chains the bosses put on the workers. That's how the 8-hour work-day was achieved.

Thousands chanted "Long Live the Workers of the World"; and "The Workers, United, Will Never be Defeated." PLP's 1,500 fliers called upon the workers to organize ourselves to fight against capitalism and build a society based on social equality.

We mocked the security forces of FMLN and the state which tried to control the demonstration. They didn't want us to bring our message to

the May Day marchers, which was the opposite of their's. While we are small, our consistent work will win recruits among soldiers, workers, students, farmers and future generations to the PLP. We also distributed CHALLENGES and made various contacts, especially among veterans of the FMLN.

Comrade from El Salvador

LA PLP Plans Summer Project; Expose Union 'Deal'

Here in Los Angeles, we are closing out the school year and getting ready for summer. As such, we are doing some activities to try to build towards the Summer Project, to build student leadership and to strengthen our ties to the young people we have been working with all year. Last weekend, we had a study-action group. A student selected our reading and led the discussion. He chose the CHALLENGE letter about the situation in the Inglewood school district.

This led us to discuss the new "deal" that the teachers union made with the L.A. Unified School District. The union accepted almost 2,000 layoffs and four to six unpaid furlough days. Teachers at all of our schools thought this action was a sell-out of the younger teachers. The union however did not allow much discussion; it pushed the deal to a vote one day after it was announced. At one of our schools, there was a quick lunch-time meeting where a comrade was able to raise the need to reject the deal and fight for working-class unity, no layoffs, no pay-cuts. At another school, the union did not even have a meeting, just the vote.

The discussion then transitioned to how to get out our ideas, especially through CHALLENGE. Since we were going to a CHALLENGE sale afterwards, we talked about how to distribute the paper and how to encourage workers to read and contribute to their paper. There was even a short role-play. Afterward, we went to a neighborhood supermarket and talked with the workers there, who were mainly Latino. We were able to get out 76 papers and raise about \$10.

Our student-leader was able to overcome some hesitancy and got out CHALLENGE to newcomers. He found that workers are interested in PLP's ideas and willing to talk to communists. This was a good beginning in our transition to summer work but we hope to build on it and win more students to an upcoming "Summer Project Orientation."

Teacher in Los Angeles

Ludo Martens, 1946-2011: Fighter for Communism

Comrade Ludo Martens died on June 5, 2011, after a long illness. Originally trained as a medical doctor, Martens decided, during the 1960s, to devote his life to the struggle for working-class liberation and for communism. He founded the communist Workers Party of Belgium.

He was the author of "Another View of Stalin," a book PLP has been distributing online for many years. Then it was the only attempt to view the historical role of Joseph Stalin, and therefore that of the Soviet Union during his time, from a communist, anti-revisionist point of view.

Martens rightly rejected all the anti-communist and Trotskyist falsifications he could identify, and tried to stick to the facts as he could determine them. The book's principal weakness is its apologetic tone — more an attempt to "justify" Stalin than to take a dialectical view of his weaknesses as well as his strengths, and of the Soviet communist movement of his time.

Martens wrote this book in the 1980s, before the flood of new evidence from formerly secret Soviet archives had been made public. Nevertheless, within the scope of its limitations, this was a useful book for a long time.

Having founded the Workers Party of Belgium — an anti-revisionist communist party that strives to build a working-class base — comrade Martens believed that the party should collaborate with other anti-revisionist groups, despite their differences, in an attempt to build a world movement, a view which PLP does not share.

Martens was a dedicated anti-racist. He wrote several books and articles about genocidal Belgian imperialism in the Congo. He devoted much of his life to working in the Congo. His premature death at the age of 65 cut short his research on the history of class struggle in the Congo.

PLP salutes comrade Martens' example and memory. The working class needs millions more like him.

(A longer memorial article by the Workers Party of Belgium, in French, is here: <http://www.ptb.be/nieuws/artikel/en-memoire-de-ludo-martens-1946-2011.html> For some reason it does not mention Marten's important book "Another View of Stalin.")

Education

continued from page 8

More fundamentally, the nationalization of education will prepare workers for increased fascism and war by defining the ideas taught to youth. Common Core State Standards and the accompanying battery of tests (now in development) will advance the centralized control of the content of education. By tying seniority, pay, and job security to teacher evaluation and student test scores, the ruling class hopes to develop a teaching force that shies away from independent thinking, both for themselves and their students. The end goal is a working class trained to be loyal to U.S. imperialism and willing to fight in wars to defend it.

