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THE **communist**



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OUR FIGHT:

- ✦ PLP fights to smash 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.

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ANOTHER FASCIST TROJAN HORSE

A CRITIQUE OF THE 9/11 TRUTH MOVEMENT

In the last ten years the Truth Movement, those that believe the September 11th terrorist attacks were an “inside job,” has grown from an obscure radio host in Austin, TX to a massively influential movement.¹ By 2006 one poll found that a third of Americans believed in some form of 9/11 conspiracy theories.² A large internet based industry has sprung up around supplying 9/11 conspiracy films, books, music, clothing, and other paraphernalia that has turned men like Alex Jones from a small time radio host into a millionaire.

The explosion of the Truther Movement has also prevented many honest well meaning workers and students from asking serious and probing questions about what brought on the 9/11 attacks and their aftermath. And this is the real danger of the Truth Movement. Yes it is an opportunist business that pedals tragedy as a commodity, but its real crime is that it diverts workers and students from the real struggle against imperialism and delivers them into the hands of the ruling class.

What follows is an analysis of the two most popular Truther films, *Loose Change* and *Zeitgeist* (which is one very long film in two parts), and the Alex Jones media empire from which Truther ideology comes from. This article hopes to expose the Truth Movement for what it is, a Trojan horse filled with racist, hyper-nationalist, and anti-communist politics. And as such the Truth Movement can provide no source of liberation for the working class.

Loose Change: Who Needs Facts?

Loose Change is a film that was released on the internet in 2005, with several revisions that followed, which serves as the “factual” foundation of many Truther myths.³ The film’s exclusive focus on poking holes in the official account of the 9/11 terrorist attacks makes it mandatory viewing for those entering into the Truth Movement. All of the “evidence” presented in this film can be described alternately as quotes taken out of context so as to alter their meaning, photos and video manipulatively displayed so as to misrepresent actual events, wild speculation, or outright direct fabrications.⁴

Just to give a sample of the many ludicrous claims and fabrications in the film, right out of the gate two minutes into the film they describe an exercise where a drone aircraft is tested. By their description the plane has ten takeoffs and thirteen landings; apparently they failed to do the math on that one!⁵ The filmmakers have a similar math error later in the film. To prove that a plane collision cannot knock down a skyscraper they retell the story of an errant B-25 that crashed into the Empire State Building in 1945. As their twisted logic goes, if the B-25 collision did not cause the collapse of the Empire State Building then a 767 which weighs over eight times as much, traveling over three times faster, carrying almost fifteen times more fuel, and colliding with a force ninety-three times greater than that of the B-25 collision could not have possibly brought down the World Trade Center. These examples are clearly far from comparable and the B-25 canard lays bare as either the result of complete ignorance or a deliberate attempt to misrepresent the events on 9/11.

At another point in the film *Loose Change* claims that fires caused by jet fuel could not have reached the 3,000



The creators of *Loose Change*



That the World Trade Center buildings fell at “free-fall speed” is an accepted “fact” in the Truther world, but that claim is again based on deliberate deception. *Loose Change* begins timing the collapse of the South Tower using footage from the angle pictured on the left. What the smoke obscures from that angle is pictured to the right. *Loose Change* allows the tower to collapse for a while before starting their timer in order to create the illusion that it falls at “free-fall speed.”

degrees Fahrenheit required to melt steel. Again this is a deliberately created straw-man. Nobody claimed the towers collapsed because the steel framing melted, they claimed that the steel framing was severely weakened by the incredible heat of the fires which eventually caused it to fail and the building to collapse. The film states sarcastically that these are the only steel framed buildings to ever collapse because of fire.⁸ Another deliberate fabrication, the World Trade Center buildings collapsed not just from a fire, but from the combined effects of massive airliners colliding with the buildings at high speed and the subsequent fires that ensued. But for the sake of argument there have been several steel framed building that have collapsed from fire alone: McCormick Place Exhibition Hall in Chicago (1967), the Kader Factory in Thailand (1993), and a fire led to the partial collapse of the Windsor building in Madrid (2005).

Early in the film *Loose Change* reports that NORAD had been training to intercept hijacked planes in 9/11 type scenarios all the way back in 1999 as some sort of proof that the government had begun planning this attack for years.⁹ Again they deliberately misrepresent their source. The article in question actually said that the training scenario involved international flights (the 9/11 attacks involved domestic flights), that had been hijacked over the Atlantic for the purpose of crashing planes laden with poison or some biological weapon into a city center. It says nothing about using planes as missiles and ramming them into a building. Furthermore the article states that the Pentagon scrapped the training exercises claiming that the scenario was “too unrealistic.”¹⁰

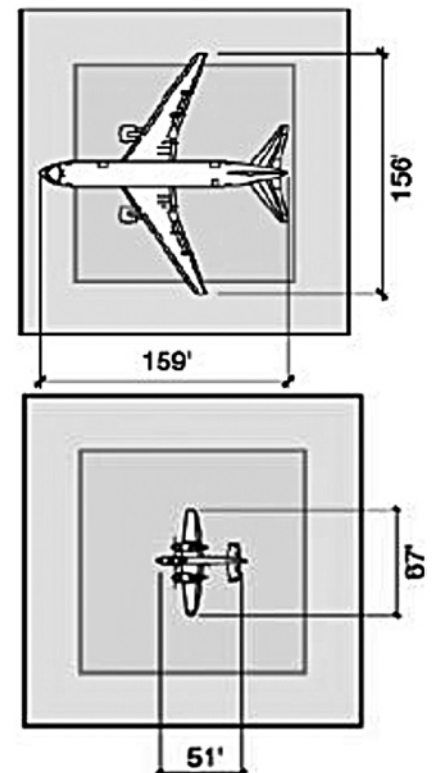
In its effort to debunk the official story regarding the

assertion, one of the photos that they show of the “real” Bin Laden as a comparison with this “fake” Bin Laden struck a *Loose Change* critic as being particularly odd. The photo had been carefully and deliberately cropped by *Loose Change* in order to cut out Bin Laden’s right hand where you can clearly see the same ring and watch that they so vehemently claimed that he could not wear.¹³

The reason for pointing out this small sampling of factual errors in the *Loose Change* film is not to wade into the swamp that is 9/11 conspiracy “science,” but rather to demonstrate that not only are these theories completely ludicrous, but they are based on “evidence” that is deliberately misrepresented or fabricated. If there were only a

collision with the Pentagon *Loose Change* compares the diagram of a Pratt & Whitney JT8D jet engine with wreckage found at the site.¹¹ They correctly point out that the wreckage does not match the components of the diagram. They however fail to mention that the reason for this is that the Boeing 757 aircraft that collided with the Pentagon had Rolls-Royce RB211-535 jet engines not the Pratt & Whitney model they showed. The wreckage does correspond with the correct Rolls-Royce engine.

In a particularly revealing scene in the first edition of *Loose Change* the filmmakers state that the video of Osama Bin Laden claiming responsibility for the attacks had to be a fake because Bin Laden was wearing a ring and a wristwatch.¹² Wearing gold jewelry is forbidden in the Koran, a dictate which *Loose Change* assures the viewer would make it impossible for Bin Laden to be wearing this ring and watch. Besides the utter ridiculousness of this



A size comparison of a 767 (above) and a B-25 (below) illustrates the misdirection used by *Loose Change*

GET TO KNOW TRUTHER "SCIENCE"...

Truther Science vs Real Science

As communists we seek to understand the world through the development of a scientific analysis of events around us and their relationship to the greater political economy of capitalism. We develop hypotheses about the cause of world events and then we test these hypotheses through the careful study of history using dialectical materialism as our guide. This process of testing allows communists to develop theories about the world and how it functions.

Truthers flip this process on its head. They begin at the end by developing their conclusion first. In this case that the WTC was brought down by a controlled demolition, energy weapons, "mini-nukes," etc. This conclusion is indisputable and those that claim otherwise are labeled either hopelessly ignorant ("sheeple" is the term used in Truther circles) or part of the conspiracy. The fact that their conclusions are based not on evidence but on cues imbedded in American culture does not bother the Truther.

Second the Truther goes looking for "evidence" to poke holes in the "official" story. This is a process known as "anomaly hunting" and it is highly unscientific. In this process the Truther looks for something that is either currently not explained in full detail or that has been explained but the Truther is simply ignorant of that explanation. They collect these isolated incidents and then point to them as "proof" of their conspiracy. The Truther demands that every detail be known in a complex event. If one detail is unknown at the moment they throw out the vast mountain of evidence to the contrary, cling to their anomaly, and shout "conspiracy!"

In doing this they are not seeking evidence to test a hypothesis, but evidence to prove a conclusion. In short the evidence does not inform their conclusion, but rather their conclusion informs their interpretation of the evidence therefore tainting their analysis of the event. This can be easily seen in the way that Truthers handle criticism of their evidence. When one of their anomalies is explained they don't pause for even a beat to reflect on why they got their analysis wrong and what it could mean for the whole structure of their argument as a scientific thinker would, rather they go hunting for their next anomaly always firm in their unfounded, foregone conclusion. As a result of this lack of criticism and self criticism the Truther mythology grows at an exponential rate shooting off in a variety of directions. Like the mythical hydra every anomaly that is explained is replaced by two more. Even those anomalies that have been explained time and time again, the fallacious "melted steel" argument for example, end up being recycled back into new arguments. After all the Truther is not interested in evidence or proof, but in the maintenance of a particular world view.

Finally the unscientific nature of Truther science compels the Truther to engage in overtly dishonest argumentation. The Truther feels that the story they have to tell is so critical to humanity and the Truther's need to believe is so important to their sense of self that they frequently and flagrantly manipulate images, deliberately take quotes out of context, and simply lie in order to build a case and win converts to their cause. The Truth Movement is built largely on a foundation of lies like this.

It is no accident that the Truth Movement is awash with Holocaust deniers and other bottom feeders. The working class needs a scientific communist analysis of the world to break the chains of capitalism. The Truth Movement just like all other racist-nationalist niche movements only serves to strengthen capitalism's grip on the working class.

few errors in the film it might be seen as the result of amateurs trying to play detective, but when every claim is provably false a conspiracy begins to take shape. This conspiracy is not the shadowy New World Order conspiracy promulgated by Truthers, but a conspiracy to play on people's unease, cynicism, and fear in order to make a buck. It is no coincidence that the first thing that greets you when you go to the *Loose Change* official webpage is an advertisement to buy a \$20 *Loose Change* t-shirt.

But apart from the crass money grab from the *Loose Change* filmmakers, there is a deeper ideological subtext to the films. The movies help to perpetuate anti-Arab racism and a nationalist myth of American invincibility. At the very end of *Loose Change* an extended *Fox News* interview is aired with University of Wisconsin Truther Kevin Barrett. When pushed during the interview by

the caustic Sean Hannity Barrett makes a revealing statement, "I think you (Hannity) have the bizarre theories. You think it was nineteen guys with box cutters led by a guy on dialysis living in a cave in Afghanistan? That's ridiculous!"¹⁴

This quote from Barrett sums up the ideological weaknesses that pervade Truther thought. His essential argument is that it is ridiculous to think that Arabs, who have been demonized as sub-human primitives in the U.S., could possibly strike a blow, no matter how small, against the United States. This is racist non-sense. The other side of this argument is that since the United States is invincible, a notion that is drilled into our brains by Hollywood from the first time we open our eyes, only an internal cabal of white American men could possibly attack it.

This theme pervades other cultural representations of

GET TO KNOW A TRUTHER...

Architects and Engineers for 9/11 Truth (AE911) Scholars for 9/11 Truth (S911)

AE911 and S911 represent the effort of the Truth Movement to create legitimate fronts for their reactionary message. Both groups seek to counter the critique that early Truthers were in no way qualified to speak to the events of 9/11 by gathering together “experts” to testify on the behalf of the Truth Movement. Despite much bold talk these groups never were able to find the legitimate experts that they sought instead collecting a hodgepodge of frauds, discredited academics, and people whose credentials, to put it politely, are a little sparse. The reason for this failure is that no respected scientific organization or professional group agrees with ridiculous Truther “science.” Expert opinion is near universally in opposition to the Truth Movement.

The sordid history of the short-lived S911 exposes the absurdity of Truther science. S911 was formed by James Fetzer in his downtime from writing on JFK conspiracy theories. Steven Jones, a physicist from BYU, joined shortly after and became the group’s most prominent member. Jones was fired from BYU amidst a firestorm of criticism of the shoddy research methodology permeating his work for the Truth Movement. After only six months of existence a fight broke out between Fetzer and Jones, now serving as co-chairs, over the future direction of this “scholarly” organization. At the center of the fight was S911 member Judy Wood and her theory that no planes hit the WTC and that the towers fell after being attacked by space based energy weapons. This was the quality of the debate that these “scholars” were engaged in.

AE911 was founded less than a year after S911 by architect Richard Gage. The organization engages in all the same non-sense as other Truther groups. They rehash long disproved arguments basing most of their website materials off of the discredited Loose Change movie and the work of David Ray Griffin. The organization claims expertise, but fails to prove that it actually has any. Gage himself, while an architect, has no experience in high-rise building construction or design. But the most notable thing about AE911 is its blatant profiteering on the cynicism and unease created by the terrorist attacks. Gage and AE911 never miss an opportunity to ask for money to fund their crusade. Where does this money go? A 2009 study of AE911’s tax documents showed that Gage took in 21% of AE911s total revenue as his personal salary. (ae911truth.info/wordpress/2010/ae911truth/75450)

American defeat, particularly those of the Vietnam War. For example, in the movie *Rambo* Sylvester Stallone’s unhinged Vietnam vet character goes on a tirade at the climax of the film about how the soldiers wanted to win the war but the government wouldn’t let them. The message is clear, third world Asians couldn’t defeat white soldiers unless whites in the U.S. conspired against them.¹⁵ The Truther claim that Arab terrorists could not have been behind the terrorist attacks is simply a rehashing of this same old racism.

The “inside job” myth relies on an underlying belief in American invincibility. Truthers constantly state that it is inconceivable that the military was caught off guard and unable to scramble fighters to the defense or that it is crazy to believe that American intelligence agencies could be outwitted by Arab terrorists. But as we have learned from the past decade the U.S. military really isn’t the invincible fighting machine that Hollywood would have us believe and our intelligence agencies really aren’t all that efficient. The U.S. is not run by an omniscient X-Files style cabal of men in the shadows able to maintain a decade long conspiracy of silence involving many thousands of people, but rather by mortal men who because of their own internal weaknesses were caught with their pants down on September 11th. Promoting the idea of an invincible, omniscient ruling class can only breed cynicism and is quite frankly, a fantasy.

Worse still *Loose Change* serves to redirect people from

examining the actual important questions about the September 11th attacks. By declaring 9/11 an “inside job” Truthers halt any discussion about American imperialism as the roots of terrorism and global instability before it can even start. Left by the wayside is U.S. intervention in Afghanistan dating back to 1979 (prior to the Soviet invasion) and continuing through the 1980’s and 90’s. Serious analysis of Osama Bin Laden’s demand that the U.S. abandon its bases in Saudi Arabia, bases most Americans did not know existed, gets swept aside replaced by fantasies of domestic betrayal.¹⁶ In the Truther world the whole view of the war on terror becomes a critique not of imperialism, but of nationalism pitting the real super patriots against the shadowy traitors (more on their identity later).¹⁷ In short, Truther myths become a smoke screen for American imperialism.

Zeitgeist: Resurrecting Old Enemies

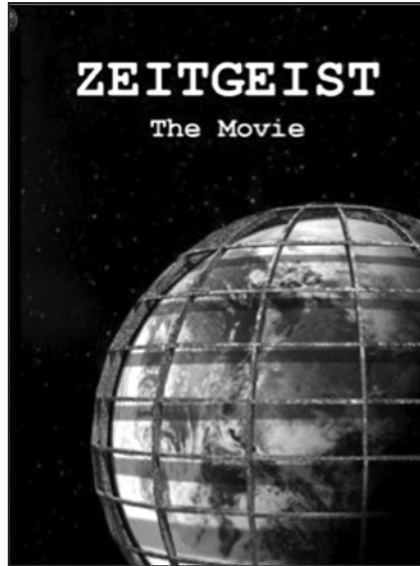
The Zeitgeist film series (*Zeitgeist* and *Zeitgeist: Addendum*) has gained a cult following since the first film premiered on the internet in 2007. Discussions of the films is common in Truther circles and the *Zeitgeist* Movement, which the films have popularized, has claimed a rapidly growing membership of 391,000 people. The films cover topics as diverse as religion, 9/11 conspiracy theories (this section is simply a rehash of *Loose Change*), and the Federal Reserve tying them all together with the all too

familiar theory of an international banking conspiracy pulled straight from the anti-Semitic, anti-communist Protocols of the Elders of Zion. *Zeitgeist* builds on the Truther mythology by beginning to provide an outline of the ultimate villain in the Truther fairy tale.

Like *Loose Change*, the information contained in the *Zeitgeist* films is a mix of gross misrepresentations and outright lies.¹⁸ The film begins with the nonsensical ramblings of some New Age yogi while third rate computer graphics play in the background. This leads into a discussion on religion that can be described as amateurish at best. Just to give a quick example the film tries to draw a connection between astrology and Christianity by connecting the term “God Sun” with “God’s Son.”¹⁹ The only problem with this logic is that the original text of the Bible was not written in English, nor was modern English a language spoken anywhere in the world at the time of the founding of the Christian religion.

The section on religion has generated a lot of interest among young viewers of the film who have become cynical of religious demagogues. But what criticism is it really? Its arguments that Christianity borrows from other cultures and religions is nothing new, although *Zeitgeist* does falsify most of its evidence. This process, called syncretism, is a well documented factor behind Christian expansion and has already been written about much more competently. The idea that Europe borrowed its ideology from Egypt is likewise not particularly controversial, although Martin Bernal’s *Black Athena* covered the subject far more competently twenty five years ago.

What *Zeitgeist* does do with the concept of religion is invert the Marxist understanding of it. Marx wrote that “The religious world is but the reflex of the real world.”²⁰ Religion becomes a reflection, an outgrowth of the class society and its particular stage of development. Hence Christianity can be an ideology for slaves and the poor with revolutionary potential in 50 C.E., but become the religion of the maintenance of slavery in the American South 1,800 years later. The character of religious ideology is determined by the class society and the class struggles that are reproducing it. *Zeitgeist* follows the lead of many wrongheaded reformers before it by declaring religion the ultimate evil in the world, placing the proverbial cart ahead of the horse.²¹ Religion does not “empower men to do evil” as *Zeitgeist* claims, but rather is used as a post-facto justification for real world materialist goals. Religion does not push class conflict, class conflict pushes religion. By turning the Marxist analysis of religion on its head *Zeitgeist* effectively nullifies class conflict as



the basis of dialectical motion. This is not a liberating philosophy, but an imprisoning one.

The second section on 9/11 conspiracy theories is simply a rehash of *Loose Change* with some commentary from neo-fascist Alex Jones thrown in (more on him later). Section three of *Zeitgeist* rounds out the first film and ties it all together by claiming organized religion and the 9/11 terrorist attacks to be elaborate conspiracies created by an international banking cabal hell bent on creating a one world order.

This third section of *Zeitgeist* and the follow up movie *Zeitgeist: Addendum* represents the filmmaker’s effort, and ultimate failure, at doing political economy. The filmmaker begins

his analysis of the banking system with a complete misrepresentation of the nature of money. He would do well to read section one of Marx’s *Capital* to learn how money actually gains value. Instead the labor theory of value is completely ignored for idealist notions of growing debt that has no origin and is reproduced by “magic.”²² The dialectical contradiction of the money commodity and the larger contradictions inherent in capitalism itself are left by the wayside for simplistic mysticism.

Now this is far from a victimless crime. Marx in his identification of a phenomenon he dubbed the “fetishism of commodities” explains how money, as a universal exchange commodity, becomes an abstracted form of socially necessary labor time.²³ In short it becomes a representation of human labor that is made opaque by the process of exchange and ultimately obscures the labor component of value. This is critical for the continuing exploitation of the working class by the capitalist class. Instead of being told that we are exchanging one hour of labor with the capitalist in return for the exchange value of ten minutes of labor time, we are told that we are given a wage. One hour’s work for ten dollars. An exchange that obscures the fact that we produced sixty dollars in that one hour. This disjuncture hides the true nature of capitalist exploitation and reminds of the importance of communists studying and forming study groups around Marx’s *Capital*.

The simplistic analysis of *Zeitgeist* fits in nicely with the libertarian rhetoric of American political culture, but it makes debt the center of economics, supplanting and ultimately denying the reality of class exploitation. This is a dead end for the working class.

The history in *Zeitgeist* and *Addendum* is as bad as the political economy. Claims that the Federal Reserve is a private bank, that the income tax is unconstitutional (as if such things mattered), and that imperialism is a creation



Loose Change and Zeitgeist spend a lot of time dwelling on the “mysterious” collapse of WTC 7. Again deception is at the heart of their argument. They claim no pre-collapse damage to the building while only showing one side of WTC 7. Of course if they were to show the other side of the building they would see the massive gash (above) caused by the collapse of the North Tower. FDNY Captain Chris Boyle reported, “On the north and east side of 7 [the perspective shown by Loose Change] it didn’t look like there was any damage at all, but then you looked on the south side of 7 there had to be a hole 20 stories tall in the building, with fire on several floors. Debris was falling down on the building and it didn’t look good.”

long series of economic crashes in the U.S. and worldwide that dated back to 1873.²⁵ Again *Zeitgeist* obscures and ultimately erases a critical aspect of the Marxist critique of capitalism. Far from being the creation of a few bankers the series of Panics during this period which would become known as the Long Depression were the result of the irreconcilable contradictions at the heart of the capitalist system itself. The falling rate of profit and ensuing crisis of overproduction that precipitated this Depression are well described in Marx’s third volume of *Capital* while the imperialism and war the capitalists would use to get out of it is dealt with in Lenin’s *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. *Zeitgeist* only offers us the tired old boogymen as a replacement for the ultimate failures of capitalism itself. But the working class does not need these distractions which only serve to breathe new life into the decaying capitalist system.

The third part of *Addendum* forgets the first five sections of the *Zeitgeist* mythology to venture into the purely idealist world of the Venus Project a rehash of the anti-communist “technocracy” theories of the 1930’s. These theories sought to write exploitation and class struggle out of history by claiming that world problems could be solved by “competent” technicians and modern technology.

By denying class these modern day mystics ignore the key question of who controls the technology. The 20th century saw an explosion of new technologies, almost all of which were used to either further exploit the working

class or to spread mass terror by arming imperialist states with the latest doomsday weapons. Shortly after the technocracy pseudo-Leftists began formulating this idealist religion the very technology they held up as so pure and liberating was used to instantly vaporize 140,000 people at Nagasaki and Hiroshima (160,000 more would die within five years from the effects of the bombs).

The final section of *Addendum* attempts to tie all these disparate elements back together again in a confusing, nonsensical fit of idealist pseudo-intellectual posturing. The viewer gets reintroduced to the ridiculous international banking conspiracy theory and the film is finished off with some truly bizarre random New Age nonsense about spirituality and oneness.

The *Zeitgeist* film series is an attempt to analyze the world without getting into sticky issues like class-conflict or exploitation. Where the Marxist analysis of political economy is rejected by *Zeitgeist* it begins to erect a new view of the world. This view, infused with the paranoid individualism of modern capitalism, is one of super patriots fighting a cabal of international bankers to take back their country. Students of history will recognize this simply as the latest rehash of the racist Protocols myth (more on this later). The Protocols myth which placed all conflict in the world at the feet of “communist Jews” and their supposed “international banking conspiracy” formed the foundation for German fascism in the 1930’s. It is not surprising then that *Zeitgeist* opens its section on the



Cartoon criticizing Charles Lindbergh's acceptance of the Nazi Cross of the German Eagle medal in 1936. Like Henry Ford, Lindbergh refused to return the medal during the war.

banking system with a long quote from the anti-Semite, Nazi sympathizer Charles Lindbergh.²⁶ In this quote he repeats the vicious lies of the Protocols myth that Jewish bankers pulled Europe and the U.S. into WWI and connived to pull the U.S. into a war with Nazi Germany.²⁷ The film later goes on to anoint the fascist U.S. congressman Louis McFadden as one of the lone defenders of America against the shadow banking interests.²⁸ A staunch supporter of Hitler and the Nazi regime McFadden's much hyped, in *Zeitgeist* at least, 1936 Presidential campaign ran under the slogan "Christianity, not Judaism."²⁹

Alex Jones: The Racist Underbelly of the Truther Movement

Loose Change and *Zeitgeist* are ultimately primers for the paranoid, neo-fascist politics of Alex Jones.³⁰ Jones is a popular radio talk show host and "documentary" film maker based in Austin, TX. He is a New World Order (NWO) conspiracy theorist and founder of the 9-11 Truth Movement. His appeal is largely directed toward disenchanted white, "middle class" youth. His followers range from anti-globalization activists to neo-Nazi skinheads.

Although his ideas may seem ridiculous, Jones has

GET TO KNOW A TRUTHER MYTH... The Federal Reserve

One of the more enduring myths of the white power movement that the Truth Movement was able to bring into the mainstream via Ron Paul is the story that the Federal Reserve is a private bank and that it is part of a larger international banking conspiracy. Federal Reserve conspiracy theories are rooted in the racist Protocols myth and were brought to the fore amongst American reactionaries by the arch-conservative John Birch Society. John Bircher G. Edward Griffin is the author of the foundational Federal Reserve conspiracy text *The Creature From Jekyll Island*.

The creation of a central bank was not the result of some secret conference of New World Order elites, but was rather the result of capitalists trying to cope with the inherent instability of capitalism itself. Forty years into a period of continuing economic crisis (the Long Depression began with the Panic of 1873 and lasted until the First World War) members of the American ruling class began discussing theories on how they could "manage" capitalism. Discussions over the creation of a new central bank predated the Federal Reserve Act by a decade. Capitalists distressed over the worsening boom and bust cycles of capitalism sought to develop an agency that could help manage these crises and stabilize the power and wealth of the ruling class.

The Federal Reserve Act passed in 1913 was the result of these debates over managing capitalism. It should be noted that the development of central banks to manage capitalist crises has occurred in every modern capitalist state in the age of imperialism. It is clear that the need to exercise some control over economic crisis is a critical need of imperialist states.

The functioning of the Federal Reserve in the US is complicated, but no more complicated than other state regulatory regimes. The Federal Reserve is made up of 12 Federal Reserve Banks (based on geographic region) that oversee member banks in their region. In order to become a Fed member bank, these banks have to lease "stock" in the Federal Reserve. This is the source of much of the "Fed is a private bank" confusion. While member banks purchase fed stock it should be noted that they do not get full drawing rights. They lease the stock meaning that they cannot sell it without losing their membership. The reason for setting up this stock system is that it not only helps to capitalize the Fed system but it was also felt that it would help encourage private banks to buy into and become invested in this federal system.

In exchange for purchasing this stock 60% of the seats on the boards of these regional Fed banks are determined by private banks. Again this is not abnormal within federal regulatory agencies. An examination of the EPA will uncover the worst polluters in industry, the FDA is populated by the pharmaceutical industry, and the NLRB is populated with the friends of industry. This is not because of some New World Order conspiracy, but because the state is an extension of capitalist class power itself.

Now the 12 Federal Reserve banks are not free to do whatever they want. They are controlled by a Board of Governors that is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. These are the people that make monetary policy and yes they make it unilaterally, just like every other branch of the state bureaucracy. Being a member of the federal bureaucracy the Federal Reserve and its Board of Governors are subject to multiple yearly audits and are forced to report annually to the General Accounting Office. The Federal Reserve is not a private bank, it is not the creation of a Jewish conspiracy, it is a part of the federal government and an important part of the capitalists' quest to control the natural instability of capitalism itself. A communist critique of the Fed needs to be folded into a critique of capitalism as a whole. Claiming that the Fed is a conspiratorial aberration is simply an apology, and cover, for capitalism itself.



Jason Bermas and Alex Jones promoting their new movie

become highly influential in the last few years. His Facebook page has over 188,500 friends, his radio show is syndicated on over sixty stations and has two million listeners a week, his infowars and prisonplanet websites

receive four million hits a week. He has been endorsed by celebrities Charlie Sheen (before he went crazy) and Rosie O'Donnell, and has appeared in the popular Richard Linklater films *Waking Life* and *A Scanner Darkly*. He has been featured in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Vanity Fair*, *Fox News*, and has had feature articles about him in magazines ranging from *Texas Monthly* to *Hustler*. Jones has been the main organizer behind the Ron Paul presidential runs which in 2008 raised a record one day sum of six million dollars. Jones was also the creator of the now ubiquitous Obama/Joker "socialism" poster.

Jones has drawn people in over the last ten years through his exploitation of Truther issues. Once people are drawn in to his radio shows and movies he hooks people on the Left with his use of anti-globalization and Bush-bashing language and he hooks people on the Right with his appeals to libertarian ideas and down home American racism. Jones' world view can be summarized simply as:

- 9-11 was a "false flag" (staged) operation designed to convince Americans to "give up their freedom"
- It was perpetrated by a conspiracy of

GET TO KNOW A TRUTHER...

David Ray Griffin

David Ray Griffin represents the "respectable" end of the Truth Movement. His books *The New Pearl Harbor* and *Debunking 9/11 Debunking* have become an integral part of the cannon of the Truther religion. While Griffin has gone the farthest to try and maintain the illusion of respectability his work is riddled with all the same flaws and shortcomings of the rest of the Truth Movement.

One of the reasons for this is that Griffin's works largely recycle the tired and well-worn arguments of the original Truthers. A critical analysis of Griffin's *Debunking* book found that of those citations that he cited in the affirmative are almost all from fellow Truthers. This rogues gallery includes Eric Hufschmid who when he is not writing foundational Truther books like *Painful Questions* is busy pursuing his first love, Holocaust Denial. Racist Holocaust Denial is a favorite hobby of Truther Christopher Bollyn who also receives a place of distinction in Griffin's work. Other notables include Judy Wood, James Fetzer, and Steven Jones who were founding members of the doomed Scholars for 9/11 Truth. The group disintegrated when the three could not resolve a disagreement over whether or not the twin towers were brought down by secret "energy weapons" based in space.

Griffin's "science" demonstrates many of the problems in Truther logic. The most prominent, as seen above, is how inbred this subculture is. Griffin came to the Truth Movement after reading Eric Hufschmid's *Painful Questions*. Hufschmid's book was largely inspired by the racist October 2001 article by Jim McMichael *Muslims Suspend the Laws of Physics*. Now McMichael borrowed his accusations largely from Carol Valentine's 911: No Suicide Pilots published two weeks prior. Valentine who was part of the early Alex Jones crowd spent her free time prior to 9/11 engaging in... you guessed it, Holocaust Denial! Along with her 911 article she is also the author of the piece *The American Coup d'état and the War For Jewish Supremacy*.

Griffin's science is a fraud. His sources are compromised and his theories are infused with the paranoia of the white power movement. Griffin's claims have been thoroughly debunked again and again yet he continues on his idiotic quest to claim some legitimacy for the Truth Movement. This is what is important to understand about the Truth Movement, it is not about crafting a legitimate critique of the official story regarding 9/11, it is about shaping a racist world view that obscures the reality of class war and inter-imperialist war with a mythology of race war.

For a debunking of Griffin's *Debunking 9/11 Debunking* see:
 Ryan Mackey, On *Debunking 9/11 Debunking*, Version 2.1, 5/24/08.
www.jod911.com/drg_nist_review_2_1.pdf

omniscient, omnipotent global elites alternately referred to as globalists, Free Masons/Illuminati, Socialists/Communists/ international bankers, and Zionists

- The goal of this devious cabal is to put the whole planet under one world government (the New World Order, or NWO), kill off 80-95% of the population³¹, and enslave the rest

Jones' deception is nothing new however; he is simply rehashing the same lies that have been pushed throughout the last century in order to mobilize the population when capitalism is in crisis in a particular country. On his website he lists two chronologies that map out how this secret cabal has been manipulating governments and populations for the ultimate purpose of creating this New World Order.³² Looking at these chronologies the astute reader quickly realizes that they have heard this story before. The "globalist conspiracy" is simply a rehashing of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, the racist tract created by the Czar's secret police in order to tighten the screws on the Russian police state and attack the Left just before the Russian Revolution.



**Masonic Design:
Israeli Supreme Court or NWO HQ?**

This picture is featured on the prisonplanet website. The pic portrays Tel Aviv, Israel as the home-base of the New World Order, part of the anti-Semitic worldview promoted by Jones.

The Protocols argued that Jews, the easiest population to scapegoat in Russia, had created an elaborate banking scheme to take over the world and create a one world Zionist government. After the Russian Revolution the Protocols were adapted to attack the Soviet Union and workers' movements around the world. Suddenly Marxism and communism became instruments of evil Jewish conspirators in their struggle for global dominance. This fusing of anti-communism with anti-Semitism is outlined in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*,

"With infinite shrewdness the Jew fans the need for social justice... into hatred against those who have been better favored by fortune... In this the Jew keeps up an outcry against international capital

*and in truth he means the national economy which must be demolished in order that the international stock exchange can triumph over its dead body... [Jews] thus give this struggle for the elimination of social evils a very definite philosophical stamp. He establishes the Marxist doctrine."*³³

This fusion allowed capitalists around the world to use racism to attack the communist movement. Henry Ford made the Protocols mandatory reading for his factory employees in the US and his newspaper, which all the employees received regularly, contained editorials connecting the Zionist conspiracy in the Protocols to the communist movement. In many schools throughout the Western world the Protocols were treated as a historical fact and were used to teach anti-communism. This was done despite the fact that a wealth of articles had been written proving the Protocols to be a forgery! These inconvenient truths were ignored by the capitalist class who correctly saw themselves as engaged in a fight against communism for their very survival.³⁴

Jones resurrects the Protocols and uses it as a tool to attack those that would oppose capitalist fascism and war. One of the chronologies on the prisonplanet site written by D.L. Cuddy assures us in its first paragraph that his conspiratorial plot is in no way related to the Protocols. This warning is reminiscent of when someone says to you "I'm not racist but..." and you can be just about 100% sure that something really racist is about to be said. In Cuddy's chronology the conspirators are almost always labeled as being socialist, frequently labeled as being bankers or financiers, and occasionally as socialist bankers. Making a decision based on perceived intolerance for blatant anti-Semitism Cuddy simply replicates Hitler's version of the Protocols without using the term Jew instead relying on the reader, thanks to years of capitalist racist training, to make the connection.

The Protocols form the backbone of Jones' world philosophy. Recognizing that the Protocols can be a tough sell to those who are not so openly



Jones was the creator of the ridiculous Obama "socialism" poster now ubiquitous on the Right. Jones is also one of the final holdouts still pushing the racist Obama birther conspiracy.

GET TO KNOW A TRUTHER... Ron Paul

Texas congressman Ron Paul has shocked political analysts during the last two election cycles with his runaway, out-of-nowhere popularity particularly among youth. With his anti-war, anti-empire statements this self-professed Libertarian has even become a darling of the liberal Left receiving favorable treatment from liberal culture makers such as Bill Maher, Jon Stewart, and the show *Democracy Now*.

What is less known is that Paul's recent popularity comes largely from the Truth Movement and white power circles. Ron Paul has always been heavily endorsed by Alex Jones and has made frequent appearances on Jones' radio show. During the 2008 campaign cycle he also received help from infamous racist Don Black who runs the *Stormfront* website. The website endorsed Paul and even included a donation link for his campaign. A 2008 thread on the site titled "Why We Should Support Ron Paul" featured such arguments as Paul "is the strongest opponent of 'Hate Crime' laws," that Paul was the most anti-immigrant, and that Paul was "the least likely to support government crackdowns on Pro-White organizations, and the most likely to veto any legislation to that effect."

The fact that Paul is adored by Truthers and their friends in the white power movement is not evidence enough on its own to label Paul a racist. His record of working as a Trojan Horse to bring the paranoid fantasies of the white power movement into the mainstream is fairly extensive, however. He is the most prominent proponent of Federal Reserve conspiracy theories that have their roots in the racist Protocols myth and are foundational beliefs of both the Truther and white power movements. Even Paul's anti-imperial statements can be traced to the paranoid New World Order mythology.

During the 2012 election cycle Paul's barely submerged racism began to bubble up to the surface as copies of his old newsletter the Ron Paul Political Report resurfaced. In it Paul discusses paranoid racist fantasies about the "end of white America" and the "coming race war." Among his many racist statements regarding black people, in 1992 after the LA riots Paul wrote, "Order was only restored in L.A. when it came time for the blacks to pick up their welfare checks three days after rioting began... What if the checks had never arrived? No doubt the blacks would have fully privatized the welfare state through continued looting. But they were paid off and the violence subsided." Among his many anti-Semitic remarks, in 1993 he wrote, "Sneaky goddamn Jews are all alike." In 1994 as the world celebrated the end of Apartheid in South Africa Paul lamented the loss of the racist regime stating, "There goes South Africa" and warned of a "South African Holocaust." (The New Republic, 12/23/11; 1/17/12)



Ron Paul posing with Stormfront founder Don Black

committed to racism Jones uses couched language to lure people into following him. On his radio show and in his films Jones simply refers to these conspirators as globalists. By doing this he can

again relabeled Zionists (Jones' not so subtle code word for Jews). This manipulation of the names helps Jones to lure otherwise well meaning kids into being won over a little at a time to racism and fascism.

Globalists/Freemasons/Illuminati/Bankers/ Socialists/Communists/Zionists

An examination of Jones' following reveals that they have received the message loud and clear. If one searches "Jew" and "New World Order" on Jones' prisonplanet forum you get thousands of hits displaying the most vile racist garbage.³⁵ A 2009 film inspired by Alex Jones, *The Conspiracy to Rule the World: From 9/11 to the Illuminati*, begins by asking the viewer, "Are we being controlled? And who is controlling us?" It then answers the question moments later by affirming the legitimacy and correctness of the Protocols document.³⁶ An incoherent and rambling article on the prisonplanet site "details" the Jewish NWO conspiracy. Commenting on Russia the author states, "The fact is that Yeltsin was a hired tool whose job it was to turn Russia's wealth over to the same cartel of Jewish racketeers who controlled Clinton."³⁷

Frequent contributor for Jones, Henry Makow, explicitly states that the NWO conspiracy is the work of Jews,

pose as just another anti-corporation, anti-globalization advocate. For those who listen and watch more carefully he identifies the globalists as members of secret orders such as the Freemasons and the Illuminati. For readers who delve still deeper into his websites the terminology changes again and the conspirators are labeled socialists, communists, and bankers. If you delve still further into his prisonplanet webpage and read into the articles that he has collected from other authors and those that have been sent in to him you will find the conspirators once

*"To all appearances Jews have a disproportionate role in the Illuminati New World Order... Many secular Jews became radicals as they tried to replace their lost religion with belief in a worldly utopia. The Illuminati were able to dupe them with their fraudulent Communist promise."*³⁸

Makow on his own blog (amongst his sea of Hitler apologia), frequently visited by Jones fans, goes further stating that the "Illuminati are a loose alliance of Jewish finance and the British/America/European aristocracy" and that they were the creators of the Soviet Union.³⁹ In another article featured on prisonplanet Makow argues that the Protocols are authentic and that the Israeli Supreme Court building is the NWO headquarters.⁴⁰ While Makow complains that Jews/communists/Illuminati ruined Nazi Germany for him another Jones contributor, Albert Burns, explains how the Jewish/Soviet conspiracy infiltrated the highest levels of American government. This he says vindicates the work of the racist John Birch Society and the McCarthy witch hunts.⁴¹ Attack pieces on Rahm Emanuel and William Kristol on prisonplanet derisively refer to each as a "committed Jew" and a "Jewish Trotskyite."⁴²

Jones can claim all he wants that he is not an anti-Semite, the fact that his site is literally wallowing in the gutter of anti-Semitic racism speaks for itself. He has even featured appeals on his website that refer to the vile racist scum David Irving and Ernst Zundel (the world's two most infamous Holocaust deniers and Hitler apologists) as political prisoners "wasting away in prison."⁴³

Not content to utilize only one infamous racist tract Jones, in his analysis of the immigration issue, invokes the book *The Turner Diaries*. Written under the pseudonym Andrew MacDonald in 1978 by Dr. William Pierce, founder of the white power group the National Alliance, *The Turner Diaries* depicts a future race war in which a guerrilla white separatist group called "the Order" engages in a civil war in the U.S. during which all "non-white races" are ethnically cleansed.

Immensely popular in the white power subculture this book is said to have been the inspiration behind the Oklahoma City bombing, the murder of radio show host Alen Berg, and the dragging death of James Byrd. The antagonists in the book are the Zionists who aspire to create a New World Order devoid of white people. One of the NWO methods for combating white resistance and fomenting this move towards one world governance is to open up the U.S./Mexico border in an effort to provoke a race war which the Zionists could then simply mop up after. This theme is repeated almost verbatim by Alex Jones as he discusses the need to shut down the U.S./Mexico border.

According to Jones, Chicano groups such as MEChA are in league with rebel groups across the Mexican border in order to bring about a Reconquista. Under the title



the Plan de San Diego these groups plan to invade and occupy the Southwestern United States and create a "Communist military dictatorship."⁴⁴ However, Jones warns that this is all a trick perpetrated by the globalists, aka Zionists. The Zionists are using these Chicano nationalist groups to provoke a race war in the Southwest U.S. that would justify their military occupation and creation of concentration camps for U.S. citizens.⁴⁵ This reasoning forms the basis for Jones' support of the fascist Minute Men and racist anti-immigrant laws.

For Jones and his followers immigrants from Central America are not victims of capitalism simply looking for work, but armed criminals and rapists hell bent on attacking white America. In one of his trademark "spontaneous" outbursts on his radio show Jones referred to immigrant workers as an "invading army" that is "above the law" being used by the NWO to attack the American people. He later elaborated on this theory stating that the NWO is being run by the "Rothschild banking cartel" (long a favorite target of anti-Semites) which is dead-set on creating and exploiting "white slaves." In a move to bring the narrative back to the Protocols Jones again began to fling around the label of "socialist bankers."⁴⁶

Another theme from *The Turner Diaries* that Jones likes to employ is the idea that the Zionists are trying to disarm us through gun control legislation in order to make us more susceptible to invasion. The race war in Pierce's book is started by the Cohen Act (one of many anti-Semitic references) which makes gun ownership illegal. Jones sympathizes and frequently laments the increased difficulty in obtaining firearms for hyper nationalist, uber-patriots besieged by an "invasion" from Mexico.⁴⁷

Jones sees the source of the plot to take away gun rights as being the Israeli lobby in the U.S. (this is lifted verbatim from *The Turner Diaries*).⁴⁸ He claims that the NWO and their government lackeys are moving to "legalize" immigrant workers in order to create an anti-gun rights voting block. The reason for immigrant support

GET TO KNOW A TRUTHER...**Joseph Farrell**

Living on the periphery of the Truth Movement but still exercising sizable influence is alternative “historian” Joseph Farrell. Farrell’s bizarre world view can be summed up as: 1) an ancient race of aliens once had a highly advanced civilization on Earth 30,000 years ago, 2) this ancient society was destroyed in a “cosmic war,” 3) the alien diaspora integrated and interbred with human society, and 4) these aliens, now divided into good and bad factions, formed secret societies (Free Masons, Illuminati, etc) to regain their ancient technology.

As always the devil is in the details of Farrell’s ridiculous story. In an interview for his book *Babylon’s Banksters* on the *Byte Show* (10/1/11) Farrell discusses the current whereabouts of these aliens. He mentions that Europeans, particularly those from Northern Europe, have the most mixed blood out of all the human “races.” He casually mentions that Africans have the purest or most “human” blood. His catch, the “mix” in European blood is actually the result of inter-breeding with these super advanced aliens. As evidence of the “racial” relationship between Europeans and the aliens he argues that around the world all the “civilizing gods” are white. These gods of myth of course represent ancient contact with these aliens. A quick perusal of the racist Stormfront message boards show how grateful the white power movement is to Farrell for concocting an alternative to the Out of Africa thesis of human origins.

Along with his theory of the origins of “white supremacy,” which Farrell openly admits to borrowing from Nazi Aryan race theory, Farrell also builds on the Protocols myth. At the head of the bad faction of aliens he places the Rothschild family, that favorite whipping boy of anti-Semites everywhere. In his book *Babylon’s Banksters* he talks about how this bad faction with its “oriental” roots created the banking system in order to enslave the human race.

He traces the rise of the Rothschilds to the fall of the Roman Empire. Arguing that Rome collapsed because of the increasing “orientalization” of Roman blood. Regretfully noting that Romans did not have the same hang-ups about “miscegenation” that we have today, Farrell argues that Roman inter-breeding with their slaves meant the diminution of Roman blood that was “99% oriental” at the time of Rome’s fall. The Rothschilds then took their banking empire from Rome to England where they currently control the international banking conspiracy. This is of course simply a restatement of the racist Protocols myth.

It is easy to dismiss Joseph Farrell as just another racist lunatic, but his influence is greater than it might seem on the surface. Farrell and his research partner Richard Hoagland are frequent guests on disturbingly popular radio shows like *The Alex Jones Show* and *Coast to Coast AM*. Much of the pseudo-religion espoused in the popular *Zeitgeist* film series is borrowed from Farrell. Silly ancient alien theories pioneered by Farrell among others are the basis of the popular *Ancient Aliens* series on the ironically named History Channel. His fetishizing of Nazism and Nazi technology plays an important role in buttressing the “intellectual” side of the modern white power movement. And finally it is clear that Farrell’s book Roswell and the Reich was one of the influences in hack journalist Annie Jacobsen’s widely publicized anti-communist book *Area 51*. Despite Jacobsen’s ridiculous claims the book was favorably reviewed on NPR, Democracy Now, The Daily Show, and the New York Times among others with only Popular Mechanics denouncing it in the popular press.

for the anti-gun measures for Jones is of course to lay the groundwork for their Plan de San Diego plot.⁴⁹

The racist and anti-communist underpinnings of Jones’ theories about the New World Order become even more obvious once his sources are closely examined⁵⁰:

- His Prison Planet website features 25 articles from Christopher Bollyn, 52 articles from Henry Makow, and over 1,000 articles from Kurt Nimmo. These men are all Holocaust deniers who feel that the extermination camps were fabrications that the Jews created to manipulate world governments into having sympathy for the Jewish people. All have written articles defending infamous Holocaust deniers Ernst Zundel (author of the pamphlet *The Hitler We Loved And Why*) and David Irving.
- The American Free Press is cited over 1,400 times. This “news” source is known for its anti-Semitic slant and was founded and owned by Willis Carto, a neo-Nazi Holocaust denier.
- William Norman Grigg and William F. Jasper combine for 53 articles on the website. Grigg and Jasper are both editors of *The New American*, the magazine of the John Birch Society a group created to attack suspected communists in 1958. The John Birch Society fought against the Civil Rights Movement frequently accusing its leaders of being communists. Today the John Birch Society continues along much the same path advocating for stronger police monitoring and repression of leftist groups and promoting racism against Hispanic people under the guise of “immigration reform.”

- NewsMax and the Texas Eagle Forum combine for 238 articles. NewsMax is an ultra-conservative, anti-communist online news source. It attacks feminists and environmentalists as communists claiming that they want to turn the US into the “new Kremlin.”⁵¹ The Texas Eagle Forum is an ultra-conservative religious lobbying group that argues that environmentalism is the new communism and that Christianity is the birthplace of capitalism (pro-Christian = pro-capitalism; anti-capitalist = anti-Christian).⁵²
- Another favorite news source of Jones is World Net Daily which is cited 119 times on Prison Planet. This “news” website has such esteemed contributors as Pat Buchanan, Jerry Falwell (thankfully now dead), disgraced racist baseball player John Rocker, and Ann Coulter. One of its contributors, Jesse Lee Peterson, was once quoted as saying, “about five years ago ... I stated that if whites were to just leave the United States and let blacks run the country, they would turn America into a ghetto within ten years ... I gave blacks too much credit. It took a mere three days for blacks to turn the Superdome and the convention center into ghettos, rampant with theft, rape and murder.”⁵³
- Jerome Corsi is cited in dozens of articles on Jones’ site. A recent addition to the Jones universe Corsi is probably best known for his tireless work in keeping the racist Obama birther myth alive. A recent study released in 2011 proved the strong correlation between racism and belief in the birther conspiracy.⁵⁴
- A constant guest on Jones’ radio show Bob Chapman has also contributed over 20 articles to Jones’ website. Chapman considers himself a close personal friend of the Le Pen family in France.⁵⁵ The Le Pen’s spearheaded the return of openly fascist political parties in Europe in the 1980’s. Patriarch Jean-Marie Le Pen was famous for running for the presidency under the racist slogan, “three million unemployed means three million immigrants too many.” A position that both Jones and Chapman have referred to as “sensible.”⁵⁶

Jones, far from being a lowly underdog fighting against a vast criminal conspiracy as Richard Linklater portrays him in *A Scanner Darkly*, is an opportunist who exploits the most vile racist filth in order to bring in \$1.5 million in yearly profits. Living not in a bunker, but in a \$800,000 home in the Austin suburbs Jones sells his cynical vision to youth and adults who have real problems.⁵⁷ Instead of solutions Jones hawks gold, survival food (freeze dried

meals for after the apocalypse), gas powered generators for combating “growing socialism,” and a world view that leaves the capitalist class and their exploitative system completely unquestioned.