All unions, including the National Education Association and American Federation of Teachers, work within the framework of a capitalist system that aims to destroy their members. The NEA leadership recently pledged to support President Barack Obama in spite of his implementation of Race to the Top, a policy that forces corporate-style reforms upon public schools. At its last convention, the AFT honored Bill Gates, the champion of larger class sizes — the key to massive teacher layoffs — in urban schools.

Both of these national unions have many members and local leaders who are fighting the attacks on education, like the "anti-billionaires" campaign of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU). Unions, however, are bound by the confines of the capitalist system. They negotiate contracts and lobby for laws that set the terms of workers' exploitation. The CTU cuts deals with politicians when it should be organizing its militant rank-and-file to fight. Recent legislation agreed to by CTU leaders makes

it harder to strike and undermines seniority protections for teachers. In reality, workers can never win in the legislative arena; any "victories" are short-term and can always be taken away by the class that rules.

The real value of class struggle doesn't lie in the reform crumbs that workers may or may not win, but in the experience of fighting the bosses — an experience that too few workers have today. (In 2010, there were only 11 major strikes in the U.S., compared to more than 4,000 strikes in 1937.)

Communists advocate breaking the rules, and to fight back wherever we can. The mothers at Whittier School in Chicago did this last fall, when they took over a building to demand a library. In Brooklyn, students, teachers, and parents recently joined together to demand that the racist Department of Education withdraw its plan to insert an elite school into the John Jay Campus, where black and Latino students face prison-like security scanning and under-funding. Currently, students at Clara Barton High School in Brooklyn are battling a trumped-up investigation of PLP teachers (see page 8).

Militant fighting is insufficient; it needs to be coupled with a revolutionary communist outlook and a long-term struggle against capitalist ideology. We must understand how ideas like individualism, racism, nationalism, and class unity with the bosses are built into the schools' curricula. To keep



CHICAGO, June 14 — Thousands of black, white and Latino workers protested "corporate welfare" and cuts in services outside a meeting of the Chief Financial Officers of major corporations. They marched and chanted: "Banks Got Bailed Out, We Got Sold Out" and "Hyatt, Pritzker, we're no fools; we won't let you ruin our schools." Two dozen protesters were arrested after stopping rush-hour traffic. Speakers and banners exposed the lie of "shared sacrifice," calling for more funds for schools, housing, and jobs. The action was organized by unions and community groups, including the Teachers Union.

our students from killing and dying for capitalism, communist teachers must win other teachers and students to see through the rulers' lies. We must learn and teach the skills of scientific analysis, the true history of workers' struggles, and the multi-racial, international unity required for revolution. This is the role of a communist education, and the goal of PLP: to build an army of workers and students to destroy the profit system, once and for all. ☺

Pacifism Won't Work Greece: Cops Attack Workers' Blockade of Parliament over Cuts, Layoffs

GREECE, June 21 — The working class in Greece is under a severe attack by the capitalist ruling class, and they are fighting back. Taking a lesson from the workers in Spain, thousands of Greek workers are occupying Syntagma Square outside of Parliament in Athens. Like the Spanish and Egyptian workers, they are setting up assemblies to discuss what actions to take against the coming cuts and layoffs. Although the workers are braving severe state repression in these acts of defiance, the assemblies are just as reformist as their Spanish and Egyptian counterparts, pushing for reformist and pacifist positions (see CHALLENGE, 6/08).

When the assemblies decided to peacefully blockade Parliament as part of a general strike against the Socialist Party-led government that approved the cuts, the state did not "turn the other cheek." The kkkops attacked with clubs and tear gas, and the ultra-nationalist fascists in Greece began attacking many of the protestors, supporting the kkkops as paramilitary forces. So much for pacifism being anything other than a pathologically suicidal position designed to get workers to passively slaughter themselves for a pathetic "moral high ground."

The economic aspect of imperialism is that foreign capital subjugates the national interests to the needs of the creditor states in the name of profit — and there is a lot at stake for the Greek

ruling class, and capitalists around the world. The German ruling class that is behind the bailouts demands privatization of Greek resources, such as ports and utility companies. This will not only lay off thousands of workers while driving down wages, but it will also open up Greece, and thereby Europe, to their imperialist rival bosses in China and Russia, who are looking to buy ports in Thessaloniki and gain a foothold in the energy market. In addition, France, the U.S.'s closest ally in the European Union, is now in danger because a major international credit agency, Moody's, said it might downgrade the three largest banks in France because of their exposure to Greek debt.

With a mass revolutionary communist PLP based in the native-born and immigrant Greek working class, dedicated to revolution and a communist society, the rolling strikes and looming general strikes could indeed be transformed into insurrections for state power. Unfortunately, there were a lot of Greek flags at the protest because many leftists and workers have fallen into the trap of believing that they should support their national bosses against the international bosses in the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Unlike the old



communist movement, the Progressive Labor Party believes nationalism is a dead end for the working class, and fights to organize internationally amongst all workers as a class.