A quick survey of the comments (which are typical for Jones’ site) that followed a story reposted on Jones’ website about the fact that minority toddlers now outnumber white toddlers in the U.S. shows the effect that Jones has on his listeners. RosePink writes, “A White American would resist a non-White America!” Bastet777, “Operation Wetback 2012. Well I can dream...” Interplod mentions the account of a Muslim man in Britain taking offense at being called an “ethnic minority” because he was born in Britain and so should be considered British. Interplod then channels Goebbels and replies, “Is a dog born in a stable a horse?”⁵⁸

Left Abdication Allows Flourishing of New Right

The question must be asked, how did a movement like the Truth Movement with all its roots in old, presumed dead racist mythology manage to attract millions to its ideas? Indeed many well meaning, honest workers and students have been seduced by the epic mythmaking of films like *Loose Change* and men like Alex Jones into



believing in some of the vilest racist filth. What has made this coup for the capitalist class possible has been the abdication of the Left following the collapse of the old communist movement.

With no powerful center like the Soviet Union or communist China and the collapse of the communist led social movements in the capitalist states the capitalist class has been allowed to control the narrative of world events. Today, moreso than ever, workers are forced to view the world through the twisted prism of capitalist ideology. Capitalist individualism, nationalism, and racism form the basis of the Truther Movement's mass appeal. Without a communist movement of sufficient size and influence to push back against these ideas they are given free reign to corrupt the working class.

This is why Progressive Labor Party has always emphasized the political in class struggle. The battle between the capitalist class and revolutionary communism is a political struggle where the battleground exists just as much in the worker's mind as in the factories or streets. Capitalism's current domination of the world of ideas means that when workers get disgruntled and angry about the very real problems exploitation creates in their lives they can easily become subsumed in capitalist "conspiracy theories" like those put out by Truthers that not only fail to combat capitalism, but rather retrench capitalist power.

Progressive Labor Party urges those in the working class that are angry to be skeptical of the lies the ruling class feeds them, but also to be scientific in our own analysis of events. This means participating in collective study groups that seek to glean lessons from the great communist works of our past (Marx, Lenin, Mao, etc.) while discussing how to use dialectics to understand the problems of the present.

Real Conspiracies vs. Racist Myths

One does not have to go to the lengths of the Jones' clique to find conspiracies in the world today. Indeed many conspiracies surround the events of 9/11. But we need to be scientific in our examination of those events

in order to come to an understanding that is liberating for the working class. Listed below are some important facts about the 9/11 attacks that there has been an actual conspiracy of silence around⁵⁹:

- Osama Bin Laden and his Al Qaeda terrorist organization were created and funded by the CIA during the Soviet-Afghan war of the 1980's.
- Saddam Hussein was an American CIA asset and direct ally of the U.S. all the way up to the first Gulf War in 1991.
- The Taliban were American allies, frequently called "Unocal's mercenaries." The U.S. supported the Taliban regime all the way up to 2000 when they became convinced that the Taliban could not control all of Afghanistan.
- The demands of Al Qaeda in the aftermath of 9/11 were political, not religious or "civilizational" as we were told. Bin Laden, a wealthy Saudi nationalist, demanded that the U.S. remove its troops that it had stationed in Saudi Arabia and pull out of the Middle East altogether.

The conspiracy on the part of the government and the media to hide these important details (among many others) represents a real conspiracy to hide the reality of inter-imperialist conflict from the working class. Uncovering the ruling class' imperialist agenda as PLP has done for decades is an empowering act. It can reveal the contradictions within the capitalist system and drive home the need for the creation of a revolutionary workers state. This analysis, achieved through the scientific analysis of both current events and the histories that underpin them, is liberating for the working class. The false analyses of the Truther Movement that rely on the constant repetition of old racist lies and tired appeals to jingoist nationalism only further retrenches the power of the capitalist class and tightens the chains around workers' necks. This is why as communists we must fight the fascist leaders of the Truth Movement like Alex Jones and reach out to our friends in the working class who have been seduced by the Truth Movement and reveal its rotten core.



¹ As this article will not concern itself in refuting all the various claims made by Truthers (a Quixotic quest by itself since like the mythical hydra every debunked Truther claim seems to give birth to two more equally outrageous claims) for a point by point debunking of Truther claims see the book put out by Popular Mechanics. The Editors of *Popular Mechanics, Debunking 9/11 Myths: Why Conspiracy Theories Can't Stand Up to the Facts*.

² *Scripps News*, "Third of Americans Suspect 9-11 Government Conspiracy," 8/1/06.

³ *Loose Change* has had four subsequent revisions since its release in 2005. This article deals with the content in the 2nd Edition of the film which seemed to get the greatest circulation.

⁴ For point by point rebuttals of *Loose Change*'s "facts" see *Screw Loose Change: Not Freakin' Again Edition* available on google video and www.loosechangeguide.com.

⁵ *Loose Change*: 2nd Edition Recut (LC from here on), 00:02:19.

⁶ *LC*, 00:31:56. For the sake of comparison a B-25 weighs 33,500 lbs, carries 670 gallons of fuel, and in this crash was traveling at 150 mph. The 767s that collided with the World Trade Center were 280,000 lbs, carrying 10,000 gallons of fuel, and traveling in excess of 500 mph at impact.

⁷ *LC*, 00:36:52.

⁸ *LC*, 00:31:00.

⁹ *LC*, 00:02:40.

¹⁰ *USA Today*, "NORAD Had Drills Eerily Like Sept. 11th," 4/19/04.

¹¹ *LC*, 00:19:33.

¹² *LC*: First Edition, 00:57:57.

¹³ *Screw Loose Change: Not Freakin' Again Edition*, 02:29:00.

¹⁴ *LC*, 01:22:20.

¹⁵ For more on the cultural reconception of Vietnam and the role of racism and sexism in recasting America's defeat see Jerry Lembcke's *The Spitting Image* and *Hanoi Jane*.

¹⁶ Clear analysis of the effects of U.S. imperialism on international terrorism can be found in Mahmood Mamdani's *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim* and Ahmed Rashid's *Taliban*.

¹⁷ Asked about the Truth Movement Noam Chomsky astutely noted the movements usefulness to American imperialist designs stating that he would not be surprised in 10 years to find out that it was created by the FBI. While the accusation is simply speculation it does highlight the great asset Truthers are to the imperialist state.

¹⁸ A point for point refutation of the non-sense spouted in the *Zeitgeist* films can be found here <http://conspiracyscience.com/articles/Zeitgeist/>

¹⁹ *Zeitgeist: The Movie*, 00:15:00. These linguistic gymnastics continue for another fifteen minutes from here.

²⁰ Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, (New York: International Publishers, 1967), p 79.

²¹ *Zeitgeist: The Movie*, 00:37:00.

²² *Zeitgeist: The Movie*, 01:17:30; *Zeitgeist: Addendum*, part 1.

²³ Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, (New York: International Publishers, 1967), p 71-83.

²⁴ *Zeitgeist: The Movie*, 01:19:40.

²⁵ The Panic of 1873 was followed by the Panic of 1884, then the Panics of 1893 and 1896, followed by the Panic of 1901 and finally the Panic of 1907.

²⁶ *Zeitgeist: The Movie*, 01:14:28.

²⁷ Lindbergh, an ardent supporter of the Nazi regime, was not against war altogether, rather he urged the West to aid the Nazis in a war of annihilation against the Soviet Union which he saw as the source of the Jewish conspiracy.

²⁸ *Zeitgeist: The Movie*, 01:25:30.

²⁹ Robert Michael, *A Concise History Of American Antisemitism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005) p 142, 180.

³⁰ *Loose Change* producer Jason Bermas even got his own internet radio show on the Alex Jones' infowars network after making *LC*. Though the show was canceled in 2010 he still serves as a fill-in host for Jones' own radio show. As noted earlier *Zeitgeist* uses liberal doses of Jones' radio and film content. *Zeitgeist* creator Peter Joseph even received a rare, though mildly combative, two hour interview on the Jones' radio show to promote *Addendum*. *Alex Jones Radio Show*, 10/15/08.

³¹ Paul Joseph Watson, "The Population Reduction Agenda for Dummies," *Prisonplanet.com*, 6/26/09, retrieved 6/20/11. There is little reason given for why they would want to do this other than that they are "evil," though one wonders who is going to work for all those "globalists" once all the workers are dead?

³² D.L. Cuddy, "A Chronological History of the New World Order," *Prisonplanet.com*, retrieved 5/30/11; "Timeline to Global Governance," *Prisonplanet.com*, retrieved 6/20/11.

³³ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, (New York: Mariner Books, 1999), p 319.

³⁴ For more on the twisted history of the Protocols see, Debra Kaufman, Gerald Herman, James Ross, and David Phillips, eds., *From the Protocols of the Elders of Zion to Holocaust Denial Trials: Challenging the Media, Law and the Academy*.

³⁵ Search of prisonplanet forum for terms "Jew" and "New World Order," 6/20/11.

³⁶ *The Conspiracy to Rule the World*, 00:02:00. The filmmakers were so inspired by Jones that they even have a gag called the "Alex Jones Announcement." *Conspiracy*, 01:28:30.

³⁷ "The Next Gaza," *Prisonplanet*, 1/20/09, retrieved 6/20/11.

³⁸ Henry Makow, "Why Do the Illuminati Hate Jews?" *Prisonplanet*, 10/13/07, retrieved 9/1/09.

³⁹ Henry Makow, "Bormann Ran Hitler for the Illuminati," *Save the Males* blog, 5/4/09, retrieved 6/20/11.

⁴⁰ Henry Makow, "Protocols Forgery Argument is Flawed," *Prisonplanet*, 12/15/03, retrieved 6/19/11.

⁴¹ Albert Burns, "Reds in America: Conspiracy to Rule the World," *Prisonplanet*, 1/21/03, retrieved 6/19/11.

⁴² "Rahm Emanuel: Attack Dog, Policy Wonk, Committed Jew," *Prisonplanet*, 11/10/08, retrieved 6/20/11; "American Exceptionalism is Just More NWO Rhetoric," *Prisonplanet*, 6/17/11, retrieved 6/20/11.

⁴³ Ted Pike, "Democrat Control Means Hate Bill Will Pass," *Prisonplanet*, 11/15/06, retrieved 6/20/11; Kurt Nimmo, "American Politicos Campaign for Likudnik Total War Against the Palestinians," *Prisonplanet*, 1/26/07, retrieved 6/20/11.

⁴⁴ Paul Joseph Watson, "Racist Mexican Gangs "Ethnic Cleansing" Blacks in LA," *Prisonplanet*, 1/22/07, retrieved 6/26/11.

⁴⁵ Ibid; Alex Jones, "The New World Order Elite has Big Plans for Arnold," *Prisonplanet*, 9/4/03, retrieved 6/26/11.

⁴⁶ *Alex Jones Radio Show*, 5/16/11. With record numbers of deportations (see *The Communist*, Spring 2011) one wonders what "law" Jones' believes immigrants are above. This is just one example of how Jones turns reality on its head in his racist paranoid fantasy.

⁴⁷ Kurt Nimmo, "DHS Proposes US Gun Laws to Fight Mexican Drug Cartel Violence," *Prisonplanet*, 3/12/09, retrieved 6/26/11; Aaron Dykes, "Mexican President Wants to Disarm Americans," *Prisonplanet*, 5/21/10, retrieved 6/26/11.

⁴⁸ *Alex Jones Radio Show*, 5/24/11.

⁴⁹ *Alex Jones Radio Show*, 5/16/11.

⁵⁰ These numbers come from an examination of the prisonplanet website 6/2/11.

⁵¹ NewsMax, "UNESCO: Strangle This Monster in its Crib," 6/18/03.

⁵² *Texas Eagle Forum*, "Free Market Capitalism: Obama's Scapegoat," 5/3/10. They complain that Americans' "anti-capitalism" comes from their lack of instruction in economics in school. Although it would seem to be the Texas Eagle Forum that needs a lesson in both economics and history as Christianity predates capitalism by over 1,000 years.

⁵³ *World Net Daily*, "Moral Poverty, A Black Man's Comments," 9/21/05.

⁵⁴ *USA Today*, "Study: Racial Prejudice Plays Role in Obama Citizenship Views," 5/1/11.

⁵⁵ Chapman gives a loving account of his relationship with Le Pen on the Jones' radio show. *Alex Jones Radio Show*, 5/20/11.

⁵⁶ Richard Wolin, *The Seduction of Unreason: The Intellectual Romance with Fascism from Nietzsche to Postmodernism*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), p 259. Le Pen also participates in a form of Holocaust denial in which he regularly downplays and minimizes both the importance and the consequences of the Holocaust. Ibid, p 272. Many on Jones' site have demonstrated an affinity for Le Pen's neo-Nazi politics. Paul Joseph Watson and Alex Jones, "The Fruits of Globalization: Rotten to the Core," *Prisonplanet*, 11/8/05, retrieved 6/26/11.

⁵⁷ *Texas Monthly*, "Alex Jones is About to Explode," March, 2010.

⁵⁸ Reader responses to the story "Babies Born to Ethnic Minorities Outnumber Number of White Toddlers for First Time in U.S. History," *Prisonplanet*, 6/23/11, retrieved 6/26/11.

⁵⁹ Some good books on the U.S. relationship with the Middle East: Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror*; Michael Klare, *Rising Powers, Shrinking Planet: The New Geopolitics of Energy*; Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban*; and Research Unit for Political Economy, *Behind the Invasion of Iraq*.

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF HAITI

The history of Haiti provides lessons for all working people. Haiti was born of slave rebellion and makes clear the slavery and racism were essential elements of the foundation of capitalism itself. The Haitian working class has also experienced some of the most vicious exploitation by imperialism, both direct and indirect. Yet since Haitian workers rose up to abolish slavery in the 1790's, the Haitians have fought back with militancy, fighting for reform after reform in the effort to free themselves from exploitation. But time and time again, these reforms failed. This history illustrates the most important lesson for all workers: that only communism can end exploitation and put the working class in control of their own lives.

Hispaniola and the Birth of Capitalism

Haiti is located on the island of Hispaniola, the island that Columbus first landed upon and claimed for Spain in 1492. Some 3 million Taino people lived there at that time, but within a decade disease and brutal slavery, all part of a deliberate genocide on the part of mainly Spanish Europeans, had wiped out the entire population. By 1625 the Spanish were more focused on their conquests of Mexico and Peru. French pirates took control of the eastern part of the island. In the eighteenth-century, this area, which the French called Saint-Domingue, became the world's richest sugar colony, the crown jewel of the French Empire, all based off the labor of slaves imported from Africa.

By the 1790's, some 30,000 French and 20,000 mixed-race free people supervised 500,000 enslaved workers in Saint-Domingue. The death rate was so high that new Africans were constantly being imported. In fact, the majority of slaves in Saint-Domingue had been born in Africa, many in the Kongo region. There were also 5,000 or more "maroons," former slaves living in liberated zones



in the mountains and waging frequent warfare against the slave masters to maintain their independence.

Saint Domingue and other Caribbean colonies were a locus of what Marx called "primitive accumulation"—a process that included the theft of land from the population of the Americas, the enclosures that forced English workers off the commons, as well as the violent expropriation of the bodies and labor of people from Africa. The profits extracted from the super-exploitation of enslaved sugar workers and the trade networks that sugar production spawned (including the slave trade itself) produced vast wealth for both French merchant capitalists and British industrial capitalists. This "fearful and painful expropriation of the mass of people"—including the enslaved workers of Saint-Domingue—funded the development of manufacturing and the markets necessary for sustained industrial production and capitalist development.¹

The sugar plantations also provided a model of new forms of work. In fact, the enslaved workers of Saint-Domingue were among the most industrialized workers in the eighteenth-century world. They built sophisticated irrigation works, operated massive mills, and manufactured barrels and metal goods, as well as cultivating food crops for themselves and sugar for their owners. This production regime required both an elaborate division of labor and extensive organization and coordination among the work force.²

The Fight to Destroy Slavery

While school books point to the rhetoric of the American and French revolutions as inspiring struggles for freedom, the most profound fight of the 18th century came from the enslaved workers of Saint-Domingue. As the newly independent United States expanded slavery, the working class of Saint-Domingue rose up to take its freedom. In 1804, Haiti became the second independent republic in the western hemisphere, and the only country to be established as a result of a slave rebellion.

The movement that abolished slavery and led to the independence of Haiti began during the French Revolution. The French Revolution was a bourgeois revolution against the limits imposed by historic feudal privileges. The merchant capitalists of Bordeaux and Nantes, who organized the French slave trade and whose wealth was tied to Saint-Domingue, were among those most active in the initial phases of the Revolution. The bourgeoisie raised the banner of equality, which to them meant more power in the government and more power to shape trade in their favor.³

The banner of equality was then taken up by Saint-Domingue's *gens de couleur*, the mixed-race free people. Many of the *gens de couleur* were French-educated property owners, often slave-owners, who operated coffee plantations in the southern and western parts of the colony. They demanded the same rights of French citizenship that were given to other property owners, including the right to vote. These demands were initially rejected by the large white sugar planters and their allies, who saw racial divisions as key to maintaining slavery. Leaders of the *gens de couleur* argued that class unity (of all slave-owners) was more important than race in maintaining slavery and pointed to their role in the militias that enforced slavery.

As this debate raged, enslaved workers organized to claim their own freedom. The slave insurrection began in mid-August 1791, when 200 slave-delegates from plantations throughout the northern sugar region of Saint-Domingue met at what their owners thought was a "dinner." Many of these delegates were slaves who worked as slave drivers, overseers, and skilled artisans on the plantations, and as such had been granted the privilege of travel to such events. This group planned for an uprising to begin later that week when owners would be in the regional capital of Cap Français (now Cap-Haïtien) for a political meeting.

In the third week of August, slaves rose up, killing their white owners and mill supervisors, burning sugar mills and cane fields, smashing manufacturing equipment—that is destroying all the tools of exploitation. Only their own homes and garden plots were spared. The insurrection involved men and women, African-born and creole, overseers and field workers, slaves from sugar plantations and from upland coffee plantations.

Within 8 days, 184 plantations had been destroyed. By late September, 200 sugar plantations and 1200 coffee plantations had been sacked, and at least 20,000 (by some estimates 80,000) were in the insurgent camps. By 1793, insurgents had networks of communication throughout Saint-Domingue and the rest of the Caribbean.⁴

In 1791, the demand to end of slavery was expressed in a variety of political forms. Some thought that the king of France had extended protections against the most brutal practices of the planters, and thus expressed loyalty to the king. Some used religious ceremonies to protect their rebellion, an aspect of the insurgency that became a major part of Haitian national mythology.⁵ Many—and sometimes the same people—adopted the rhetoric of the French Revolution with its call for universal rights. But the main source of success was the early organizing and the careful planning of groups of slaves from different regions, and the discipline these industrialized agricultural workers displayed as a military force during the ensuing twelve years of armed struggle.

By 1792, the French Revolution had entered a more radical phase, deposing the king and considering war against all monarchs. As the large sugar planters of Saint-Domingue fled to support the royalist opposition, the Jacobin French commissioner, Léger-Félicité Sonthonax, opened political offices and the army's officer corps to *gens de couleur*. A racially integrated delegation was selected to represent Saint-Domingue in the National Assembly in Paris. Then in 1793, the king of France was executed, and Republican France found itself at war with Spain and Great Britain, the other major colonial powers in the Caribbean. The on-going slave rebellion became a force in the inter-colonial warfare.

The Spanish in Santo Domingo, the eastern half of Hispaniola (now the Dominican Republic) recruited Toussaint Louverture, Dessalines, and other leaders of the slave insurgency to their army with offers of



Haitian Revolution, Battle of Vertières, 1803

HAITI 1492 - 1806

• 1492

Christopher Columbus lands and claims the island of Hispaniola for Spain

• 1625-1650

First French settlements on Haiti are established

• 1700's

The French colony of Saint Domingue is the most lucrative colony in the world, at this time, more lucrative than the 13 Colonies. Its slave-produced tropical crops – sugar, rum, cotton, tobacco, and indigo – generated great wealth. Near the end of the 18th century, 500,000 to 700,000 people, mainly of western African origin, were enslaved by the French.

• 1791

Haitian Revolution begins when a group of slaves gather at Bois-Caïman in the northern part of the colony

• 1804

Jean-Jacques Dessalines declared Haiti independent on January 1, after crushing the French army Napoleon sent to re-enslave Haiti. Over half the people in Haiti die during 1791-1804.

• 1804-1806

The US and other countries begin an embargo of trade from Haiti

freedom and land. Britain, on the other hand, acted to protect sugar profits and to gain more territory for exploitation by invading and occupying southern and western Haiti (the region closest to its sugar colony of Jamaica). There they both enforced slavery and reinstituted race-based restrictions on the *gens de couleur*.

In this context, Commissioner Sonthonax reached out to the slaves to defend the French republic. He reduced hours of work, then offered freedom and French citizenship to all black warriors who fought for France. In August 1793 after a mass meeting in Cap Français voted for emancipation, the commissioner took the final step and abolished slavery throughout the colony, in a sense acknowledging in law what was the reality in fact.⁶

In 1794, Saint-Domingue's delegates to the French National Assembly—one white, one mixed race, one an African-born former slave—asked that the Assembly abolish slavery in all of France's colonies. The privations of war had further angered the French working class and weakened (for the moment) the power of the planters, and the Assembly ratified the proposal by acclamation.

The slave insurrection of Saint-Domingue had pushed the French Revolution into its most radical endorsement of freedom. French officials freed slaves in Guadeloupe and in the other islands they captured during the ongoing war with Britain and Spain. With this Toussaint Louverture and others deserted Spain to swear allegiance to the French Republic. Toussaint became the most important French general, leading French troops, most of them former insurgents, as they drove Britain out of Saint-Domingue in the name of abolishing slavery.

Enslaved workers throughout the Americas took notice. As word of the 1791 uprising in Saint-Domingue spread, slave revolts broke out in Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Curacao, and Grenada. Major slave conspiracies were detected in Cuba and Spanish Louisiana. Armed slaves battled to establish an inland maroon sanctuary in Jamaica. And in 1800, the enslaved blacksmith Gabriel, inspired

by Saint-Domingue and the French Revolution, attempted to end slavery through an insurrection in Virginia.⁷

Slave owners, however, were determined to end these threats to their profits. By 1798, French planter interests had begun to reestablish their power in Paris. They found an ally in Napoleon Bonaparte, the French general and future emperor, whose wife was from a Caribbean planter family. In 1802 Napoleon invaded Saint-Domingue with encouragement from British and American elites. The British and French would fight each other in Europe for another decade. But when it came to defending the super-exploitation of slavery they could unite: British Prime Minister Henry Addington declared that with regard to Saint-Domingue, the "interest of the two governments is exactly the same—to destroy Jacobinism, especially that of the blacks." Thomas Jefferson described Toussaint and other black leaders of Saint-Domingue as "Cannibals of the terrible republic" and promised to aid French efforts to "starve Toussaint" into submission.⁸

The initial French expedition was led by Napoleon's brother-in-law, the slave-owning General Charles Victor Leclerc, and involved half of the entire French fleet. Leclerc initially appealed to loyalty to the French republic—to patriotism—to win some insurgent generals to his army and to arrest and deport Toussaint Louverture. But when the French re-imposed slavery on the island of Guadeloupe, the people of Saint-Domingue rose up in resistance, forcing their former leaders to desert Leclerc and begin a renewed insurgency. When Leclerc declared a war of extermination that aimed to kill all black men and women except "infants less than twelve years old," some white troops, many of them Poles, deserted the French army to join the insurgents.⁹

By 1803, the workers of Haiti—ideologically committed to their struggle for freedom, disciplined and experienced in guerilla warfare—did what no army in Europe had done. They gave Napoleon's army its first defeat. And in 1804, Saint-Domingue declared its independence as the nation of Haiti. The British lost 40,000 soldiers and the French close to 50,000 in the effort to re-impose slavery in Haiti

and other islands of the West Indies. Half of Haiti's black population was killed. In all over 300,000 people died in the fight to end slavery in Haiti.

The United States refused to recognize the independence of Haiti, and in 1815 the treaty ending Europe's Napoleonic Wars accepted France's claim to Haiti as a colonial possession. Jefferson continued his efforts to protect slave owners by isolating Haiti as an economic and ideological force. While Saint-Domingue/Haiti had been the US's second largest trading partner (even through the period of warfare), Jefferson instituted a trade embargo and exhorted the New England merchant-traders to accept the loss of a prime market as a sacrifice for the nation.

The slave owning nations—the United States, Britain, Spain, France, and Portugal—expanded slavery in the years after the Haitian revolution. In the US slave-based cotton and sugar production expanded into the old southwest and the new Louisiana territory. The French re-imposed slavery in Guadeloupe and Martinique. The Spanish expanded sugar production in Cuba, and the Portuguese developed sugar and coffee plantations in Brazil. All of this meant an increase in the slave trade to restock the depleted labor force in the region.¹⁰

The Republic of Haiti, on the other hand, continued its attempts to spread the idea of revolution against slavery. In 1815-16, Haitian president Alexandre Pétion sheltered Simon Bolívar as he initiated an independence movement against Spain. Haiti provided Bolívar with ships, arms and ammunition, a printing press, and troops to train his men, demanding in exchange that he pledge to free the slaves in any republics gaining independence from Spain. As Spain was importing slaves, many free blacks and slaves within Spain's colonies flocked to the armies of the independence movement. In Peru up to three-quarters of those who fought in liberation army were men of color. In 1821, Gran Colombia adopted a law to emancipate all born of slave mothers after that date. In 1829, Mexico became the second American nation to abolish slavery absolutely.¹¹

Defining a New Nineteenth-Century Nation

The rebellion of the enslaved workers began at the point of production, with the destruction of the mills and cane fields; control over production and reproduction continued to be at the center of the struggle to define freedom. As Haiti declared its independence, this struggle expanded to new arenas, including efforts to define race and nationality and to develop formal institutions of government.

During the insurgency, rebels had continued to farm family plots to raise food, often claiming these small pieces of land as their personal property. Sometimes these plots were farmed by small groups. When slavery was formally ended, the effort to define work and labor rights in a free French San Domingue was taken up by the new political elite, initially by Toussaint Louverture. But in 1790's, what did freedom look like?

To Toussaint freedom for Saint-Domingue required the rebuilding of a plantation economy so the country could once again become a major exporter of sugar and coffee. Toussaint wanted a "modern" economy and invited white planters who were still in exile to return to help rebuild. Confiscated plantation lands were turned over to leaders of the insurgency, creating a new group of black plantation owners. Strict labor laws required former slaves to return to the plantation under year-long labor contracts where they would be paid wages defined as a share of the profits of production. To keep people at work in the industrial style plantations, sales of small plots of land were forbidden.¹²

Toussaint's effort increased the production of coffee and sugar, and throughout the 19th century Haitian elites—both black and *gens de couleurs*—repeatedly adopted similar laws (called rural codes) to reinvigorate the economy by forcing people to work as plantation laborers.¹³ These elites tried to reorganize their world in class terms, with a rural proletariat of contracted wage workers exploited for capitalist profits.

But the Haitian workers had a different definition of freedom. To the ex-slaves freedom meant working for one's family

HAITI 1815 - 1935

- **1815-1816**
Simón Bolívar gets asylum in Haiti twice and also receives military assistance to liberate South America from Spain.
- **1825**
France threatens to invade Haiti and demands 50 million gold francs as payment for its loss of property, i.e. its slaves.
- **1838**
France recognizes Haiti's independence.
- **1862**
The United States recognizes Haiti.
- **1890-1915**
German, French, British, and US interests compete for Haiti's commerce and ports.
- **1915-1935**
United States Marines invade and occupy Haiti. The US seizes the gold in the Haitian national bank and moves it to NYC for "safe keeping." The US establishes economic and strategic dominance. A largely peasant guerrilla army, known as the cacos, resists the occupiers.

without any bosses. They rejected all forms of slavery, including the wage slavery that was becoming dominant in Europe and the northern United States as industrial capitalism developed. In *Road to Revolution IV*, PLP noted that true freedom can only exist under communism. But that understanding had not yet emerged. Instead of communism, a form of peasant economy emerged. Former plantation laborers, most of them armed and experienced in the wars against slavery, forced the break-up of many plantations. The industrial production of sugar was replaced by small-holders and squatters operating subsistence farms and growing small quantities of coffee and other goods for sale internally and for export.

Race would likewise be redefined in the course of the struggle. Racism (in fact the very concept of race) was the product of slavery. And racist divisions—in colonial Haiti a three-part division between whites, *gens de couleur*, and blacks—were part of the structure of the slave economy.¹⁴ In the 1790's, when the French Republic abolished slavery, the political leadership of Saint-Domingue had been multi-racial, and black leaders such as Toussaint Louverture had welcomed the aid of whites.¹⁵ But race also had a class dimension since most slaves were black, often African-born, and those who owned slaves were white or mixed race *gens de couleur*.

The struggle against Napoleon brought race to the forefront. The formal declaration of independence was issued by Jean-Jacques Dessalines. Like Toussaint, Dessalines was an ex-slave insurgent leader who had fought for the Spanish and had served under Leclerc. In declaring independence and choosing the name Haiti (from the Taino name for the island), Dessalines rejected any further association with French colonizers.

As he pursued those who had participated in the French-organized massacres of blacks, Dessalines ordered and supervised the killing of many white inhabitants. Other whites—including Poles who had joined the fight for independence, a group of Germans who had settled in Haiti before its revolution and many white women who were willing to renounce France—were given Haitian citizenship. The constitution merged nationalism with race. It declared Haiti to be a “black” nation, and declared that all Haitians (including the *gens de couleurs* and the naturalized whites) would be known as “black.” The constitution also stated that “no white, no matter what his nation,” could henceforth come to Haiti as “master or property owner.”¹⁶

With independence, Haiti also struggled to set up structures of government. This effort was defined by conflicts within the revolutionary elite, often between the old elite of the *gens de couleurs* who had owned small plantations before the insurgency and black ex-slave generals who had gained control of plantations as rewards for their military and political prowess. In its earliest years, Haiti was divided, with a monarchy claiming to be

based on African patterns in the north, and a republic in the south. By 1821, the country was unified under one government which had established control of the entire island of Hispaniola.¹⁷

While independent, Haiti had not escaped the reach of colonialism or slavery. In these decades, Haiti's economy developed in new ways. The ex-slave peasants preferred to grow subsistence crops not cash crops. And while local markets flourished (often organized by women), the export trade languished. Sugar production, which required capital investment and an industrial organization of work, collapsed. However coffee production was high enough to make Haiti a major exporter, especially to France. Unable to force black workers to work on their plantations, many *gens de couleur* migrated to the cities, becoming government officials and merchants, and creating a new geography of race and power between rural and urban areas.

France pushed to reestablish control over its former colony. In 1825, France announced that it would recognize the independence of Haiti *if* Haiti paid compensation to former masters for their property losses when slavery was abolished and plantations confiscated. As the French anchored warships in the harbor, the Haitian government decided to negotiate. It allowed the French to assess the value of their losses (including appraising the “value” of some of the government officials who had once been slaves). In the end, France demanded that Haiti pay some 150 million gold francs for the slaves whose lives and labor French planters had stolen in the first place! The French also demanded and won lower tariffs for French-made goods.

The Haitian government had to borrow money from French banks to make these payments, and in 1871 French bankers set up the National Bank of Haiti to serve as a tool of economic power in its former colony. It took Haiti over 100 years, and 70% of the state's income to repay this claim.

In the 19th century, over a quarter of the government's income went to debt repayment, and another half of government income paid for a large military, originally needed to protect against France. Over time the military focused on suppressing domestic rebellions against high taxes and increasing exploitation by merchants. In the 1840's slave-produced Brazilian coffee began to flood international markets and drive prices down. In the face of increasing economic hardship, Haitian peasants rose up in 1843, 1865, 1867, and 1911.¹⁸

The Haitian working class had defeated slavery at home, but the existence of slavery elsewhere, with its super-exploitation of sugar, coffee and cotton workers, was still felt. While Haitian peasants were not wage slaves, exploitation and colonialism continued to dominate their lives.

Haiti and Inter-Imperialist Competition, 1880-1934

French domination of Haiti came under challenge in the 1890's as new imperialist powers vied for trade and influence. Germany, a weak third in the imperialist competition to carve up Africa and Asia, increasingly sought influence in smaller countries such as Haiti. The US began to look at Haiti for strategic reasons. Efforts to develop a canal linking the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean increased competition for the Haitian port of Mole St. Nicolas, which commanded the Windward Passage. US efforts were rebuffed, and then waned when the US acquired Cuba's Guantanamo Bay after the Spanish American War.

From 1908-1915, imperialist competition brought political instability to Haiti. Legally foreigners could not own land, and Haitians were resistant to plantation labor, so imperialist powers set up merchant houses linked to rival elite families (who were descended from the original free black slave-owners). These merchants competed for control of the export of coffee and fruit grown on small farms and for contracts to build railroads. By 1910, German merchants who had married into elite local families dominated trade and shipping.

Trading profits depended to a great extent on government policies (taxes, tariffs, construction concessions), so each imperialist power sponsored its own politicians. And each imperialist used military threats to collect debts, threaten governments connected to rivals, or enforce the influence of its friends. In both 1902 and 1911 Germany sent in gunboats to assist their claims; and in 1909, Germany got a concession to control Mole St. Nicolas, which was overturned when US-sponsored politicians moved into power.¹⁹

By 1910, US capitalists began increasing their investments in Haiti. The railroad builder James P. MacDonald acquired a former German concession to build a railroad from Cap Haïtien to Port-au-Prince. MacDonald also received a Haitian government guarantee of profits to his financiers, the right to develop banana plantations, and a 15-year monopoly over banana exports. By 1911, the railroad concession had been taken over by its bankers, most importantly by the National City Bank of New York. At the same time, National City Bank in cooperation with the US government began a struggle to seize control of the National Bank of Haiti from French and German investors.²⁰

MacDonald's efforts to set up banana plantations sparked an armed uprising of peasants. Many peasants had farmed for generations without formal title and faced loss of their farmsteads as the railroad exercised its concession. And when World War I broke out in Europe, US bankers pushed US president Woodrow Wilson to intervene in Haiti and save their investments from both the rebellion of local workers and the refusal of the Haitian

government to continue to pay for railroad construction.

In 1915, citing Haiti's instability and the threat of German power, Wilson sent US Marines to occupy Haiti, an action he claimed had been "forced" upon the US by circumstances. The US occupation had begun in anticipation of future profits and to push out rivals in the context of the inter-imperialist World War I.

The first act of the US occupiers was to remove all the gold from the Haitian National Bank and transport it to New York for "safekeeping." By 1919, National City Bank was in full control of the National Bank of Haiti and had taken over Haiti's national debt. The US dissolved the Haitian government at gunpoint, denied freedom of speech, took over the collection of customs (the main source of government revenue) and used the revenue to pay the banks before all else, and changed the rules of land ownership to ease the creation of foreign-owned plantations.²¹

US Marines, having just occupied Veracruz, Mexico for six months, now attempted to put down the on-going peasant rebellion in Haiti and to open Haiti for commercial sugar and cotton production. They built roads to facilitate the movement of goods, and machinery, using a system of forced labor known as the *corvée*. When many fled what they saw as a new form of slavery, the Haitian gendarmerie, led and trained by Marine Major Smedley Butler, used arrests to fill their labor needs. Men accused of petty crimes, from vagrancy to cursing Marines and gendarmes, were sentenced to prison and then roped together and marched to work on the roads.

The racism of US Marines and the brutality of forced labor led to increasing armed struggle.²² Haitian peasants, in some cases whole villages, began to join the armed caco resistance.²³ The more Haitians resisted, the more the *corvée* was imposed to build roads now needed to speed the movement of troops. Ultimately the Marines mounted a campaign of extermination. A curfew was declared, and any dark-skinned Haitian out after curfew could be shot on sight as a suspected guerilla. Entire villages were



US officer surrounded by dead Haitians killed during the 1915 occupation

HAITI 1957 - 1986

• 1957-1971

François "Papa Doc" Duvalier becomes President of Haiti. From 1958-64, Duvalier's attacks, led by his private militia, the Tonton Macoutes, will drive many opponents into exile. In 1971, François Duvalier dies and is succeeded by his son, Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier.

• 1982-1984

The US State Department's Agency for International Development and the Organization of American States (OAS) oversee the slaughter of Haiti's "creole pigs," accused of being carriers of African swine fever. This is a major blow to the peasant economy.

• 1980's

Thousands of Haitians flee poverty and repression in Haiti by boat, often arriving in South Florida, creating an immigration "crisis" for the US government.

• 1986

Widespread protests against repression force Baby Doc to flee Haiti. The US Air Force flies him to exile in France. A military junta takes power.

burned when Marines were fired upon. Over 11,000 were killed putting down the growing resistance to US occupation.

In the United States, the black press denounced the occupation, and the NAACP and pacifist groups published exposés and pushed for a Congressional investigation. The NAACP also helped resurrect a pacifist resistance movement among Haitian elites, *L'Union Patriotique*, and brought the Congressional hearings to Haiti itself. But the results of these reform efforts were a US reaffirmation of the need to occupy Haiti for another 20 years.²⁴

Racism was the justification. Repeatedly US politicians and the bourgeois press interpreted peasant resistance to forced labor and wage labor as evidence that Haitians were "primitive" and needed US leadership. Smedley Butler, the US marine officer leading the Haitian police, privately described Haitians as "savage monkeys." Ignoring the brutality of the occupation, the bourgeois press swooned instead over the military honors conveyed on Butler for his activities in Mexico and Haiti—all in the service of US imperialism.

1934-1980: Communism and Anti-Communism under the "Good Neighbor Policy"

As a result of the long resistance of Haitian workers and the racism of US firms, few American companies invested in Haiti during the occupation era. But the US emerged as the predominant market for Haitian products such as coffee, having displaced all its earlier rivals. Local economic power centered on a mixed-race merchant elite who purchased coffee from peasant farmers and leased out contract laborers (braceros) to work on U.S.-owned sugar plantations in the Dominican Republic and Cuba.²⁵

By 1929, as the US ruling class began to grapple with the Great Depression, it decided that the costs of occupation were too high. With Haiti and the rest of the Caribbean clearly in the sphere of US imperialism, the US embarked on a so-called "good neighbor" policy. US troops were removed in 1934, leaving the US reliant on local strong men to discipline

the working class. Politicians who could control their populations for imperialist exploitation were favored and those who failed were deposed.

During the 1930's and 1940's, the US encouraged conflict between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, which was led by its favorite dictator Rafael Trujillo, as a way to control client politicians. Trujillo had been trained by the US military and gained a reputation as an anti-communist and a manipulator of racism. In 1937, Trujillo's army murdered over 15,000 Haitian immigrant workers in the Dominican Republic, a massacre covered up by pro-Trujillo politicians in Haiti and the United States.²⁶

At the end of World War II as Haitian farm laborers faced massive layoffs, workers rose up in what Haitians called the "Revolution of 1946." The uprising began with a student strike protesting the shut-down of a newspaper that had denounced the Haitian government as fascist. Bus drivers, bakers, government employees, workers at American firms such as Standard Fruit and American Refining Company, and even some in the army joined the striking students. As a result, the Haitian military and the US ambassador demanded that the unpopular president step down and go into exile. President Élie Lescot had long been a staunch ally of US imperialism, but his inability to control the population made him dispensable.²⁷

As students and workers celebrated their success in deposing a fascist regime, they embarked upon an effort to define their revolution. New parties were formed, and candidates announced. The real struggle was a struggle for ideological influence within the working class. On the one hand were numerous communist and socialist groups and the independent unions they sponsored; on the other the *noiriste*, or black-power, movement associated with the labor leader Daniel Fignolé and the physician François Duvalier.²⁸

In the early 1930's, Haitian intellectuals inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution and developments in the Soviet Union had formed a communist party. In the early 1930's, they attempted to organize dockworkers, attacked nationalism,

and organized to fight both local and foreign capitalists. Many were jailed or forced into exile. By the late 1930's, Haitian communists like the rest of the international communist movement, adopted a popular-front ideology²⁹ that focused on fighting fascism and accepted alliances with lesser-evil capitalists; some of its leaders accepted positions in the Haitian government that had once jailed them.

In the wake of the 1946 "revolution," Haitian communists' initially called for the socialization of all land and industry. But after being criticized by Cuban communists for being "too left," the Haitians moderated their program into a reformist call for a democratic constitution, maximum-hours legislation, the legalization of trade unions, and an end to anti-communist legislation. The communists focused their attack on imperialism—targeting Arabs, Italians, and white Americans—not capitalism, a position that left them ideologically disarmed for the struggle within the working class over the next decade.

The *noiriste* movement also began in the 1930's. The *noiriste* black-power program was explicitly anti-communist and focused on color, not class as the key division in Haiti. One of the intellectual leaders of the movement was François Duvalier, who embraced the racist ideology of Arthur de Gobineau. According to Duvalier, Africans and Europeans had different social and psychological traits, with Africans more inclined to paternalistic and despotic government. In emphasizing racial and color distinctions, Duvalier called for the incorporation of peasant folk practices such as vodou into political and cultural

life. This position found support after the war in elite efforts to promote tourism by highlighting a commercialized, exoticized Haiti.

Most importantly, the *noiristes* asserted that the solution to Haiti's poverty was a cross-class alliance between the black working class and black elites against mixed-race elites. Embracing the black and red imperial flag of Dessalines, they promoted a "black legend" that claimed that the revolution of Toussaint and Dessalines had been undermined by the mixed-race elites. The Marxist idea of working-class unity was denounced in racist terms, as a European idea not suited for black workers. While their ideas seemed "radical" to some, the *noiristes* seldom attacked US investment or influence in Haiti, and were never jailed or driven into exile as the communists were. In fact, in the 1940's, Duvalier went to the United States for advanced training in public health and returned to Haiti to serve as a medical examiner for the American Health mission to eradicate malaria in the countryside.

As a result of the uprising of 1946, a black politician, Dumarsais Estime, was elected to the presidency. Though Estime had ties to traditional elites, his "color" was heralded as a sign of "revolutionary" progress. Yielding to the anger of the moment, Estime instituted some reforms—raising the minimum wage, paying off the occupation-era debt to the United States, and nationalizing the banana industry in favor of local political allies. At the same time, he set up state-sponsored unions to undermine independent unions and limited the right to strike. By 1948, he had reinstated laws

HAITI 1987 - 1991

• 1987-1990

During this period there are three successive military governments, each overthrown by another general, until a provisional government is set in place and schedules new elections.

• 1990

In July 1990, big landowners (grandons) massacre hundreds of peasants demanding land in Jean-Rabel. In November, presidential elections are canceled after Army soldiers and former Tonton Macoutes massacre dozens of would-be voters. In December Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide, an advocate of "liberation theology" known for his sermons in support of the poor, is elected President with 67.5% of the counted popular vote.

• 1991

In September, Aristide is deposed by a military coup led by former members of the Tonton Macoutes and by groups such as FRAPH allied with the traditional elite and funded and trained by the US (through the National Endowment for Democracy and other CIA funded groups).



Masthead of student newspaper *La Ruche*, whose banning sparked the protests of 1946



Francois Duvalier (center) with “liberal” Republican Nelson Rockefeller, Haiti 1969

making communist parties illegal, and in the 1950’s, government repression of communists, socialists, and independent trade unionists increased.

During the 1950’s, economic aid poured into Haiti from the United Nations, the World Health Organization, the US’s Point IV program, and missionaries. The tourist industry boomed and concessions were made to US investors such as Reynolds Aluminum. But in 1956, falling coffee prices and the destruction of crops by Hurricane Hazel, left many peasants homeless, forcing them to migrate to the cities where they found little work. Urban merchants who had traditionally dominated the export of coffee also faced losses. With mass protests mounting, the US forced out Haiti’s then president Paul Magliore, whom they had ushered into power 6 years earlier.

The ultimate victor of Magliore’s removal was François Duvalier, who won the support of the Haitian Army and the United States during a four-way electoral contest that pitted Duvalier against his one-time *noiriste* ally, Fignolé. Unlike the election of 1946, that of 1956-57 saw little activity by independent labor groups or Marxists. Instead it was dominated by intimidation as Duvalier associated thugs terrorized residents of urban slums.

Duvalier, known as “Papa Doc” as a result of his activities with the Health Service, ruled Haiti from 1957-71, and his son Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier ruled from 1971-86. The Duvaliers accelerated the pattern of working-class repression that had begun in the early 50’s. “Papa Doc” initially won some workers to his concept of “black” unity and by manipulating rural folk traditions such as vodou, which he said represented the authentic “African” voice of the Haitian nation and of the Haitian struggle against slavery. But he ultimately ruled through death squads known as the Tonton Macoutes; some 50,000 Haitians were killed and millions driven into exile during his time in office.

Duvalier (father and son) funneled foreign aid and money borrowed in the name of the government into their

personal accounts. Duvalier’s corruption and brutality were well known, but acceptable by the United States because Duvalier was an anti-communist, something especially important after the Castro revolution in Cuba. Though some US politicians criticized Duvalier, as long as he did what the Cold-War US ruling class wanted, that is arresting and executing communists and trade unionists, he received US military assistance and aid dollars.

US Imperialism and Cheap Labor

In the 1970’s, the United States began to look to Haiti as a source of cheap labor in manufacturing. The first Free Trade Zone in Haiti was opened in 1972; and in 1982 the Caribbean Basin allowed goods manufactured in Haiti (and other Caribbean nations) to come into the United States duty free for a 12-year period. The government of Jean Claude Duvalier also promised a long period of no local taxes to investors who established assembly plants for electronics, textiles and garments, and most notoriously baseballs. In the 1980’s, 90% of the world’s baseballs (and all those used in the major leagues) were manufactured in Haiti, where the minimum wage was \$1.30 a day. Labor costs for a ball that sold for \$2.50-\$4.50 were 9 cents.³⁰

At the same time US workers were increasingly under attack as US bosses moved factories out of unionized areas in the Midwest and Northeast to the South and overseas. The low-wages paid to Haitian workers, reverberated as an attack on workers in the United States and the rest of the world.

In Haiti, the creation of a super-low wage labor force required the further destruction of Haiti’s peasant agriculture. Haitian peasant and worker resistance since independence had been based on their ability to grow their own food, and their willingness to maintain this independence even if it meant they were poor. As food production was destroyed, Haitians were forced off the land into wage labor in the process of dispossession that Marx called “proletarianization”.

The process of proletarianization accelerated with IMF and US demands in the 1980’s for changes in the economy to repay of the Haitian national debt (which had soared under the rule of the Duvaliers) and to correct balance of payment issues. The IMF and the United States insisted that the government reduce the already minimal spending on domestic needs such as education. And more importantly to enforcing Haiti as a center of low wage labor, the US insisted that Haiti’s tariffs on imported agricultural products be reduced. As a result US agricultural surpluses, especially rice, were dumped into Haiti at prices that began to undercut the viability of Haiti’s peasant economy.

The attack on Haitian peasant agriculture was intensified in 1982-84 when Haiti’s creole pig population

was exterminated by USAID. The excuse was an episode of swine fever in the neighboring Dominican Republic, which US experts warned might damage the US hog industry. The US eventually shipped in pigs from Iowa, but these animals were only available to those who met minimum income and property ownership requirements. Unlike the creole pigs, which were remarkably disease resistant and able to forage for food, the new pigs were highly susceptible to disease and required expensive feed to survive. Where pigs had once provided food and a source of cash for peasants, now wage work was required to pay for their upkeep.