Without the Party there can be no revolution. The brave workers of Greece are inspiring to the international working class and are illustrating internationalism by learning from their class sisters and brothers in Spain and Egypt and refusing to lie down and be trampled by the bosses, but we need to build a revolutionary PLP to go all the way and seize power!✊

RED EYE ON THE NEWS

Below are excerpts from mainstream newspapers that may be of use for our readers. Abbreviations: NYT=New York Times, GW=Guardian Weekly, LAT=Los Angeles Times

Spain: rising youth ditch old leaders

NYT, 6/7 — ...The recession that has ravaged Spain, along with much of Southern Europe, has had an especially hard impact on the young, with unemployment rates soaring to more than 40 percent for 20-to-24-year-olds...Many of them see limited hope of improvement unless they reshuffle the political deck and demand a new approach.

Historically, Spaniards have taken to the streets with some regularity...But the events, are usually organized by political parties and unions, organizations that the young have largely ignored. Many of the new protesters say they are disgusted with the unions that do little to represent their interests and with both of Spain's main parties, which they view as corrupt and unresponsive.

Egyptians seek a revolt; no plan

NYT, 6/10 — Cairo — Egypt's economy, whose inequities and lack of opportunities helped topple a government, has now ground to a virtual halt, further wounded by the revolution itself.

The 18-day revolt stopped new foreign investment and decimated the pivotal tourist industry... How Egypt can fix its broken economy...could also influence the outcome of the revolts across the Arab region, where economic troubles are stirring fears of...backlash against what had appeared to be a turn toward Western-style market reforms... "People in the neighborhood are talking about going back to the streets for another revolution — a hunger revolution."

U.S. medic experiment copied Nazis

GW, 6/17 — ...It was 1946 and orphans in Guatemala City, along with prisoners, soldiers and prostitutes, had been selected for a medical experiment that would torment many, and remain secret, for more than six decades.

The U.S., worried about GIs returning home with sexual diseases, infected around 1,500 Guatemalans with syphilis, gonorrhea and chancroid to test an early antibiotic, penicillin.

....The U.S. government admitted to the experiment in October....Susan Reverby, a professor at Wellesley College in the U.S., uncovered the experiment while researching the Tuskegee syphilis study in which hundreds of African-American men were left untreated for 40 years from the 1930s.

The Guatemalan study went further by deliberately infecting its subjects...It echoed Nazi crimes exposed...at the Nuremberg trials...Families of the three survivors identified so far by Guatemala...chronicled lives blighted by illness, neglect and unanswered questions.

... "Some of this has been passed on to me, my siblings and our children." Children can inherit congenital syphilis....Only a few of the original 1,500 may still be alive but there could be dozens if not hundreds of infected children and grandchildren...

Capitalism pushes prostitution

GW, 6/7 — ...At what age can sexuality be commodified?...What really makes children grow up "too soon," may have nothing to do with sex and everything to do with poverty. Watching the incredibly revealing BBC1 documentary Poor Kids this week, to see children...talking about parental debt and how things can never change, shows us some kids do learn the facts of life too young because of deprivation....

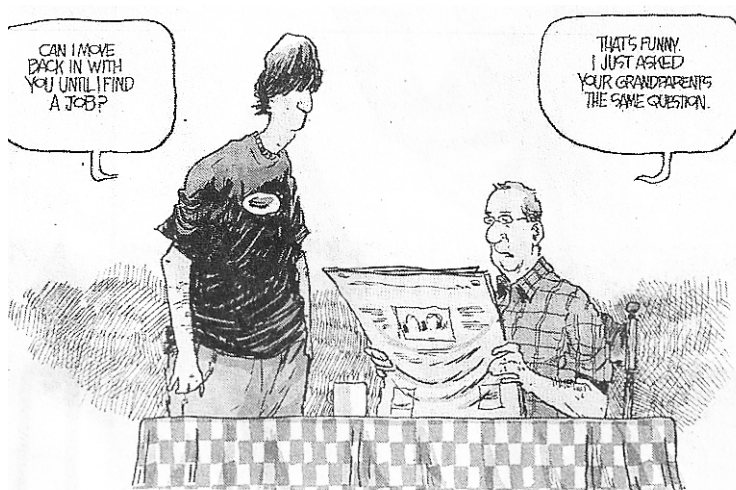
....What is needed then is not some weird repression of sexuality, but [a repression] of a rapacious capitalism that commodifies every desire and yes, will sell...children. No re[port] that tells politicians this is ever acted on.