The peasant economy was devastated, and with this school registration and sales of merchandise dropped. Per capita food production began to fall, and dependency on imports soared. In the 1970's, Haiti imported only 10% of its food needs. By the 1990's, Haiti imported 42% of its food, and by 2004, Haiti imported 70% of its food. In the period 1980-1990 real wages fell 50%.

In the early 1980's, as Haitian workers confronted continuing violence at the hands of the Tonton Macoute and increasing poverty, an exodus of "boat people" fled Haiti for the United States, which refused to give them asylum. In November 1985, student protests sparked open peasant rebellions. Jean Claude Duvalier's regime was increasingly ineffective in creating a stable environment for new low wage factories; and in 1986, the United States persuaded him to go into exile. He was allowed to take the millions he had stolen with him. From 1986-1990, military regimes were in charge of the country; in 1990 elections were held for a new parliament and a new president.

Aristide and the Limits of Reformism:

For some, the 1986 exile of "Baby Doc" seemed a repeat of 1946, a "revolution." Daniel Fignole, the anti-communist *noiriste* labor leader who had been living in exile in New York, returned to a hero's welcome. In 1990, Jean Bertrand Aristide, the candidate of a peasant and worker resistance movement known as Lavalas, was elected president with 67% of the vote. Aristide was a former priest and proponent of liberation theology. He had opposed Duvalier using symbolism that traced back to Fignole, and was widely seen as an advocate of the poor. His platform included calls for land reform, a higher minimum wage, price controls on food, and the expansion of education; it opposed the privatization of public services. But he also announced that his supporters did not want the land and wealth of the rich.

Nine months into office, Aristide was force out by the military. Though Aristide's program was limited, the fact that he had mobilized working-class forces behind it was too much for the traditional elites (those with export subcontracts and large landowners with tenants) who had long supported the Duvaliers and who were accustomed

to removing politicians they didn't like. They initiated efforts to suppress Lavalas, using murdering paramilitary groups funded and trained through US agencies such as the National Endowment for Democracy and the CIA. One of the most notorious of these was FRAPH (Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti).

As repression increased, the coup was denounced by the UN, and many Haitians attempted to flee. In the period 1991-94, thousands of Aristide supporters were raped and killed, 300,000 became internal refugees within Haiti, and others fled to the Dominican Republic. Once again tens of thousands took to the sea in hopes of landing in the US, and once again the US was patrolling the sea lanes to turn back immigrants (over 40,000 were interdicted at sea and returned to Haiti). The US faced a public relations crisis as those fleeing met death on the seas or prison and deportation when they got to the US.

In this situation, the US ruling class looked to Aristide as a solution. Capitalists use violence when they need to, but are also willing to use the carrot to entice people to put down their resistance. Even though he blamed the US for the coup (i.e. the Republicans), Aristide had gone into exile in the United States. In the US, he developed ties to groups such as the Congressional Black Caucus (particularly to Maxine Waters of LA) and to left-liberal entertainers such as Danny Glover. During the election campaign of 1992, Clinton promised that he would work to return Aristide to government if elected.

In 1994, a deal was made. US troops would occupy Haiti to suppress disorder (later the US turned this portion of its role over to the UN; the last US troops left Haiti in 2000), and Aristide would be returned to power. The reasons are clear: paramilitary forces had been unable to control the resistance of the working class and the flood of refugees was unacceptable and embarrassing to the US image.

Aristide, in turn, now accepted the neo-liberal, free-trade agenda of the Clinton Administration and the US ruling class. He agreed to impose IMF demanded "structural readjustments" which included further lowering tariffs and the privatization of government agencies and services; he agreed to disband the army (according to Aristide, Haitians were a peaceful people and didn't need an army). Most importantly he pledged to set up additional free trade zones³¹ and to work to "reconcile the rich and the poor," i.e. to minimize any talk of class conflict.

Yet in 1994, the economic situation had changed for Haiti. Many of the manufacturing firms that had dominated Haiti in the 1980's were leaving. The earlier creation of free trade zones in countries such as Haiti had pushed wages down elsewhere. With its initial tax breaks ending, and after years of protests against exploitation in its Haitian factories at home, Rawlings, for example, moved its baseball manufacturing to Costa Rica. And in

HAITI 1991 - 2000

• 1991-1994

Thousands of Haitians flee violence and repression in Haiti by boat. Although most are repatriated to Haiti by the US government, many enter the US as refugees.

• 1994

The US reinstates Aristide after he agrees to an IMF and US-demanded economic reform package, including reducing tariffs to let in more US produced food and the opening of low-wage Free Trade Zones. US troops again occupy Haiti.

• 1995

Military authority over the island is handed over to the UN. Aristide dissolves the Haitian army, and CIA front DynCorp is brought in to train a new national police force. The US will continue to fund the opposition to Aristide.

• 1996-2000

Aristide is succeeded as president by René Préval, who continues structural adjustment and privatization programs begun under Aristide.

• 2000

In May 2000, legislative elections are held and some results are challenged by OAS election supervisors. In November, Aristide is reelected for a second five-year term in elections boycotted by the opposition.

1994, the Clinton Administration signed the NAFTA agreement which made Mexico a low cost (and larger) site for manufacturing than the Caribbean Basin.

Imperialism in Haiti, now took a particular form with the rise of the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). The move to privatize government services led to an increasing role of NGOs as providers of education and health care within the country. In fact there are more NGOs working in Haiti than in any other country (some 10,000), most receiving funds from US or other governmental funders (such as USAID) or from corporations. As agriculture was destroyed, and people were forced into the cities to find wage work, NGOs such as CARE provided food assistance. Debt service takes up most of the government's revenue (in 2003, \$57.4 million was allocated for debt service and only \$39 million for education, health care, the environment, and transportation) so NGOs rose to increasing prominence. Eighty percent of Haiti's health, education, food and water services are provided by foreign agencies.

We can see here the purpose of reformism as a political movement: to limit fight back. The reform movements — demanding higher wages, schools, health care, running water and electricity — were fueled by the anger and aspirations of the working class. But leaders such as Aristide (and the various NGOs that operate in the world) act to limit who is targeted and ultimately to win workers away from a potential class analysis into support for capitalist solutions. Aristide's opponents have charged him with corruption, charges that have never been proven, but the issue of corruption is irrelevant. Even if Aristide was strictly honest, his program was limited from the start, and the longer Aristide was in office, the more clear the limits would become. When Aristide was attacked (in 1991 and then in 2004) the one thing he would not do was arm and

rely on the working class to fight for their own power, for the communist revolution for which PLP fights. Rather, his program provided avenues of advancement for some of the poor and relied on liberal capitalists (and rival imperialists), not the working class at home or abroad.

In 1996, Aristide finished his term, and a new president, Rene Preval, was elected (in an election with only 25% of the voters bothering to participate) and continued with the Aristide program. In May 2000, elections for the legislature were held, and the results of a few of the seats were contested by conservative parties, who then boycotted the November presidential election. Aristide was reelected president with 90% of the vote, and the alleged corruption of the legislative elections became a rallying cry for opponents of Aristide.

But, Aristide continued to carry out his promises to set up Free Trade Zones. In 2002, Aristide and the president of the Dominican Republic presided over the opening of the second free trade zone in the northeast on the border with the Dominican Republic. Coevi FTZ in Ouanaminthe was built on land taken from farmers by eminent domain. Its zone was part of the "Hispaniola Plan" to open some 14 free trade zones in Haiti, all to be subsidized by the US or the World Bank. By 2003, two more zones were in the works. The firms in Coevi FTZ were almost all Dominican-owned subcontractors for American companies, making clothing for



Haitian boat people

Target, Wal-Mart, K-Mart, JC Penny, etc. The Dominican Republic had exhausted its quotas to export these items to the US, and now would import into the US under the Haitian quota, and Haitian wages were about a third of those in the Dominican Republic.

In 2003, the Haitian Parliament raised the minimum wage, but the Aristide government accepted an IMF adjustment of fuel prices that raised consumer prices 40%. Capitalism only gives so that it can take more. As a result, the buying power of the minimum wage fell from \$3 a day in 1994 to \$1.50-1.75 a day in 2004. As real wages fell, Aristide faced new opposition. The conservative opposition continued, but now there was opposition from the working class. In 2003, Aristide's government cracked down on workers organizing, and the police beat and shot workers demonstrating at a factory in Port au Prince. As PL has learned from history, we can't ever trust a boss no matter how many promises he makes, whether or not s/he is the same race as us, or whether or not god is on his side, because bosses will always betray the working class.

As anger mounted against him, Aristide came up with a new response, a new target for working class anger: he demanded reparations from France. Aristide mounted a campaign, complete with TV ads and petitions to the UN, to demand that France repay the money it had stolen in 1825, which by his calculation amounted to \$21 billion. Aristide's concessions to imperialism were now to be masked by a demand on France, the original exploiter of the Haitian working class.

France was unhappy; and the US, dissatisfied with the reemerging working class anger in Haiti, accused Aristide of corruption. In 2004, the United States and France pressured Aristide out of office. Threatening to arrest him as a drug trafficker, or to leave him vulnerable to opposition forces in the police,³² the US and French ambassadors demanded that he sign a letter of resignation. He was then flown on an unmarked US military plane to a French base in Africa. In the elections that followed Aristide's departure, former president Preval was reelected, and the effort to privatize government services and to open free trade zones continued.

Bill Clinton, now special UN envoy for Haiti, became an advocate for investment on the island. His goal was to open more free trade zones for garment production and zones for the commercial production and export of mangos. He was joined by US investor and philanthropist George Soros, whose Open Society Institute set up a Haitian wing called FOKAL. In 2009, Bill Clinton and Soros announced new plans to work with the WIN Group of Haiti to open a \$45 million industrial park near Cité Soleil called the West Indies Free Trade Zone. The WIN Group is owned by Haiti's Mevs family. This family is one of Haiti's richest five families, former supporters of Duvalier whose wealth goes back to merchants who allied themselves with the United States in 1915-34. The Mevs owns shoe and soap factories, control Haiti's sugar imports, own much of downtown Port au Prince, and control oil import and storage facilities.

Haiti also remains a strategic location for the United States due to the continuing importance of the Windward passage, the potential for oil in the waters off Cuba and Haiti (more important now than before due to increasing competition and prices for oil), and the potential importance of its ports. In 2004, the US embassy in Haiti was the fifth largest in the world, despite the nation's small size, after the embassies in Iraq, China, Germany, and Afghanistan.

Lessons for the Working Class:

Often people tell us that we must work within the system, work for gradual changes that are possible etc. But the story of Haiti and Aristide reveals the limits of reform. When the capitalist classes need cheap labor, they don't give reforms, at home or abroad. Just as Bill Clinton pushed Aristide to accept "structural adjustments" in Haiti, he was abolishing the welfare system that undergirded minimum wages at home. Aristide gained a big following among the working class, but as a reformer he agreed explicitly to minimize class struggle. Workers were misled and killed. Aristide, the reformer, didn't arm the working class, but disarmed it, in both an ideological and a military sense, and the

HAITI 2001 - 2008

• 2001-2003

Aristide's opponents use the OAS challenge to legislative elections to increase attacks on Aristide and his party. Former Haitian soldiers carry out guerrilla attacks, primarily along the Dominican border and in the capital.

• 2003

Aristide breaks ground on a Free Trade Zone near the border with the Dominican Republic, one of a proposed 14 FTZs in the "Hispaniola Plan." He cracks down on protesting workers in an FTZ in Port au Prince, while announcing a call for \$21 billion in reparations from France.

• 2004

In 2004, Aristide is removed from office by the US and France. UN troops return to occupy Haiti.

• 2006

In 2006, Rene Préval is reelected president on a platform of all-class unity. He accepts aid from Venezuela and others in the region.

• 2008

In 2008, workers protesting high food prices attack the presidential palace. In the 1970's, Haiti imported 10% of its food; in 2004, it imported 70% of its food. Food prices rose 50% from 2007 to 2008.

HAITI 2009 - 2010

• 2009

Bill Clinton named special UN envoy to Haiti. He announces plans to join with George Soros and the WIN group, owned by the elite Mevs family to build a new FTZ.

• 2010

In January earthquakes rock Haiti. Capitalism compounds this natural disaster into a world tragedy. Over 200,000 people die and millions more are affected to this day.

working class paid a high price.

Reformism cannot improve the lot of the world's working class, only communist revolution to smash capitalism. The view that only reforms were possible led to the crushing of the Haitian communist movements of the 1930's and 1940's. At the same time, neither the workers of Haiti nor those of the United States can win these changes alone. The working class needs to be part of an international communist movement, of one communist party that rejects nationalist and racist divisions within the working class.

At the same time, the history of Haiti illustrates the need for communists to be inside the mass movements of the working class. If communists were inside this mass movement that formed around Aristide, we could expose the limits and build a base for communist ideas and practice to expand the limits and move closer to revolution.

¹ Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, chapters xxxi and xxxii, quotation from chapter xxxii. Marx's description of primitive accumulation is also the source of one of his most quoted statements: "Force is the midwife of every society pregnant with a new one. It is itself an economic power." A discussion of how this worked and the money/profits involved can be found in Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: from the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800*.

² Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: the story of the Haitian Revolution*, pp. 18-21.

³ Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848*, pp. 163-64.

⁴ Dubois, *Avengers*, chapter 4.

⁵ One of the most mythologized aspects of the first days of the 1791 uprising is the role of Boukman, a man who had worked as a driver and coachman who led a religious ceremony at a place called Bois-Caiman before the uprising. In fact there was probably more than one religious ceremony in this period. The Bois-Caiman ceremony was first described in 1814 by a white exile. Since then, it has taken on an important role in both religion and nationalism within Haiti. See Dubois, *Avengers*, pp. 99-102. For a discussion of the uses and interpretation of the Bois Caiman ceremony, see Dubois, "The Citizen's Trance: The Haitian Revolution and the Motor of History," in *Magic and Modernity*, ed. Birgit Meyers and Peter Pels.

⁶ Dubois, *Avengers*, pp. 155-65.

⁷ Douglas R. Egerton, *Gabriel's Rebellion: the Virginia Slave Conspiracies of 1800-1802*.

⁸ In the end, Jefferson and the British reneged on their promises of material support. They interpreted the size of the Leclerc expedition as a threat aimed at them rather than at the government of Toussaint. Jefferson, however, would use Napoleon's losses in Saint-Domingue to acquire France's claims in North America, i.e. the Louisiana Purchase. Quotation from Addington is in Dubois, *Avengers*, p 256. For quotations from Jefferson and a

detailed (if somewhat apologetic account of Jefferson's diplomacy) see Tim Matthewson, "Jefferson and Haiti," *Journal of Southern History*, 62 (May 1995): 209-248.

⁹ Leclerc also encouraged divisions among the insurgent generals, many of whom were upset at the policies of Toussaint and others of whom were competing with him for wealth and power. Toussaint would die in prison in France. See Dubois, *Avengers*, 290-293; quotation on 290. Those who had served in revolutionary and republican army were denounced as "bandits" who couldn't be forced to work [as slaves].

¹⁰ In this period, the United States, with 900,000 slaves, was the largest slave-owning country. In 1808, the United States cut off importations of new slaves, in part to prevent importation of slaves from the Caribbean with memory or experience in struggles against slavery and those from Africa that might have experience in rebellion there. At this point, states such as Virginia became the suppliers of slaves to the new cotton plantations in what became an elaborate domestic US slave trade (See Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life inside the Antebellum Slave Market*). During the period 1815-1830, the international traffic in slaves to the Americas exceeded that of the period 1780-1800 (Blackburn, *Overthrow*, 322).

¹¹ Blackburn, *Overthrow*, 345-372.

¹² Toussaint had been a slave. After becoming free, he had briefly owned a slave and had rented slaves. He joined the insurgency against slavery at the beginning, and was dedicated to the anti-slavery cause. For more on Toussaint see Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, chapters 8-12; Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848*, chapters 5 & 6. These both add to the classic account of Toussaint, C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, which was first published in 1938.

¹³ Robert K. Lacerte, "The evolution of land and labor in the Haitian Revolution," *The Americas*, 34 (1978): 449-459. See also, Dubois, *Avengers* and Blackburn, *Overthrow*.

¹⁴ See PLP Racism pamphlet.

¹⁵ Dubois, *Avengers*.

¹⁶ As was mentioned in the text, Leclerc had quickly declared the war in Saint-Domingue to be a war of extermination. He had decided that men and women who had fought to eliminate slavery would probably never again be good workers. Instead they would be replaced by new slaves. After Leclerc died (as a result of disease), the French General Rochambeau replaced him. Rochambeau brought in attack dogs to assist in the battle to retake Haiti. At one point he organized a “circus” attended by many whites in which black prisoners were set at the mercy of attack dogs. Other black prisoners were burned alive, drowned, and asphyxiated by poisonous fumes. At this point Dessalines, who had been fighting the French under the French tri-colored flag, is said to have torn the white strip out of the flag. Whites, he said, had forfeited their right to be in the community as a result of their brutality. Dubois, *Avengers*, pp. 290-93, 298-301.

¹⁷ Haiti would be expelled from the eastern half of Hispaniola (now the Dominican Republic) in 1844, but it had forced the end of slavery there. Haiti would send expeditions into Spanish Santo Domingo in 1849 and 1850; in 1861, Haiti aided some of the Dominican Republic’s independence fighters until threatened by Spain. The Dominican Republic would obtain its independence from Spain in 1865.

¹⁸ Blackburn, *Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, p. 480, 540; Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940*, pp.49-51.

¹⁹ Brenda Gayle Plummer, “The Metropolitan Connection: Foreign and Semi-foreign Elites in Haiti, 1900-1915,” *Latin American Research Review* 19(1984): 119-142. Of course the explanation of this instability offered to the US public was racist—something in the character of black people. In this period, Haiti became an object of cultural interest (for example the play Emperor Jones). In the 1930s, as a result of the efforts of communists, Haiti’s history became an example for many of anti-racist resistance.

²⁰ Walter H. Posner, “American Marines in Haiti, 1915-1922,” *The Americas* 20(1964):231-266; Hans Schmidt, *The U.S. Occupation of Haiti* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1971, 1995). By 1914, the railroad company was bankrupt. Haiti however refused to pay off on its bonds because the promised railroad connections had not been completed. During the US occupation, this money would be paid in full.

²¹ Roger L. Farnham, the National City Bank employee appointed to run the Haitian railroad was a key source of information to the Wilson administration. In 1915, he met with Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan (the former “Populist” and alleged opponent of banks). Farnham demanded that the US occupy Haiti and threatened that US business would pull out if it didn’t. (Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 10, 52, 98-99. See also Posner, “American Marines” and Schmidt, *U.S. Occupation*). The technique of taking control of a nation’s customs collection was known as a “customhouse receivership.” It was imposed on the Dominican Republic and other countries of the Caribbean in the imperialist technique known as “dollar diplomacy.” On this more broadly see, Emily S. Rosenberg, *Financial Missionaries to the World: the politics and culture of dollar diplomacy, 1900-1930* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003). On the military tactics in a broader Caribbean context see, Lester D. Langley, *The Banana Wars* (Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources, 2002 [first published 1985]).

²² Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). The account that follows is based on this book.

²³ The term *Caco* came from the period of slave rebellion. Often these peasant rebels came from and were supported by their own communities, and some US observers noted this support. But the US military defined them as “professional” soldiers or as “bandits” or “soldiers of fortune” feared by peasants. Later some US officials admitted that cacos were not bandits but rather were “foraging revolutionists.” (Renda 141, 144)

²⁴ Leon D. Pamphile, “The NAACP and the American Occupation of Haiti,” *Phylon* 47 (1986): 91-100; “*The Truth about Haiti: An NAACP Investigation*” @<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5018>. The NAACP investigations were led by James Weldon Johnson, who had served as a US consul in Venezuela and was active in the Republican Party.

²⁵ Plummer, 172-77.

²⁶ The United States dumped Trujillo in 1960, when he no longer served their interests; he was assassinated in 1961. In 1965, the US invaded and briefly occupied the Dominican Republic when it was unhappy with Trujillo’s successors.

²⁷ Lescot had long been a friend of the United States. He was a fervent anti-communist, who had sought out and expelled foreigners and others suspected of communist leanings when serving as Minister of the Interior in the early 1930s. Later he served as Haiti’s ambassador to the United States, and helped cover up Trujillo’s massacre of Haitian workers. During WWII, he participated in US-sponsored efforts to develop rubber plantations that led to the clearing of some 47,000 acres of peasant-cultivated land. The eventual cancelation of this project contributed to the post-war depression that undermined his political power.

²⁸ For a more detailed account, see Matthew J. Smith, *Red and Black in Haiti: Radicalism, Conflict and Political Change, 1934-1957* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

²⁹ For a critique of popular front ideas and of the line of the international communist movement in the 1940s and 1950s that encouraged these positions, see PLP’s “Road to Revolution III” (1971) and its supporting articles.

³⁰ “Unsporting Multinationals,” *The Multinational Monitor* (December 1985), @<http://www.multinationalmonitor.org/hyper/issues/1985/12/ebert.html>. Accessed 13 March 2013.

³¹ In 1995, US AID offered loans for conferences to recruit business investments in Haiti but rejected an increase in the Haitian minimum wage because any increase would “jeopardize the ‘comparative advantage’ of its highly productive, low-cost labor force.”

³² After the disbanding of the Army, the US furnished funds to train a new national police force. Many in the police force were former Tonton Macoutes, former army officers, and former members of FRAPH. DynCorp (often used as a CIA conduit) was hired to train this police force.

THE LAND OF THE FEE AND THE HOME OF THE SLAVE: MYTHS AND ILLUSIONS ABOUT U.S. CAPITALISM THAT KEEPS US ENSLAVED

Capitalism is a system in which a small minority of rich owners of industry and finance, called capitalists, maintain control over the lives of the great majority of people who have to work for a living. How can a small minority control a large majority? While the answer partly lies in the capitalists' control over the means of force and violence (namely the police, courts, prisons, national guards, and the military), they could never keep their system running day to day without total chaos by these means alone. The capitalists require that the great majority, the working class, harbor stupendous illusions about how the system works. To do this they create countless myths and make them seem plausible by making grand claims, without ever comparing these to overall realities. The purpose of this article is to examine the myths in light of real conditions and to expose the most important of these myths – the belief in which keeps us enslaved by a system that does us, our families, and our class untold damage around the world. The key myths are freedom, democracy, and the alleged benefits of competition. Only by pulling our blinders off can we hope to free ourselves from capitalism, or even to hold that as a noble goal, indeed the greatest goal in life.

From birth we are taught that capitalism means freedom and democracy, and that it is the best possible *political* system for the most people. Or as Churchill has been variously paraphrased, it is the worst form of government except for all the rest, which amounts to the same thing. We are further taught that capitalist competition produces the best quality products for individual consumers, i.e., for all of us, and is therefore the best *economic* system for the most people. This is based on the claim that people are basically selfish and that the most important things to people are products for individual use, no matter how useless and no matter how much they substitute for things we really need.

As it turns out, for a small class of capitalists, capitalism *does* offer freedom and democracy and *is* the best possible system, although competition causes many capitalists to lose out to their competitors, particularly internationally. But for the vast majority of humanity it means relentless horror, misery, and death.

Proof that capitalism is harmful for most people is right under our noses, but we are often blinded by the propaganda that we are fed from the crib, through the news and entertainment media, politicians, and schools and universities. Human perception is not simply the taking in of things our senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell, or taste happen to pick up. Perception is much more than that. It involves a perceptual framework through which our senses filter the things all around us. Because of this, two different people can observe precisely the same phenomena and yet come away with completely different perceptions of what they just experienced. We each decide, whether we realize it or not, what things around us are important to see, hear, etc., and what things are not. For example, when talking with someone in a crowded room, we are able to listen to the person we are facing without letting the other talking interfere, unless it is so loud we cannot hear our friend. If we wanted to focus on what someone else is saying, we could do so if it were in hearing range, but then we would not be hearing what our friend was saying. This is a decision we make, usually consciously, but not always.

The important thing about the framework through which we perceive various things is that it is not fixed throughout our lives. Indeed by learning a new outlook on what is important and what can be neglected, we change our perceptual frameworks all the time. The aim of this essay is precisely to change the reader's perceptual framework about the nature of the system we live in. Nothing in this essay requires any remote research, but rather depends on our taking a new look at things that we experience all the time in our daily lives.

So let's examine what is meant by the words freedom, democracy, and competition and let's examine what it is about capitalism that is said to benefit the vast majority of humanity.

Freedom

What do we mean when we say that workers are free today or that one or another country is a free country?

When slavery ruled the American South and the Caribbean from the early 1600's through the mid 1800's, as well as many other places and times, freedom could easily be understood as the opposite of the chains, whips, and guns that kept enslaved Africans bound to the plantations against their will and certainly not to their benefit.

But when slavery in the U.S. was finally abolished in the mid-1800's as a result of the Civil War, the problems of the former enslaved black workers did not end. Prison chain gangs fed by arbitrary arrests and convictions, Jim Crow laws cloaking these injustices in legal cover, and capitalist-inspired racist ideology continued to guarantee that black labor was employable by the few at a higher intensity of exploitation, and consequently greater level of misery, for black workers than for many other workers (Blackmon – see references at the end). The thirteenth amendment to the U.S. Constitution that purported to end slavery contains the following loophole:

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States...[our emphasis]

“Crimes” used to justify imprisonment and enslavement after the formal end to slavery included vagrancy (essentially meaning unemployment), so vaguely defined as to permit the police and courts to convict any black man of it (Blackmon). It was generally understood in the South that white men were simply not subject to such arrest and conviction, though the law did not specifically spell that out. Much the same happens today with arrests and convictions for drug “crimes.” One of the key aspects was, and remains, that state legislatures and Congress define many things as crimes that have no victims – no victims, that is, other than the person arrested.

Not much has changed since the Civil War in the U.S. in that regard, and in many ways this oppression and misery have actually intensified in more recent times (Alexander, Perkinson, Beckett and Sasson, Massey and Denton). Possession of drugs is a modern equivalent to vagrancy among victimless crimes.

Black labor following the Civil War was termed “free,” only because the chains had been removed from many and the whips and guns were kept barely hidden, but still very much present in the hands of the police, militias, prison guards, and the Ku Klux Klan.

In fact, with the recent skyrocketing of the U.S. prison population in the last couple of decades, begun with the political manipulation of “crime in the streets” by Johnson and Nixon, escalated with the “War on Drugs” under Reagan, and continued by every president since, Republican and Democrat alike, a huge proportion of black workers – particularly, but not solely, men – have become once again enslaved by the gun. In Chicago, for example, 55% of adult black men have felony records (Alexander, p. 184). Overall black men in the U.S. are incarcerated at a

rate more than 6 times that of white men; they have a one in four chance of being jailed some time during their lives; and one in fourteen are at any one time in jail or prison (PLP pamphlet *Prison Labor: Fascism U.S. Style*).

The U.S. not only has the largest prison population in the world, but it is 70% black in a nation in which black people represent only 13% of the population. The proportion of Latin workers is not far behind relative to their proportion of the population. The vast majority are imprisoned for non-violent violations of drug laws, designed deliberately to turn a medical problem into a criminal act, though the same percentage of blacks and whites deal in or use drugs, approximately 6-7% (Alexander, Perkinson). The false belief, on the part of most whites and many blacks, that a much greater proportion of blacks than whites are involved with drugs is the work of the capitalists’ propaganda machines – particularly news media and the entertainment industry. It is a lie to cover this re-enslavement of black workers, as are all other aspects of racist ideology.

And more recently the brand of “drug criminal” is increasingly and falsely applied to Latino immigrants, the vast majority of whom come to the U.S. to find jobs that have been destroyed in their native countries by U.S. corporations. Corporate capital moves southward across the border without being declared illegal and dispossess millions of rural workers of their lands and livelihoods in order to force them into subservience to the profit needs of that capital. This includes the creation of an army of unemployed workers, available for the ever changing corporate needs due to the business cycle.

In the U.S., many white workers, and some black and Latino workers who have not yet been imprisoned, harbor the illusion of freedom. What does the word “free” mean? It means unbound...to anything. But where are workers unbound to the necessity to have access to the means of survival, including food, water, clothing, or shelter? It is this necessity for access that binds us to the need under a capitalist system to work at whatever jobs can be found – no matter how unrewarding, backbreaking, unhealthy, or dangerous.

Work in a truly free system would not be for the purpose of obtaining the means of survival as individuals. Rather work would be for the purpose of satisfying our psychological needs to be creative and productive and to contribute necessary labor to the general welfare of our class globally. Indeed, perhaps the most devastating thing about the capitalists’ control of most jobs is that the vast majority of us are prevented from contributing to the welfare of our class (Gomberg). But even in a system in which we were enabled to do so, we would not be free of those psychological needs. Because our lives are interdependent, regardless of system, we are never free in the sense that capitalism claims we are – again, unbound to anything, as though we were separate bouncing balls

in a vibrating container.

So far we have spoken only about individual freedom. But consider the idea of the freedom to organize labor unions or a communist party to overthrow the government or to advocate force and violence to end capitalist rule. These are group or class freedoms, not just individual freedoms, and they are only allowed by capitalist governments within strict limits and at specific times in the histories of various countries, but are not general freedoms under capitalism that are guaranteed under any and every circumstance.

Alternatively consider individual freedoms that harm others, such as the freedom to drive drunk and risk killing others, or to smoke in public places and cause lung cancer in others from secondhand smoke, and so on. Are these freedoms really desirable from the point of view of the working class? Clearly not. So there are undesirable freedoms, as well as desirable ones.

Karl Marx's friend and frequent co-author, Friedrich Engels, wrote that freedom was the recognition of necessity. In other words, understanding how the world and society really work gives us the freedom to be able to accomplish our goals. But even that freedom is constrained by the way the world and society do, in fact, work. So there is no such thing as complete individual freedom in the sense meant by capitalists, nor would such isolation from each other be desirable. Recognition of that fact allows us to examine different degrees and kinds of freedom to enable us to choose what kind and degree we want to achieve, as well as the methods that are necessary to make that a reality.

Other aspects of modern capitalist society that are touted as proof that we are free is that workers are free to change jobs, or free to move from one city to another, or free to choose whatever car we might want, or free to choose whatever we can afford to buy. But the latter is one of several stumbling blocks: whatever we can afford to buy. Apologists for capitalism don't even try to claim that everyone is free to live in whatever neighborhood they choose, since most people are aware of the falsehood of that particular claim. Residential segregation is still very much a part of life in the U.S. and helps to enable virtually all other forms of racist discrimination (Massey and Denton).

The current equivalent of chains, whips, and guns, for the freest workers among us, is the need for access to the means of survival, and that is controlled by the capitalists, who force the vast majority of us to work for them. Or, in some cases, to work for ourselves, which carries its own limitations of freedom, in the form of such things as greater taxes, the mercy of the marketplace, exchange of time off for income, and the out-of-pocket expenses of health care.

Returning to the slavery-run plantation, if the system had permitted an enslaved worker to choose under which

owner and on which plantation she or he wanted to submit to the slave-driver's chain, whip, and gun, would the worker have been called "free"? Hardly. Then why is the worker called "free" who is permitted to choose at which factory, field, office, shop, or mine she or he wants to submit to the discipline of the foreman and the whim of the owners? Why is the worker called "free" who is forced by the threat of hunger and homelessness, or even starvation, to choose one or another capitalist-run establishment at which she or he is to be overworked and underpaid? But the capitalists and their ideologues tell us we are "free," and we have, at one level, fallen for this sleight of hand. Ever since the victory by the North in the U.S. Civil War, an individual worker appears to be free to choose, but the threat of hunger and homelessness plays the role of the gun.

The essential transformation after the Civil War, and after the chain gangs were abolished more than half a century later (Blackmon), was the change from the situation in which each individual enslaved worker was bound to one slave-owner/boss by the gun, to the situation in which the entire class of workers was, and remains to this day, bound to the entire class of capitalist bosses by the threat of hunger or starvation. But that change is enough to make it seem plausible to many workers that today, with the end of chattel slavery and chain gangs, we are free.

Yet all that changed was the replacement of chattel slavery (chain, whip, and gun) with what is referred to by Marx as wage and debt slavery. The term "wage slavery" refers to workers' being forced to work for wages in order to live, while the term "debt slavery" refers to our being bound to debt that often rises faster through interest than our ability to pay it off, so that we are never free from debt – a condition that is becoming even more common during the current economic crisis. In the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, black and white sharecroppers alike were primarily bound by debt slavery, but even today mortgages, rent, and credit card debt play a similar role. With the replacement of chattel slavery by wage and debt slavery, the threat of hunger and homelessness, and often starvation, remain every bit as effective as, if not more than, the slave-driver and the bounty hunter in forcing us to do the bidding of the capitalists.

The further threat today of police, courts, and jail is more clearly equivalent to the guns and whips of the slave-drivers and bounty hunters. Those who have been, and remain, most targeted by these modern equivalents are of two kinds: 1) political actors who organize unions to fight collectively for improved conditions or who advocate the overthrow of the wage-slavery system, and 2) individuals whose actions or state of being are artificially declared or treated as crimes, though there are no victims, other perhaps than themselves, i.e., those who seek escape from misery in the form of drugs and/or who are merely black or, now, immigrant or Latino.

And, of course, the American Indian (Native American) descendants of the small proportion of survivors of the concerted genocide are often not free to escape the concentration camps, called reservations, that were set up in the 1800's in exchange for theft of their land, with all the diseases, unemployment, and hopelessness that is associated with this form of imprisonment.

Another form of enslavement and lack of freedom for young working-class men and women is the option of military service, where the jobless young worker can, for the sake of survival, submit instead to the iron discipline of rank and to the threat of court martial and the stockade. With the reinstatement of a draft becoming more and more imminent as the overseas needs of the capitalists increase due to accelerating rivalry with other national imperialists, military service will become more obviously equivalent to the slave-driver/bounty hunter. Worse yet, with military service one is, in fact, forced by the gun to prey on other members of our class, whether in foreign countries or during urban rebellions at home. Yet the relentless capitalist propaganda machine, in order to lessen the popular resistance that would otherwise develop, mischaracterizes this form of imprisonment with the noble-sounding "service to your country" – in reality service to the needs of one's national capitalists to control as much of the world's resources, markets, and labor as possible.

And once those lucky enough to survive modern genocidal imperialist warfare are released from this bondage, they are greeted by higher than average unemployment, an interruption in their careers, higher degrees of homelessness, and frequently broken relationships with their spouses, as well as psychological trauma that leads many to either murder others or commit suicide. Meanwhile the media, the politicians, and various businesses hypocritically pay homage and respect to "our veterans," who are thanked in empty words but rarely in meaningful deeds.

We are encouraged to overlook all these constraints by being led to concentrate on the freedom to vote (about which more in the section on Democracy below), or the freedom to change jobs (if and when jobs are available), or the freedom to move from one city to another (if we are not redlined by mortgage companies that prevent us from access to better housing or denied access to rental properties), or the freedom to choose whatever car we like (given that public transportation has in many places been kept so inadequate and expensive that cars become the only choice in the first place, to those who can afford one), or the freedom to buy what we like (ignoring the advertising and peer pressure that it fosters to acquire things that we really don't need, while others have little or no access to the things they really do need, and ignoring the addictions that we or our children are encouraged to develop, to legal drugs such as cigarettes and alcohol, let alone to illegal drugs).

Predominantly black workers who have been either convicted of drug possession, or have been threatened with much greater charges to extort plea bargains, are branded for life as felons (a deliberate upgrading by Congress of drug charges from misdemeanors), and therefore ineligible for the rest of their lives for food stamps, public housing, and in practice from most jobs (Alexander). This all but destroys the opportunity to ever have and love a family. It isn't the time spent in jail that matters nearly so much as the lifetime brand of "felon" that ruins millions of lives. No other country in the world brands drug possessors "felons" or imprisons for victimless "crimes" at anywhere near the rate that the U.S. does.

Those workers who are branded "felons" are also barred from voting for the rest of their lives, a mixed blessing for the working class (as explained in the democracy section below), but to the definite advantage of racist and opportunist politicians of all stripes, who manipulate different sections of the working class for their own career advancement.

This and all other aspects of racism affect white workers as well, always to their detriment, whether it is those who are also caught up in the War Against Drugs, to cover the deliberately racist character of this assault on workers' lives, or the fact that when white and black workers suffer different degrees of oppression it acts as a barrier to understanding that when one worker suffers, all workers suffer, whether to different degrees or not. A study by economist Michael Reich in the 1980's showed that those places in the U.S. where the wage differentials are greatest between white and black workers are precisely the places where the wages for white workers, as well as black workers, are the lowest of anywhere in the country.

Struggles in which black and white workers are united in a fight to get rid of those differentials are generally the ones that bring the most success for both, though all successful struggles under capitalism bring at best temporary gains, soon taken away again one way or another. But when one group of workers believes that the problems faced by another group of workers does not affect them – or worse yet that their own problems are to be blamed on another group of workers – both are weakened in their struggle against the capitalists for higher wages and better working and living conditions, let alone for the revolutionary destruction of capitalism altogether. This indeed is one of the major reasons that racism continues to exist more than 400 years after the first Africans were forcibly brought to the New World. The other major reason is that the resulting lowering of wages from racist wage differentials nets the capitalists much greater profits than they might otherwise be able to extract from the working class's labor.

For the most part, economics is taught in schools and

universities as a study of consumerism – the supply and demand of goods and services – rather than the exploitative process of production. But as Marx put it in his masterful 19th century exposure of the hidden inner workings of capitalism, called simply *Capital*, it is in the production process that the underlying reality of capitalist slavery – wage slavery – is most clearly revealed. This reality is much less obvious on the consumer side of things, where poverty and consequent lack of access to the necessities of life are the main manifestations and can be blamed on the supposed weaknesses of the individual worker. But even in order to know where poverty comes from, one has to study the robbery of the working class inherent in the production process (see, for example, the PLP pamphlet *Political Economy: A Communist Critique of the Wage System*, 1998, www.plp.org).

The illusion of freedom, as we have been taught to understand and believe in it, simply melts away under close scrutiny. In the U.S., for example, one cannot acquire needed medical care for free, even if you have insurance, let alone acquire food, shelter, clothing, or transportation for free. The method for obtaining these necessities of life under capitalism makes this the “Land of the *Fee*,” not “... of the *Free*.”

Evictions and layoffs are always just around the corner, and then we become even freer – free of a home and a job. This has been the fate of millions of farmers whom capitalism has thrown off their land in order to create a class of laborers that the capitalists could use to make their profits for them, as well as to seize their land – whether in England in the 18th and 19th centuries or with foreclosures on U.S. farms in the 20th century by the mortgage-holding banks. North American and European imperialists and local ruling classes continue this land theft in many parts of the world today. Such is the freedom that awaits many of us who haven’t already lost jobs or homes, or never had them.

But even more serious than evictions and layoffs is the turn to a fascist police state that has happened before, particularly in 1920’s Italy under Mussolini and in 1930’s Germany under Hitler, as well as in other countries of Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and will happen again in any country in which a mass working class movement challenges the capitalists for power. These fascist movements have been supported and fully funded by the capitalists, not only in those countries but from the U.S. For example, Henry Ford, Prescott Bush (the father and grandfather of the two Bush presidents), and many other individual capitalists as well as U.S. corporations contributed heavily – in money, factories, and propaganda support – to the rise of Hitler and his Nazi Party (Black). This fate awaits workers in the U.S. if the capitalists ever feel it is necessary, and any challenge by a mass anti-capitalist working class movement will make it necessary for them.

Let’s face it, the “Land of the Free” is an illusion, pure and simple, even during times when a democratic façade hides the underlying capitalist rule. The reality is one of capitalist wage- and debt-slavery, at best, or drug addiction, prison, or military service, at worst. At such times, we only feel free, at best, when in the *relative* comfort of our homes, if we have homes, but rarely if ever at the assembly line, field, desk, or mine shaft, and rarely if ever at bill-paying time, with interest on our credit cards rising faster than our income to cover it (if we even can afford a credit card), or with increases in our rent (for those who are not homeless), or in our property taxes (for those lucky enough to be able to “own” a home). But during capitalist crises, either economic or political, fascism has been and will continue to be the order of the day.

Underlying all the obstacles to freedom for the working class under capitalism is the fundamental encouragement of individualism by bourgeois ideology. That is, bourgeois mythology holds that the individual is supreme and that only by cultivating the highest degree of individualism can one be really free. But this proves to be the exact opposite of the truth, since by oneself virtually nothing can be accomplished, other perhaps than breathing. By striving to improve our own income, wealth, or status as individuals we are necessarily forced to do so at the expense of other members of our class. This in turn separates us from the very class allies that we all need in order to free ourselves from exploitation, racism, sexism, poverty, and want. Individual freedom then is an oxymoron (logical self contradiction) of the highest order.

Democracy

Democracy has been defined as “government of the people, by the people, and for the people,” as Abraham Lincoln put it. However, this formulation fails to deal with methods for its achievement, which we discuss more near the end of this section. Nevertheless what we really have around the world is government of the working classes, by the politicians, and for the capitalists, and did have even 150 years ago when Lincoln was the main spokesperson. But the electoral system masks that reality by allowing us, on a regular basis, to choose our oppressors.

Why do we say that politicians are among our oppressors? Skipping over more than two centuries of laws that limit the rights of workers to organize against oppressive working and living conditions, consider a group of federal laws in the latter part of the 20th century that label black and Latin, though rarely white, drug *possessors* (apart from distributors) as felons. These laws, among other things, mandate minimum sentences that remove all discretion from judges who might give lesser sentences. Beginning in the 1960’s with Lyndon Johnson’s self-promoting drive to concentrate on crime in the streets, the politicians of the executive branch have declared war

on black, and increasingly Latino, workers in the name of a “war on drugs.” In fact, the drug laws have been so horrible that a number of judges (no friends of the working class) have actually resigned rather than administer these outrageously unjust sentences (Alexander). All politicians, under normal circumstances, ignore the much bigger crimes in the banks and corporate offices, as well as within their own successive warmongering presidential administrations, up to and including Obama.

A drug addiction should be classed as a medical problem, as it is with nicotine or alcohol. The very transformation by Congress of drug *possession*, let alone addiction, into a criminal offense and a federal felony, is one modern extreme example of the way that U.S. politicians oppress the working class. And the Supreme Court has given police the go-ahead to selectively arrest and convict black and Latin workers. Furthermore the Court has given the police the right to keep any money or articles (not just drugs) seized in an arrest for a fictitious drug offense, even when the victim is not charged with a crime and is released. These seizures have helped to fund many a police department throughout the U.S. The Court has also protected prosecutors from being sued who arbitrarily threaten innocent arrestees with serious fake charges in order to extract a plea bargain for a lesser offense that then labels them felons for life.

However, there is an even more fundamental reason to call politicians oppressors. First of all, a representative system is one in which we are asked to vote for either a self-selected or capitalist-selected person about whom the only thing we know is what that person chooses to tell us. Of course, their opponents also tell us things about them but these things are usually not really relevant and often false, as are the self-descriptions. There is no conscience among politicians when it comes to the difference between truth and falsehood, since conscience would stand in the way of winning an election. Indeed their self-interest may sooner or later stand in the way of their even recognizing the difference.

When someone decides she or he wants to attain office for her/his own personal gain, she/he appears all at once in the public eye having done absolutely nothing to merit our approval previously, and begins to spin a tale of what she/he thinks the most voters want to hear. Once in office, winning the next election becomes the politicians’ main goal. When they claim to be servants of the public, they are lying, and instead they treat the public as servants of their own careers. Public servants would not hesitate to discuss or vote on a bill such as a \$50 billion for job creation to repair the U.S. infrastructure, or to give the FDA more authority and funding to inspect food distribution facilities, or to provide better child nutrition (as Congress had recently done, in favor of a pre-election vacation, at the time of this writing). The reason the politicians of both parties refuse to even discuss such bills until after an election is because they are only interested in how the

discussion affects their chances for re-election, not how the bills might help the working class, or, in their obscure terminology, the public, of whom the vast majority are members of the working class.

Of course, they can always rationalize their vote-seeking as serving the interests of their constituents against the supporters of their opponents, and hide even from themselves the self-building reality. The existence of two main political parties, or at least more than one, serves the function of blaming one section of (working class) voters for the problems of another section, in sort of a bad-cop/good-cop routine – “We may not do everything you want us to, but it will be worse if the other party wins.” And in some ways this may even sometimes be true in a narrow sense. Meanwhile the media plays the chorus, continually reminding everyone how stupid and selfish the voters for the other party are, thus dividing the working class even further, and even more importantly hiding from view the real enemy of the entire working class, namely the capitalists who fund both, or all, of the parties in order to continue this shell game.

Given that their self-interest is their only, or main, interest, politicians are ripe pickings for any source of funding for their campaigns, and we all know that those most capable of funding these campaigns are those with the most money, namely the capitalists and their corporations. This is one of the mechanisms through which the system, far from being government by or for the people is really government by the politicians and for the capitalists.

But an even more important mechanism of capitalist control of government is through the use of advisors to the Presidents and to members of Congress – advisors who are drawn from leading capitalist-funded think tanks like the Council on Foreign Relations or the Trilateral Commission, set up by the oldest and most powerful members of the capitalist ruling class, led by the Rockefellers.

Voting year after year for one politician after another, in the wild unfounded hope that things will get better, ignores this reality. Voting is doing nothing but chasing after candidates who are bought and advised by the capitalists and therefore represent only the interests of the capitalists. For if any candidate were to try to represent the interests of the working class, she or he would be labeled by the media as unfit for office and could never command the millions of dollars showered on the capitalists’ loyal servants.

Basing a vote on what a politician says or promises, or how sincere she/he looks on TV, proves time after time to be a losing proposition. Look at the plummeting popularity of Obama, so soon after the early euphoria brought about by his election – a euphoria based on ever-present wishful thinking. One of his foreign policy advisors, Samantha Power, let the cat out of the bag

early in his 2008 campaign when she was asked whether Obama would really keep his promise to end the war in Iraq, and she replied, in essence, that such promises are empty talk because of the constraints put on presidents. She was fired from the campaign for that comment. Honesty, after all, is the worst policy for politicians and their campaign workers.

But some of them seem so sincere, you say. All we can say is that long hard experience should be permitted to override such subjective impressions. Politicians are forced to lie, whether they want to or not, and they soon want to, even if at first they do not. They are good at sounding sincere. They are among the best actors in the world because they really believe in themselves. Even a politician who enters a race for the first time with the illusion that she or he can actually do something for the working class soon learns that she or he cannot.

One telling example of this involved a Latino Congressman who was elected because of his past anti-racist activities and who supported the Cuban revolution, and, when asked directly by us in 1964 why he didn't stand up in Congress and denounce the U.S. blockade of Cuba, responded that if he did so he would never again be able to win a vote for any funding for his district. He knew by this time that he was forced to choose between an honest progressive political stance and being able to help his district and thereby gain re-election, and he chose the latter. Even if he had stood up and denounced the blockade, he would have been ignored, and probably ostracized by his colleagues and dragged through the mud by the capitalist-owned media. The system simply does not permit such actions to go unpunished.

The terms "conservative" and "liberal" are meant to convey a real choice for the working class between those who would keep things as they are (conserve) and those who would make changes (liberals) that appear to benefit the working class. The fact is that both vote for wars on our class brothers and sisters of other nations; both try to outdo each other as tough on crime; both agree to imprison and blacklist communist workers who fight for the interests of the working class; and both raise taxes on the working class and cut taxes on the rich exploiters. One might say therefore that the difference is embodied in the following examples: Conservatives advocate that the government give special consideration to corporations to help the corporation owners, while Liberals advocate that the government give special consideration to the corporations to "help the workers." Or Conservatives vote more money for the military to promote U.S. business hegemony and security, while Liberals vote more money for the military to "promote democracy abroad." Or Conservatives oppose communism to protect the capitalists, while Liberals oppose communism to "protect the workers." Regardless of the reasons they give, the outcome is the same. As one Marxist historian, after showing how Congresspersons and Senators are all (necessarily) rich, summarized it

(paraphrasing), congressional bickering represents a battle between the haves and the haves (Parenti).