Medicaid patients get less or zero

NYT, 6/16 — Children with Medicaid are far more likely than those with private insurance to be turned away by medical specialists or be made to wait more than a month for an appointment, even for serious medical problems, a new study finds.

....The study used a "secret shopper" technique in which researchers posed as the parent of a sick or injured child and called...to schedule an appointment...[They] described problems that were urgent...like diabetes, seizures, uncontrolled asthma, a broken bone or severe depression...

Sixty-six percent of those who mentioned Medicaid-CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program)



were denied appointment, compared with 11% who said they had private insurance, according to...The New England Journal of Medicine.

In 89 clinics that accepted both kinds of patients, the waiting time for callers who said they had Medicaid was an average of 22 days longer... A physician not connected with the study...said: "It's interesting to think you even need a study to prove that. It's pretty much common knowledge."....Many doctors said they could not keep their practices going if they accepted too many Medicaid patients.

And specialists affiliated with academic medical centers said they were willing to treat Medicaid patients but were under pressure from the medical centers to bring in more money by seeing more people with private insurance....Another study uncovered patients' difficulties in obtaining psychiatric care...."The disparity held across every specialty that was tested," Dr. Rhodes said. "This is systemic.".... "People say: 'Sure, I take insurance. Oh, I don't take Medicaid.'..."

No hiring: Automation ups profits

NYT, 6/10 — Companies that are looking for a good deal aren't seeing one in new workers.... Equipment is getting cheaper.... "I want to have as few people touching our products as possible," said Dan Mishek, managing director of Vista Technologies... "Everything should be as automated as it can be. We just can't afford to compete with countries like China on labor...expenses."....Two years into the recovery, hiring is still painfully slow. The economy is producing as much as it was before the downturn, but with seven million fewer jobs....

Billionaires Rule the Schools, but — **REAL Education Comes from Class Struggle vs. Capitalism**

As the economic crisis and wars abroad deepen, the U.S. ruling class has moved toward more direct control of the schools nationwide. In New York, billionaire mayor Mike Bloomberg runs the city's school system on a corporate model, with lawyers and business people in top leadership roles while teachers and school staffers are downsized. This structure attacks the students, the working-class of the next generation.

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel appointed a new school board full of corporate "movers and shakers" like board chair David Vitale, the former vice-chairman and director of JPMorgan Chase, and Penny Pritzker of the Hyatt Hotel dynasty. John Veasy, the Los Angeles schools superintendent, worked for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and completed an executive training program funded by billionaire philanthropist Eli Broad.

In spite of rhetoric to the contrary, these billionaires and millionaires have no intention of creating policies to benefit students. Children who attend urban public schools are disproportionately black,

Latino and low-income, the children of the same workers these bosses exploit. The racist segregation of housing and education in the U.S. makes poor black and Latino students the most likely victims of closed schools, empty test-prep curricula, and inexperienced teachers.

In this still-racist (not "post-racial") country, children of the most exploited workers, including the unemployed, are the ones most likely to attend schools where rigid obedience is demanded and rote learning is the norm. The critical analysis skills that all students need are the last thing the rulers want most of them to learn.

The degraded conditions of these schools — and of an economic system that thrives on low-wage/no-wage workers — push nearly half of their students to leave without having graduated. The system needs only a handful of working-class students to be well-educated, for skills the bosses need and for use as misleaders of the mass of workers who are left behind by the school system.

Members of the ruling class are directly fund-

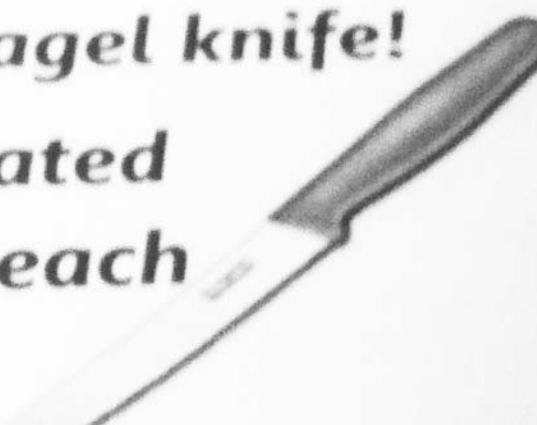
ing "reforms" in education through the Broad and Gates foundations, along with Walton Family Foundation and groups like Democrats for Education Reform and Educators 4 Excellence. The new Chicago schools' CEO is Jean-Claude Brizard, who left his job as the Rochester (NY) superintendent of schools with a 95% no-confidence vote from teachers and a similar lack of support from parents and community members. Brizard is a graduate of the Broad Superintendents Academy, described by James Horn, of the blog Schools Matter, as "Eli Broad's corporate training school ... for future superintendents who... [learn] to hand over their systems to the Business Roundtable."