Those who pose as friends of the workers, liberal Democrats, are our worst enemies, because they can fool a greater percent of the working class – even though the gap between "conservatives" and "liberals" is in fact quite narrow. Indeed, the primary use of the two major parties, Republicans and Democrats, is to manipulate working class sentiments historically through demagoguery – demagoguery that mainly centers around racism and that, through the use of the ruling-class-owned media, first creates the blowing winds of the time and then adjusts itself to them.

One clear example of this demagoguery was the war on crime, discussed above, in the 1960's, '70's, and '80's. Starting with Johnson's public declaration that most Americans see crime in the streets as the single most serious problem, each successive president has brought about media concentrations on crime that changed the sentiments of voters, according to surveys at the time. It was not the other way around. That is, until these manipulative demagogic declarations created precisely the sentiment that they claimed already existed, the public in fact did not see crime in the streets as the most critical problem (Beckett and Sasson).

Those of us old enough to remember will recall that in the 1988 presidential race Bush Sr. defeated his Democrat opponent, Governor Michael Dukakis of Massachusetts, in part by playing up the story of William (labeled Willie in the press and by Bush) Horton, a black man who, among many other prisoners, was let out of prison by Dukakis and ended up raping and murdering a woman. And Clinton, in turn, in the 1992 presidential race defeated Bush Sr., in part by interrupting his campaigning and running home to Arkansas to oversee the execution of Ricky Ray Rector, a black man who was so mentally impaired that he reportedly asked that they save until tomorrow morning the dessert from his last dinner. Neither politician wanted his opponent to portray him as soft on crime, so they both unashamedly used prevalent racist sentiment to win those presidential elections.

Such public manipulation by the leading electoral political parties is extremely useful to the ruling class behind the scenes, along with all the other means of deception that they wield. Therefore both parties are heavily supported by huge donations from the capitalists, since both are their servants against the interests of the working class.

Similarly the visibility of newspaper columnists and talk show performers, with their frequent tirades against one or another politician, up to and including the president, reinforces the illusion that there is freedom of speech and of the press in particular, and that the U.S. differs from more obviously dictatorial societies in this respect. This freedom is tightly confined, however, to

those writers and speakers who subscribe thoroughly to the basis of the capitalist system and to the cause of U.S. supremacy both militarily and economically in the inter-imperialist rivalry. No writer/speaker is permitted by either newspaper or radio/TV station owners to condemn capitalism everywhere and call for communist revolution. It is this ideological control, in the media, schools, universities, places of worship, and other institutions, that grants the ruling class almost complete immunity from working class rebellion most of the time.

Which leads to the final point: Democracy, or rule by the people as a whole, cannot exist in a divided society, whether divided by class interests or by sexism or racism. No people as a whole can rule themselves in their own interests when there is no commonality of interests.

Consider that under capitalist “democracy” – defined as our having the right to vote, but only on those things that the ruling class decides we are allowed to vote on – most votes come out nearly tied, with few exceptions. This means that almost always nearly half the voters have imposed on them something they don’t want. That’s because the things on which we are allowed to vote don’t really make as much difference to us as things that we are not allowed to vote on, such as whether layoffs should be illegal, whether racist or sexist discrimination should bring a heavy fine, whether pollution and CO₂ emissions should be illegal, or whether the military should be allowed to invade other countries and soak up huge amounts of money that would otherwise go toward things we need such as health, education, or ending homelessness.

In a society not divided by class interests but rather ruled by the working class, while we might or might not decide whether voting is the method we want to use for any particular decision, most votes would likely be overwhelming if not unanimous. And if the sentiment were not overwhelmingly in one direction or another, there would be more discussion until consensus, or near consensus, was reached. Which is one reason that voting would generally become superfluous, in favor of adequate discussion and consensus. Looked at in this light, voting under capitalism can be seen to be nothing but a deception by the ruling class to make us think we are in control.

The fathers of the U.S. government were clear on their ideas of how to control the masses of working-class citizens. *The Federalist Papers* is a collection of writings designed to convince the wealthy classes, both landowners and owners of industry, of the need for a particular form of government. The three authors of the 85 papers in this collection were James Madison (the fourth president and lead author of the constitution, as well as a slave-owning Virginia planter), Alexander Hamilton (the first Secretary of the Treasury), and John Jay (son of a wealthy merchant and the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court). In paper number 10, Madison argued that his class required a republic as the preferred form of government to serve

their class interests, rather than a democracy. Madison explains that a democracy is “a society consisting of a small number of citizens, who assemble and administer the government in person.” He further explains that a republic, in contrast to a democracy, is one in which the voters decide who will decide. That is, the voters will not themselves make important decisions about how the country should be run, but rather they will only be permitted to choose those who will in fact make those decisions.

Of course, in the early days of the republic, only a very small percentage of the population was even permitted to vote on their choice of who should make decisions for them. In the ensuing almost century and a half, the ruling class has discovered that, in conceding to the many struggles for expansion of eligibility to vote (suffrage), they actually derive benefit from letting the vast majority of the population vote on who will make the decisions, as that has successfully built the illusion that the “people” rule, without in any way interfering with the ability of the capitalists to be the sole exercisers of that rule.

Furthermore, the relevance of who rules the government may be best grasped in the context of the daily lives of workers. At any particular point in time, for adults who are finished with school, each of us either has a job outside the home, or we don’t. It is the job, or its lack, and its insecurities that govern almost all our waking hours, either directly while we are at work or indirectly when we come home fatigued, discouraged, and, more often than not, unhappy with the meaningless of what we do. Weekends for many of us become escapes from an otherwise awful existence. At work, even if we enjoy what we do, the profit from our labor belongs not to us, but to our bosses.

For black and Latino workers, things are even worse – much worse – than for white workers, as bad as those conditions are. The threat and widespread reality of imprisonment (described in the section above on freedom) – a systematic part of the so-called “war on drugs,” but really a war on black and Latino workers – is used to coerce workers to accept the worst working and living conditions and the lowest incomes. The brutal threats and attacks on immigrant workers by the Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement cops coerce workers into acceptance of the most back-breaking and lowest-paying jobs, and force them to hide in fear from the authorities round the clock. The destruction of welfare by President Clinton forced millions of women into slave-labor situations with lower incomes and increased child-care expenses. Racism is an inherent part of capitalism and alone gives the lie to the concept of democracy, just as do exploitation, sexism, and all other aspects of capitalist oppression.

Looked at in this way, with little to no control over the conditions that occupy almost all our waking hours, what

can it possibly mean to say we live in a democracy? What can it possibly mean to say that “we the people” govern the conditions of our lives? What the ruling class calls “democracy” is clearly a scam.

Patriotism, or nationalism, is another distraction that is offered to mask the absence of a commonality of interests between workers and bosses, and is inflicted on all workers around the world to enlist the loyalty of one nation’s workers, against their own class interests, in genocidal wars against workers of other nations for the gain of the imperialist ruling classes.

Patriotism/nationalism, while appearing to unite “insiders,” is always directed against “outsiders.” Comedians Mel Brooks and Carl Reiner, in their routine “The 2000-Year-Old Man,” has Reiner asking the Old Man if they had national anthems during the cave-dwelling era, to which Brooks replies that they did and sings an example of one anthem that captures the essence of patriotism/nationalism: “They can all go to hell except for cave number 76.”

To the extent that patriotism/nationalism is accepted by the working class, it can only divide the workers of one nation from workers of other nations, creating an obstacle to the recognition of our common interests world over. Real democracy requires that everyone in the world share common interests, and that, in turn, requires a system that eliminates exploiting classes and is comprised only of workers, who labor freely (or as freely as possible) for each others’ well being. That system is called communism – a system run by the world’s workers, in which our common interests can be satisfied through a form of democracy, called democratic centralism, in which all workers collectively participate in society, together carrying out, those actions that will best serve the needs of all.

The main task of the working class and its communist leadership is to overcome the many divisions and to build out of the massive working class of the world an army capable of forcibly taking power away from the small classes of capitalists everywhere and their political, military, and police vassals. And, as described in the previous section, that will require our ability to work under fascist, police state conditions, since that will be the condition to which the capitalist ruling class will turn when the power of their class is challenged.

Competition

Lastly let’s examine what competition really means for the working class, as well as for the capitalists. As businesses compete with each other and try to beat each other to sell their products, some businesses will inevitably outdo others, and the others will be stuck with products that they can’t sell as quickly as they would like and are therefore threatened with a loss of

some potential profits and, if bad enough, even absolute loss of their invested capital. Rather than lose profits when they can’t sell their products, they cut their costs by laying workers off, and even those capitalists who can sell their products are continually replacing many workers with machinery and speeding up the remaining workers. The latter process they refer to as increasing “productivity” and unashamedly claim that increasing productivity, despite the inevitable layoffs it causes, is good for both workers and capitalists. After all, they say, this represents progress. Progress for whom? – that they don’t say. In effect, the competition among capitalists is carried out over our sick, injured, and often dead bodies.

Competition is all around us under capitalism, so that we often don’t even notice how harmful it is. In fact, capitalist ideologists tell us from the moment we understand language that this is a natural condition in human society. They train us to revel in competition through such things as sports and other contests. The following quote from the ex-president of Shell Oil Company is typical (Hofmeister):

Why are the Olympic Games so eagerly anticipated? Why is the World Cup the most important event in the world every four years? Why do the World Series, Super Bowl, and Final Four matter in the United States? Why do political junkies like me stay up all night to watch election returns of races clear across the country? People love competition. It’s important to us. It’s a life force. It’s also fun, exciting, keeping us on the edges of our seats. It brings out the best in us and rewards those who win. There are intrinsic and extrinsic satisfactions to being or choosing a winner.

Indeed we have all been taught almost from birth to “love competition” and to find it “fun” and “exciting” and to believe that it “brings out the best in us.” But the “best” of what? And “fun” for everyone? After all, consider that while sportscasters and spectators as well as participants always concentrate on who is the winner, we are rarely reminded that for every winner there are one or more losers. Rarely, that is, unless we are among those losers. Hardly ever are we reminded that every sports event or contest produces people who will lose and who will be unfortunate at least psychologically and often monetarily. Competition inevitably produces an assault on well-being in some, and often in most, whether participants or fans. It fosters an individualist concentration on one’s own welfare, whether real or imagined, and works to destroy class solidarity. What is said by this major capitalist boss to be “the best in us” comes down to selfish, individual reward, when what all of us really need is selfless cooperation for the welfare of our entire class. Competition is not good for us therefore, and it is certainly not natural.

In order to maximize profits, competition lies at the heart of the need of all capitalist businesses to enlarge their market share at the expense of their rivals.

Therefore it becomes a life-and-death need under conditions of competition that each capitalist corporation has to maximize profits and expand the business. But the ironic aspect of competition among capitalist businesses is that winners buy up losers and become bigger and bigger until eventually there is monopoly, and competition is temporarily, at least in that line of business, ended. Ended, that is, until foreign capitalists move into their markets, as, for example, the Japanese auto manufacturers did to GM, Ford, and Chrysler in the early 1970's. Capitalist competition, therefore, has the inherent tendency to abolish itself, even though international rivalries prolong and renew the process, and domestically from time to time new firms arise to challenge the monopolists, but, coming late as they do, they are at a distinct disadvantage. Capitalist competition, in short, is unstable, with amplifying feedback toward monopolistic self-destruction. Advocates of the free market pretend that this is not so, and claim that there are stabilizing forces *within* the market. But the only forces that have ever (temporarily) interrupted this internal destabilizing tendency toward monopoly are interventions from the government or other national capitalist classes, i.e., from *outside* the market.

When considered on a national scale, with competition arising from capitalists of other nations, each nation's capitalist class is forced, whether they want to or not, to fight in a different arena than simply trying to grab more market share. In short, they are forced to grab resources and cheap labor, as well as markets, wherever they exist in the world. In an age where there are no longer new lands to conquer, ever since the end of the 1800's, this can only be done through war with competing capitalist nations. Under these conditions the capitalist nations are termed imperialists, and inter-imperialist rivalry in this day and age is the direct or indirect cause of absolutely every war in the world, whether a small local proxy war or a world war. War represents the greatest government subsidy to business, all at the expense of workers' enforced contributions – through our deaths and taxes.

While the capitalist governments always make up a fictional reason to go to war in order to gain the loyalty of the working class of that particular nation – such as “weapons of mass destruction,” “humanitarian reasons,” “we were attacked,” “if they take over that other country we will soon be conquered,” and scores of other pretexts – the real reason is always economic competition on an international level. On the other hand, the ruling classes would not be able to induce the working class to fight for them if they told the truth. So imperialist governments are absolutely forced to lie, continually. And, as the Nazis proved to the world, the bigger the lie the more workers will believe it – thinking falsely that, if it were not true, no one could get away with it – yet another illusion about those with the thinly veiled power to command the media and schools, both public and private.

Inter-imperialist rivalry is why the U.S. ruling class, through their government, is sending working-class men and women (usually not their own sons and daughters) to kill other workers, and to risk death themselves, in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is why the U.S. fought in Korea, Vietnam, and the first Gulf War. This is why World Wars I and II developed, first among European and Asian imperialist nations and later involving the U.S., and killed tens of millions of workers and others. Competition, with its inevitable outgrowths, is truly a death sentence for millions.

But there is a second way that competition among capitalists, and their need to continually maximize their profits, constitutes a death sentence for millions of workers. That is through the depletion and waste of the world's resources and the continual production of pollution of our air and water, as well as food. The main effect of this is not only the depletion of fresh water and arable land, but even more important in the long run, the filling of the atmosphere with oil, coal, and natural gas-derived global warming, with the ruination of the glaciers that provide the water to drink, to wash in, and to grow food, and with the rise in sea level that will eventually force billions to move inland and create dislocations of populations that will have unimaginable consequences for the working class (see the article “Global Warming Driven by the Profit System – Only Communism Can Create a Better Sustainable World” in the Winter 2010 issue of *The Communist* magazine, also available on www.plp.org).

Since competition manifestly has so many harmful effects on the working class around the world, again myths have to be built to create the illusion that competition is good for us. This is done in part through the myth that competition among capitalist businesses pushes them to improve the quality of their products, resulting in better products for the “consumer” – a catch-all word that, like the word “public,” is designed to hide the class nature of capitalist society. But instead of improving the quality of products, which could cost the capitalists more money, they reduce quality to the least they can get away with. Furthermore to divert our attention, they design newer and newer products that the advertising industry very successfully convinces us we really need, or at least want. The advertising industry is a massive waste of social resources that benefits only the capitalists and diverts our personal resources.

Then there are products and services that we do really need, such as housing, vaccines, antibiotics, nutritious food, safety devices, real education, health care, clean sustainable energy – the list is almost endless – that don't necessarily produce the best profits for the capitalists and may even cut into the profits of the most powerful ones. As a result, the working class is robbed of the opportunity to produce these things or to continually improve their quality.

But perhaps the two most devastating immediate results of world wide capitalist competition are its continual inter-imperialist wars and unemployment. CHALLENGE (PLP's newspaper) has written much about wars in virtually every issue. So here we examine unemployment. The underlying cause of the instability in employment is the instability in profits caused by competition among capitalists, combined with the control over employment by the capitalists. Competition, as we have said, is built into the system in a way that the capitalists cannot do away with it, even if they would want to do so.

Unemployment denies access to the means of survival. It creates hopelessness and, in a few, a resignation to a life of what the capitalists hypocritically call crime – including drug dealing, robbery, and even murder. These are indeed crimes against the working class, but virtually everything the capitalists do *legally* is an even greater crime. Their politicians make the laws that arbitrarily define some actions as legal and others as illegal. Morality – however that might be defined in a class divided society – has nothing to do with legality, though equating the two is a secondary myth fostered by the ruling class.

As one comrade once put it in a song many years ago:

*When some have lots of money
And others haven't a dime,
That's when law and order
Is another word for crime.*

And as another comrade put it in another song, about the massive Attica prison rebellion in 1971:

*Who are the criminals,
And where do they dwell?
Inside a prison cell block,
Or in a plush hotel?*

And as the early 20th century German communist poet and playwright, Bertolt Brecht, put it:

*What is the crime of robbing a bank compared to
the crime of owning one?*

Still another example of legal crime is the profiteering by weapons manufacturers, derived from the killing of workers by the thousands on the streets – whether by cops, drug gangs, or accidents – and by the millions in war. Hundreds of other examples of crimes against the working class, that are declared legal by the lawmakers, could be given.

But perhaps the greatest ongoing peacetime crime committed by all capitalists, in their quest to maximize their profits, is that not-so-silent killer, unemployment – the result of layoffs, firings, and discrimination in hiring. Unemployment causes deaths by stress, poverty, starvation, exposure, and sometimes by drug addiction and the resulting petty crime. An increase in the official unemployment rate by 1.4% leads to 30,000 additional deaths over the next five years, by all the above means and others, as CHALLENGE has many times reported

(from a 1971 Congressional report), most recently (as of this writing) in the 9/8/10 issue, p. 6.

The misery caused by unemployment does not need to be compared with the misery brought about by imperialist wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and many other countries, with the deaths of over a million Iraqis and hundreds of thousands of Afghans, the maiming of one's children and other relatives, and the deliberate bombing destruction of entire infrastructural aspects such as fresh water, hospitals, roads, and schools. All these crimes spell a degree of misery that cannot effectively be described in words, but are experienced by millions – all a result of inter-imperialist competition among capitalists for resources, markets, and cheap labor, with no international legal framework to declare these wars illegal or with the power to enforce penalties for violation.

The misery caused by unemployment has its own character, well recognized by those victimized by it, and feared by those who have not yet felt its sting, though a diminishing segment of the working class comes under that category. Let's examine what "unemployment" really means.

Let's start with the question: What is the opposite of unemployment? The answer depends on which economic system is considered. Under capitalism the opposite of unemployment is full employment, though, for reasons we will show below, full employment under capitalism is a figment of the imagination and can never occur in practice *even momentarily, and certainly cannot occur over any significant span of time.*

On the other hand, under our future of communism – when the working class, rather than the then extinct capitalist class, will rule the world – the opposite of unemployment will *not* exist because there will be *no such thing* as employment, let alone unemployment. Yet every single one of us who is mentally and physically capable will be enabled to contribute to the well-being of our entire class through useful work organized by our class. That, however, will not be the same as the concept of employment under capitalism, let alone full employment.

Why do we say there will be no such thing as employment under communism? Underlying the concept of employment is a hidden feature of capitalism that one doesn't often think about, but becomes clear on reflection. Consider what employment literally means: think about what we mean when we say we "*employ* a hammer" or "*employ* a stove" or "*employ* a technique." We mean "*use* a hammer," etc.

And that's precisely what is meant under capitalism when we say a worker is "employed," namely the worker is "used" – used by the capitalist owner of the business. And used for what? To make profit for the capitalist. So that when workers are employed under capitalism, the workers are being used for a *purpose* that is not under the control of the workers, and therefore also under

conditions that are not under the control of the workers. In particular, as Marx showed in *Capital*, the capitalists' profits are derived from the hidden underpayment of the workers for their labor time (see the PLP pamphlet *Political Economy: A Communist Critique of the Wage System*, available on our website www.plp.org).

Why, when a job is even available, do we submit to being used for someone else's purposes and gain? Because, as we have pointed out in the section on freedom above, that's the only way under capitalism that we and our families can survive. If we are able to find a job, we strike a devil's bargain because to refuse to do so spells our death and that of our families, from starvation and exposure. And when jobs are not available, capitalism forces workers to band together to demand jobs, which represents a hidden way of fighting to be exploited – an action that is called for by the need to survive in capitalist society. No good choices here.

How did such a lack of choice for workers arise? The capitalists, through their control over the means of force and violence (the police, courts, prisons, and military), guard and prevent our access to the means of survival. This is nakedly true for immigrant workers who face the violent and racist Border Patrol in the Mexican border states, though far less so in the Canadian border states (a nakedly racist distinction). But this daily threat, if not reality, of official state violence is just as prevalent for all workers throughout all countries to varying degrees. This is most intensively so in urban areas, where the trained racism of police forces induces them to murder at will and where they are granted complete impunity by the ruling classes, with rare exceptions where workers collectively rise up to demand justice.

Over the last several centuries the capitalists have literally stolen these means of survival – both the raw materials and the labor that turns these materials into usable products – *our* labor. They have done this by throwing peasants off their land and seizing the land for themselves, forcing the peasants to become workers for the capitalists – part of what forces Mexican and other Latin American workers to look for work in the U.S. even today – and by enslaving Africans, American Indians, and European indentured servants directly (see *Political Economy: A Communist Critique of the Wage System*, www.plp.org).

While some workers are lucky enough to have jobs that seem satisfying for their own sake, most who even have jobs find that their jobs are at best unsatisfying and at worst extremely oppressive. In the first category are many teachers, health care workers, social workers, and other jobs that permit some level of serving the interests of our class, but even that is extremely limited under capitalism and often at best we find ourselves ignoring those limitations in favor of concentrating on what we are able to accomplish.

Yet even if the job carries a level of satisfaction, we are almost always being used by capitalists, unless we are self-employed, a status associated with its own problems, such as paying both halves of the FICA tax in at least the U.S. and the significant chance of going bankrupt. And even if we are self-employed, we are often being *indirectly* used by the capitalists, as they don't have to pay for whatever service we may provide. The most often cited and most glaring example of this type of self-employment is the category of "housewife" and parent, in which mainly women are forced to keep a household running and raise children to become future employees for the capitalists, and all for no direct pay from the future employers.

Why is the concept of full employment a figment of the imagination under capitalism? Full employment is an imaginary condition in which every worker needing a job – which is the ticket to some limited access to the means of survival – has access to a job. This, however, even if possible for a brief time, *would not be a stable condition* because the needs of the capitalist employers are unstable, and they can hire and fire or layoff at will, hindered to some degree only by the united strength of workers in a local situation in unions. The instability can be traced to *competition* among capitalists, but results in forcing competition on the working class in the following way. The mere existence of an unemployed pool of workers aids the capitalists by enhancing the competition among workers for jobs and thereby permitting the lowering of wages – an example of supply outpacing demand. Worse yet, the capitalists use racism and sexism to prevent worker unity, dividing the working class into different categories by race, gender, or national origin in order to promote the idea that one or more groups of workers are the reason for the unemployment problems of other groups – whether causing men to blame women, white workers to blame black, Latin, or Native American workers, or citizen workers to blame immigrant workers. Oddly, and demonstrating the power of pervasive capitalist ideology to blind us to reality, white workers don't generally blame other white workers for their problems, though it is just as much true that when jobs are scarce and any one worker is "lucky" enough to get a job, some other worker is blocked from that job. Again, competition, aided by racist/sexist/nationalist ideology, ends up harming the working class.

Communism is the only antidote to these capitalist evils

The opposite of competition is cooperation, and while there are many occurrences of cooperation even under capitalism, only the complete absence of competition can produce general well-being. Only cooperation can produce winners with no losers. Why should we settle for a system that always produces losers? Particularly when losing under capitalism often spells death. Capitalism is like a

gigantic gladiator sport, in which only some of those who enter the ring will leave it alive, and even the survivors suffer varying degrees of misery.

Communism will bring about cooperation without necessitating the production of losers. It will do so by permitting everyone to contribute to the general welfare through our work, and participation in sporting events can then be for exercise and fun without the necessity of keeping score. Capitalism generally means that the economic winners will always be found among the capitalists, while all workers are losers. Let's face it, this death-dealing system needs to be destroyed and replaced by communism.

A communist system is one run by the world's working class under the leadership of its communist party for the benefit of our entire class around the world. In such a system, work is for the purpose of contributing to the welfare of our class, not just ourselves and our families. All our needs will then be able to be distributed without money, and based on need. We will only produce those things we need instead of the continuing proliferation of unnecessary products whose only purpose is to make profit for capitalists. Then we will be able to do away with wasteful use of resources and the pervasive pollution that sickens and kills millions.

But even when the necessities of life are distributed in the future without money, they will not be free, since each of us will have to work in order to contribute to their production. In that communist future, however, collective work will be seen and felt as liberating, while money, rather than having been a liberator under capitalism,

will be seen to have been an obstacle to freedom – by having been the only available pathway to acquiring our individual survival needs and subjecting us to use by the capitalists as wage slaves.

Perhaps most important in the immediate future, then and only then will we be able to do away with wars – wars that derive only from competition between capitalists for markets, labor, and resources, and that kill millions of workers while capitalists sit home counting their shares of the “root of evil.”