This stepped-up corporate control is both about making money in the short run and trying to save capitalism over the long haul. A revolving door of new, lower-paid teachers saves public systems money, while attacks on teachers' unions and pension funds are cutting wages and benefits for all education workers.

continued on page 6

Racist School Bosses Use Anti-Communism to Mask Budget-Cutting Attacks

*Here is MY bagel knife!
Now I've created
a security breach
too!*



BROOKLYN, N.Y., June 22 — "At a time when political attacks are met with little response, what you all are doing there gives others the example needed to fight back!" This was the message sent from a teacher in New Jersey to those involved in the struggle at Clara Barton High School in Brooklyn, and a reminder of how our political work can inspire other workers and students.

As reported in last week's CHALLENGE (6/22), more than 150 students and staff demonstrated in front of Clara Barton to protest the investigation of two communist teachers who attended a union rally with students in Washington, DC, last fall. It's no accident that communists are being targeted by the Department of Education (DoE). Communists build class struggle and class consciousness. We struggle to win our class to see its power so that we can build a mass party to fight for revolution. At this rally, the largest and most visible action at the school this year, we did begin to see our strength.

In our continuing efforts to build the Party, more than 500 copies of CHALLENGE were distributed at Clara Barton last week. Students greeted the paper with enthusiasm. They read it carefully, line by line. There was a lot of discussion about the cover story — why did CHALLENGE call principal Forman a racist pig? Some thought that we needed to provide a more thorough explanation of why we regard him as racist. The ensuing discussions both clarified that point (see below) and also addressed a broader one: that capitalist schools can never serve the needs of working-class students. Students also began to wear 700 buttons with the slogan: "SCHOOLS NOT JAILS".

Forman is a willing agent of the DoE. His job is to exert control over the students while implementing the DOE's budget cuts and other tools of inequality. In a school system that is more than 70 percent black and Latino, these cuts are inherently racist. A decade after the Campaign for Fiscal Equity first won its case against the glaring funding disparities between city and suburban schools, the

cutbacks continue to get worse each year.

At Clara Barton, the systematic racism in U.S. education is especially obvious. Forman was previously a leader of two other schools that closed after he led them to fail. His move to Clara Barton is a clear signal that the DOE doesn't care about the students at this school. Several classes are still taught out-of-license by teachers with inadequate training. Forman has shown no interest in creating more challenging classes in the social studies department. The same room once used for student leadership classes is now designated for detention. Instead of empowering students, he'd rather punish them.

In particular, the principal has done nothing for the huge population of students from Haiti at Clara Barton. The Haitian Club's former advisor found himself repeatedly harassed after the activist group organized anti-racist assemblies and debates. Forman has obstructed the creation of a soccer team, which these students — among many others — have long wanted. The fact is, students from Haiti face harsher discipline than other students at Barton, and often feel picked on and harassed.

So there is absolutely nothing positive the racist Forman has done for Clara Barton.

Cutting Bagels A 'Security Breach'?

In the middle of Regents week, as graduating seniors waited to have their exams graded, there was another attack on teaching staff. Forman used a surveillance camera to determine who had brought a bread knife into the teachers' workroom to cut bagels, supposedly a rules violation. This teacher was called in for a disciplinary meeting, although Forman claimed that he was only "gathering information." We boldly challenged him in this meeting by wearing a sticker produced that weekend: "Here is MY bagel knife! Now I've created a security breach too!" The principal ultimately backed down. But this small victory will not be the end of this war. After all, we know what the real "violation" is: our political organizing in the school.

Forman has made it clear that he will stop at nothing to lash back. He has shown us that the same measures used to oppress students — like the cameras installed throughout the school — can and will be used against teachers, too.

The principal began by attacking communists in October and is now moving against anyone who will stand up or speak out for their students. This pattern of harassment is not limited to Clara Barton, of course. It's part of the DOE's bigger plan to crack down on teachers, especially any who fight back. The two communist teachers received an unsatisfactory rating towards the end of the school year. They are continuing to fight the principal's harassment. Throughout the system, investigators are being called in over the most trivial incidents while thousands of teachers face layoffs. The DOE is attempting to keep us in retreat just when we need to mount a more militant offensive.

We need to follow the advice from a veteran teacher: "We have to keep up the fight! They don't know us if they think we're backing down. We better make people see that an injury to one is an injury to all, and they will be next if they don't stand up now!"

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