And most important for our long-term future, the current capitalism-caused climate change can then and only then be brought under control, though it has already started on a course that will be very difficult to reverse. Global warming already causes, and threatens to accelerate, violent weather events that kill hundreds of thousands, as well as the twin water disorders of drought and flooding. Such deaths will become preventable under communism, even in the face of such events, and they will become rarer once we find ways to reverse the warming.

Only through an organized, communist-led armed revolution by millions of workers around the world, that overthrows the power of the capitalists, destroys their murderous exploitative system, and replaces it with a communist-led working class cooperative system, can an end be put to the Land of the Free and the Home of the Slave. Join and build the PLP to hasten the day that this noble goal is reached around the world. Help throw off the myths and illusions that confuse and blind us. We and our children and grandchildren need and deserve no less.

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Editor's Note: This pamphlet, which was published over 45 years ago, continues to be an important tool for communists today. As we struggle to win workers to fight for communism and the dictatorship of the working class, we inevitably face the same contradiction that the old movement had to deal with – Reform and Revolution. Right opportunism, making reform politics primary, was the main weakness of the old communist movement and a weakness within our Party today. However, our practice of criticism and self-criticism allows us to learn and correct these practices. There are also many parts of our line that has changed since this document came out. For example, we no longer believe in winning people to groups like WAM (Workers Action Movement), but instead winning them straight to PLP. We no longer advocate “30 for 40” instead we fight to win workers to abolish the wage system.

Nonetheless, we still feel as though this is an important document and urge all members to discuss it with other comrades and friends as we continue to analyze our work in the fight towards communist revolution.

REFORM AND REVOLUTION (1976)

Ever since the founding of our Party, PLP has put forward communist revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the working class – led by a communist party – seizing state power.

There have been many changes in our line over the years. While the line has constantly moved to the Left, we have found ourselves applying far too much of our time and thinking to building militant reform struggle rather than revolution. The roots of this contradictory development will be traced shortly, but it should be stated now that unless we *fit the reform struggle into revolutionary politics and not vice-versa*, no matter what we say, we will become a revisionist party, that is, a party that accommodates itself to – and works within the framework of – the capitalist system.

Pursuing reform or revolution involves two totally different tasks. Reform *builds* the system (tries to make it work better); revolution *destroys* it. Therefore, the theory and action of trying to win immediate reform demands can never, in and of itself, lead to a revolution. By definition, it is not designed to do that.

We participate in reform struggles in order to get the opportunity to put forward communist ideas and goals. These communist ideas *cannot be drawn from the reform struggle itself*. Workers do not come to Marxist-Leninist conclusions merely from working on the assembly line.

These ideas must come from outside the reform struggle and are directly opposed to reformist goals or working within and building capitalism. Communist ideas have always been brought to workers from outside the reform struggle itself, from Marx to Stalin to the present day.

The Party's role, therefore, is to make a revolution that destroys the system, not to make reforms and build it. The Party leads people in reform struggle to the goal of a better union or of rank-and-file power. Building the Party is primary, not building the union, although a by-product of building the Party, of building for a revolution, can be, and often is, a better union.

Obviously we have improved in trying to put forward revolution rather than reform, compared to years ago. Yet as the line moves to the Left, our practice tends to trail this movement, tends to move more in the direction of primarily fighting militantly in the union to throw out the sellouts, to run for elections, to go into a strike with the main idea of “winning the strike,” or building militant picket lines, etc. And correspondingly, we judge “victory” or “defeat” based on whether or not we achieve these reform goals. We tend far less to think in terms of how well Challenge-Desafio was sold, how many subscriptions were bought, how much anti-racist struggle was organized, how much workers were pointed in the direction of seeing the necessity to take state power, how many workers and

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others were recruited to the Party on the understanding of the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Our main goal in going into virtually every strike has been building the strike and a militant, democratic union, not building the Party and revolutionary ideas.

Thus, we tend to spread the illusion – and are victims of it ourselves – that to build a militant reform struggle, a democratic union or strike is to be Left (revolutionary). But militant reform struggle does not lead to revolution. It didn't in the 1930's when communists organized 5,000,000 workers into the CIO; it didn't in the 1960's in the civil rights movement and the ghetto rebellions; and it didn't during the anti-Vietnam war movement which involved millions in militant action against U.S. imperialist war. Even insurrectionary armed struggle does not spontaneously lead to communist class consciousness and the establishment of socialism.

Reform and Revolution

Reform, militant or otherwise, is not revolution. The movement for reform and revolution are two parallel movements. Fighting to reform the system will not lead to its overthrow, to revolution. In the sense that fighting strictly, or even mainly, to reform – patch up – the system spreads illusions that capitalism can be reformed. In this sense, reform politics are completely divorced from revolutionary politics. In this sense, fighting for reforms will never lead to revolution. Of course, if communists fight in, and even lead, the reform struggle with the idea of tying that struggle to revolutionary ideas, of showing how merely fighting for reforms is a dead end, that it will never change our lives for the better because capitalism will always take back any gains in another form – if we do that in the reform struggle, we will be concentrating on the main function of a communist: winning workers directly to revolutionary ideology, to joining the party, to fighting for state power for the working class.

Yet, for the most part, we have ended up concentrating on trying to lead the reform struggle to victory under capitalism. We haven't participated in the reform struggle as one tactic in the revolutionary process. Most of the time it has become our all-consuming passion, with the tacking on – virtually as an afterthought – the necessity to destroy, not reform, the system, to make a revolution. Because of that, we rarely go into a reform struggle with the main instrument with which the working class will make a revolution. Therefore, the implied conclusion is that somehow a revolutionary struggle will grow out of militant reform battles. It won't. (See Lenin: What Is To Be Done, Chapter III, Section A).

Revolution and Reform: Two Sides of a Contradiction

To better understand how and why we in PLP have allowed reformism to dominate our actions, we should look at revolution and reform more dialectically, as two sides of a contradiction. In every contradiction there is a unity of opposites. In this instance, we would agree that, on the one hand, we can't just shout revolution at workers and expect one to happen. We must participate in the reform struggle. On the other hand, we also agree that we can't simply participate in reform struggle limiting ourselves to reform goals; we must raise the need for revolution, the need for the working class to take state power, and therefore the need to build a party. So here, in the necessity to fight for revolution while we also work in the reform movement, there is a unity of opposites.

Yet, in every contradiction there is a primary aspect and a secondary aspect. The primary aspect determines the essence of a thing. For instance, in bourgeois or capitalist society, the main contradiction is between two classes, the bosses and the workers. But the primary aspect of that contradiction is that the bosses hold state power and control all production and distribution of all value created by the workers. It is this primary aspect that determines this society to be a bourgeois or capitalist society.

Similarly, as regards to building a revolutionary movement: although there are two aspects to this – reform and revolution – one is primary and will determine the essence of what we are building. Too often we view both aspects as equal, and that therefore if we “do both” (the unity indicated above), we will achieve our goal of revolution. This belies material reality. When our anti-communist enemies accuse us of not really being interested in the immediate reform (“you just want to use the reform struggle for your ‘ulterior motive’ of building your party”)! they are actually saying that revolution and reform are contradictory. We have been trained to resolve that contradiction in a reformist way, by saying, “No, the two aspects are compatible; in fact, if we have a strong revolutionary Party we are more likely to win the reform.”

Yes, while revolution and reform do – in one sense – go hand-in-hand, they are also contradictory. One, if pursued to its inherent logical conclusion, would destroy capitalism and build socialism; the other, if pursued to its inherent logical conclusion, maintains capitalism. If we must do both, revolution and reform, which is primary in our work? Again, the primary aspect determines the essence of what our Party is building, a revolutionary movement or a reformist movement.

This essence came out sharply in the old Communist

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Party during the late 1940's. When the ruling class mounted a ferocious anti-communist offensive, they forced all union officials by law (the fascist Taft-Hartley law) to sign non-communist affidavits if they were to remain as union officials. The C.P. leaders of unions virtually all decided to resign from the party, sign the affidavits and continue as union officials, on the "theory" that they must sacrifice politics to "save the union" ("but in our hearts we're still communists"). We'd characterize this as an abject sellout of principle. But when we're faced with essentially the same choice, although on a lower level, we act to prove ourselves in the reform struggle as real militants, "win the respect of the workers as fighters" (for reform), and then introduce our revolutionary politics, later. We therefore build a good base for reformism, and when the struggle gets sharp (in a strike, etc.), it is our friends (not our anti-communist enemies) who say to us, "don't sell C-D" "don't raise your Party", etc. In life, by concentrating on reform work in a reformist way, we have made reform the principal aspect of the contradiction. The working class has recognized this and acted accordingly. And, just as happened with the old C.P., we will end up with a revisionist, sellout party if we pursue this path to its ultimate conclusion.

We cannot win workers to communist ideology if we come off to them, in practice as "better reformers," as promisers of reform victory.

First, if we do win an immediate reform gain without the main idea of tying reform struggle to the necessity to make a revolution – to take state power – then it will only reinforce the idea among the rank and file participating in the reform struggle that you can win under capitalism – therefore, why do you need a communist revolution?

Secondly, whatever gain might be won will always be reversed by the capitalist class because it has state power and can always take back the gain in another form. Thirdly, with communists in leadership the bosses might deliberately take a harder line and refuse to grant anything just to "prove" to workers they can do better without communist leadership. And they have the power and resources in this period to outlast workers, if they deem it better for them in the long run.

Finally, we will not be able to lead a revolution for state power based on "first" winning power in the unions through militant reform struggle and "then" launching the struggle for state power. First of all, the ruling class will never let revolutionary communists get to the top of the labor movement, and possibly not even to head a big local in steel, auto etc.; they will pull out all necessary stops, including plenty of force and violence to prevent it. Therefore, to prepare workers for that inevitable ruling

class reaction, we would have to raise the need to seize state power right from the beginning of building our base with a group of workers.

Here in the U.S. we often follow a reformist line in opposing the revisionists. We usually center our attack around how they sabotage the reform struggle. This is not the essence of our ideological differences with them; this is not necessarily how they are leading the workers into the bosses' arms. In fact, at times the revisionists themselves criticize the union leaders; some are militant and even build a base.

Here again: Oppose the revisionists on revolutionary grounds, not reform ones; show that they put forward sharing power with the "good" bosses, that they believe the ruling class will give up its rule peacefully, while revolutionaries understand that there are no "good" bosses (only bad ones with different tactics on how to exploit workers); that no ruling class ever gave up its power peacefully, and that therefore we must destroy what is essentially a dictatorship of the bosses and replace it with a dictatorship of the working class, of the proletariat; furthermore, that the revisionists are nationalists and in practice oppose the time honored internationalist slogan of "workers of the world unite!" It is on these and similar grounds that we should oppose the revisionists, not on who does better in the reform struggle.

Recruit to Revolution, Not to a Reformist Line

Even recruiting to the Party is not necessarily a measure of whether or not we are pursuing a correct, revolutionary course since we can – and do – easily recruit workers and others on a reformist basis. Two million workers belong to the Italian C.P.; they have been recruited on the basis that the "communists" will bring them more under capitalism. Recruiting by itself doesn't mean building the Party. Recruiting on a revolutionary political line means building the Party.

The further danger of recruiting people on a militant reform line is that once the ruling class succeeds in reversing the gains won through the militant reform, once the first dip in the reform struggle comes along, this new recruit winds up leaving the Party. They do not have the staying power of revolutionary ideas and commitment to a long-range, protracted revolutionary struggle for the seizure of power. But, if we have already recruited people on a reform basis, we shouldn't now ask them to leave; we should attempt to consolidate them on the basis of revolutionary ideas and struggle.

All this does *not* mean we get out of the reform struggle.

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It does not mean we don't go to union meetings, that we don't run for union election, etc. It *does* mean that we pursue these activities and others in the reform struggle with the eye to building the party, with the goal of how do we use the union – as one aspect of the fight for revolution – to recruit to the Party and to the idea of the working class seizure of state power. We advocate, participate and even initiate struggle in the reform movement, but within the context of building for a revolution (which means building the Party). It is necessary not just to win reforms (which, by itself builds capitalist ideology, that you can reform the system), but to move masses to revolution.

We are using the reform struggle as a tactic in building a revolutionary movement that will not stop at the useless and impossible aim of reforming capitalism but will enable the working class and its allies to use the party to make a revolution. Communists want workers to use their strength as a class to overthrow their oppressors, and that can only be accomplished by building a revolutionary party – which they must join – and has that as its only goal.

The fact is that our Party has made its biggest advances when we have raised our revolutionary politics front and center as our main activity. This was true in raising the anti-Vietnam war movement to an anti-imperialist level. It was certainly true in organizing and carrying out our May Day action in Boston in 1975. It was then and around other May Days that the largest number of workers have seen the need to join the Party and build for a revolution, not simple stick to reforms. If we just put forward our revolutionary politics for a few weeks before May Day, the workers view us as militant reformers the rest of the year and then it is harder to understand the major political issues raised around May Day – the fight for Communism, internationalism, the dictatorship of the proletariat, etc.

Putting revolution primary and reform struggle secondary means building for something like May Day all year round. It means building a communist base who we can go to about participating in such an important Party activity. Otherwise May Day will get smaller and smaller.

Our Paper Spreads Our Ideas

If winning workers to revolution is primary, then nowhere are these ideas spread more widely than through the pages of Challenge-Desafio. Increasing the sale of, and subscriptions to, C-D, is not just some numbers game but part and parcel of the fight to win thousands of workers and others to the Party's ideas. It should lead us to many new recruits, workers thirsting for the real

solutions to their problems. It can provoke discussions about revolutionary ideas among thousands and tens of thousands, if they are given the opportunity by us to read the paper regularly.

One reason we often view the reform struggle as primary is because we believe the revolutionary struggle is either too distant or impossible. Often we tend to see the objective situation in a limited and static sense. For example, some of us do not believe the ruling class is in a state of accelerated decline. Therefore, it is very hard for us to accept the Party's line on war and fascism. Sometimes we are frustrated because the class struggle appears to be quiet. It seems that the working class will always submit to the dictates of the ruling class. Consequently, if our thinking is dominated by the fact that the bosses are on top, and that this is permanent reality, then our attention must turn from a revolution to reform.

If we believe reality to be a passive working class that won't fight back, then we will abandon a revolutionary perspective. At "best," we will stay in the reform struggle. And, if we don't accept the Party line about war and fascism, don't understand that the only way to defeat these capitalist developments is by revolution, we will never see the urgency of building our Party.

These weaknesses occur in all of us because we don't have an historical basis and historical information about the inevitability of change and the inevitability of the revolutionary process. Particularly unfortunate is the fact that we don't draw the proper conclusion from recent important political events. For example, while it's true that the anti-Vietnam war movement and the black rebellions were not revolutionary, the fact is that both these developments shook the ruling class to its heels.

These were two major upheavals in our short lifetime, both shook the ruling class badly. But the fact is that these upheavals did happen! The other reality is that without a revolutionary party in the leadership of these movements they will peter out.

We should encourage insurrection; every upheaval should see our party grow, leading to faster and continuous struggle in which we and the working class move to the left and to revolution. Strikes, or even general strikes – both of which are goals we seek – are not the quintessence of the struggle. We must learn how to direct these struggles into open rebellion against the ruling class, challenging them for state power. More and more workers must be won to the outlook of state power.

If our revolutionary outlook were staunch, then our revolutionary will would grow.

Our problem, as stated, is that our revolutionary outlook

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has been limited in the first place. But our illusions in reformism have persisted or even grown. So what often seems to be a weakening of revolutionary will, is in fact our loss of reformist will. This loss *can* and *must* be replaced by revolutionary consciousness. Historical examples, as well as more recent ones should give us overwhelming confidence that the workers can ultimately play their revolutionary role.

Can We Fight in a Revolutionary Way?

The question of fighting in the reform movement in a revolutionary way – for revolutionary ideas – rather than in a reformist way (that maintains and even builds the system and its ideology), is no academic question. In fact it goes right to the heart of why we’re fighting for socialism and on what basis we recruit someone to that fight and to the Party.

If we fight in the reform movement in a reformist way, and tag on the necessity to fight for communism as the way to win the reforms we can’t win under capitalism, we will be planting the seeds of the reversal of Communism once we were to win it. If the reason we fight for Communism is only to win material gains, then what would happen if workers were won to the Party solely on these grounds and did make a revolution? Once the working class has destroyed the capitalists and their ability to reap surplus value (profit) from the labor power of the working class, it does not necessarily mean that each individual worker under Socialism would get the full value of his/her labor power in his/her paycheck, to do with what they will. Where, then, would the social value come from to build whatever workers need in common – hospitals, dams to prevent floods or more factories and machinery to produce whatever the working class decides it needs? Still further, where would the value come from to help revolutionaries elsewhere in the world to take state power, to overthrow the ruling class that not only oppresses them but also has as its aim to destroy Communism where it has already been achieved?

The fact is, under Communism, with the working class in control of the state, it would decide collectively how to apportion the value it produces. It might not mean that every reform demand fought for under capitalism would be met right away, because other social and political needs might be more pressing. But if Socialism were won mainly on the basis of material incentives, rather than the ideological level of preserving and spreading the revolution to make it worldwide, then working class rule would eventually be destroyed, as has happened in the Soviet Union and China.

First, if all Socialism meant was more goods in more hands, we would have had it in the U.S., since the most goods in the hands of the most people exists right here. Secondly, “goulash communism” means forsaking revolutionaries elsewhere, since you’re committed to producing the most for yourself. This creates the basis for your own destruction, since it leads to (1) more powerful bosses outside the Communist state being allowed to exist and aim their guns at you; (2) the drive to produce for the individual rather than for the social good of all; and (3) the opposite of proletarian internationalism, imperialist expansion, where the Soviet revisionist leadership expands its tentacles around the world on the grounds of feathering its own material nest and power.

Still further, winning workers to Socialism based mainly on material incentives (fulfilling the economic reforms not realizable under capitalism), leaves aside the whole superstructure of culture, relations between people, the question of family life, of what values will govern the society – communist or bourgeois values. It leaves aside the whole question of politics. Lenin said, “The economy is primary, but in the epoch of the dictatorship of the proletariat, politics must take absolute priority over economy.”

“To give first importance to politics does not mean to replace the economy with politics and to neglect the economy, allegedly for the sake of politics, but means that each economic problem and the whole development of the economy must be seen through political eyes and be carried out in the direction defined by the proletarian politics...”

What we are mainly fighting for in the reform battles under capitalism – material gain or building a revolutionary party with a revolutionary ideology – will determine on what basis we recruit to the Party, on why we’re fighting for Socialism, and ultimately on whether ideological incentives will overrun, preserve and spread that Socialism or whether material incentives will plant the seeds of its destruction and the restoration of capitalism based on capitalist ideas.

Examples of Reformist Line in Our Practice

In the recent NYC hospital strike (Local 1199), the plan was to build the Party (recruit) and contrast the “demand” of arbitration with the necessity to win through violence, raising the whole communist concept of the need to seize state power.

Now, there was improvement in this strike. PLP leaflets did come out putting forward revolutionary ideas as primary. Some workers were recruited to the Party.

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However, the Party leadership spent entirely too much time giving leadership to the reform struggle (exposing the sellout, organizing stronger picket lines, etc.) and far less time to plans for the two goals mentioned above. Therefore, too little political discussion took place in the clubs. Thus, the larger fraction meetings achieved during the strike became little more than left-wing caucuses. Thus, recruiting would tend to be on a reform, “we’re the good guys” WAM-type basis.

In the 38-day San Francisco city workers strike the Party leadership planned a focus on three points: (1) racism; (2) who controls the city government; and (3) exposing the union leaders as sellouts. The idea was to build the Party around these points.

In practice, fighting racism and linking the strike to the broad political point of how capitalism uses racism to stay afloat (and therefore, why it can only be smashed with a revolution) became a very secondary thing. The question of who controls the city government – basically a question of state power – was nonexistent. This left the exposure of the sellout union leaders as the main point and led to the Party forces trying to become – and sometimes achieving – the tactical leadership of the strike. By not teaching the lesson of the capitalist government – in this particular case, the actual boss – smashing the working class with its state power, and by concentrating on the union sellout issue, even though we led hundreds in militant struggle, the net result was that no city workers were won to the Party.

Still another example is the recent strike by AFSCME Local 1006 in Chicago against racist layoffs and led by the Party. Two Party members were elected to the 1006 executive board, the recording secretary of the local and the chief shop steward. In addition, the editor of the local union paper is a PLP member. Three Party goals should have been: (1) since the strike was a Party-led action against racist layoffs (120 minority workers were axed), a good issue, to broaden this out to oppose the Nazi racist attacks and general ruling class offensive in the city of Chicago; (2) defeat the revisionists ideologically in the union; and (3) recruit to the Party on the above basis.

(1) No fight was made to expand the strike to oppose the broader manifestations of racism, thereby failing to politicize many in a mass way, to understand the relation of the strike to Mayor Daley and the whole ruling class, etc. The strike was restricted to the fight inside the union against layoffs, (2) We allowed the revisionists to run us over ideologically. We backed off selling C-D as “divisive” (it was done, but weakly), when we should have thrown the revisionists out of the union and explained why, (3) When we met with the strike leaders we discussed mainly

how to build the picket lines, not how to build the Party.

All this happened after conducting a long and positive fight in 1006 to actually go on strike, and against layoffs. When it happened and with Party members in leadership, it appears we felt impelled to “win” the strike to show how good the Party members were (“better reformers”), rather than really winning by recruiting to the Party based on revolutionary ideas, at the same time as we participate in a militant strike, using the latter opportunity to make the points we had planned to.

Finally the government/boss fired 300 strikers who were protesting these racist layoffs. Then the AFSCME International sellout Jerry Wurf came down, put the local in receivership, declared the strike over, and connived with the bosses to split the strikers, maintaining the firing of 33 (PLPers and other militants).

The communists who, in attempting to carry out the political fight against racism and thereby organized the strike, were virtually all fired, without, so far, having recruited any workers to the Party out of this struggle. There is no PLP fraction there. Therefore, not only was the revolutionary movement not built, but the bosses, having accomplished their most important aim – lessening communist influence – can now go about driving the workers down still further, with far less communist leadership to contend with.

The entire line of putting reform before revolution has been reflected in our leaflets and C-D articles. We have spent most of the leaflet discussing the ins and outs of the reform struggle, giving good advice on how to militantly overturn the union sellouts’ tactics, and ending up with “PLP fights for communism and workers power; for more information, call us.”

While this may sound too crude, it is essentially what most of us have done. And this is the way our activities have been described in C-D articles. We do that instead of starting out with revolutionary politics, why we are involved in this reform struggle, in what way does it show the need for overthrowing capitalism, in what way does it show capitalism as the cause of the problem, etc., and then spending some time on tactics, growing out of this communist analysis which would imply sharper class struggle and an understanding to act against capitalism.

How did all this happen? Is it wrong to be active in the union, to run for union leadership, to be militant, to immerse one’s self in the working class at the point of production, etc.? Definitely not, but certainly we shouldn’t do it in the one-sided, reform-over-revolution way we’ve done it. The reformist errors described did not result from Party members not carrying out the Party line. It was

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the Party leadership who allowed the line to develop in a one-sided way. The fact is the Party membership followed the example set by the leadership. When the articles appeared in C-D in the fashion described, members could only conclude that this was desirable and followed suit. When the leadership concentrated on the reform struggle, making it primary in practice, the membership followed suit, “carrying out the line.”

Now, based on a review of our practice and where it has gotten us, we are trying to correct these mistakes and develop the line in such a way that it isn’t practiced one-sidedly, so that the advances made each step of the way are not undercut. Advancing our theory and practice is a protracted process, not an all-or-nothing affair. It is a painstaking struggle to constantly test it, evaluate the results, make necessary changes and then test it again, always using the mooring of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the necessity for the working class to seize state power, and the need for a communist party to lead that goal.

At this point it might be helpful to examine the development of our line, especially in the labor movement.

Move Towards the Working Class

When the PLM (Progressive Labor Movement) was first formed in 1962, it was based on the fact that the working class was the key class historically in making a revolution and that it needed a communist party to lead to the smashing of bourgeois state power and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. This was the answer to the old C.P.’s total abandonment of the fight for Socialism. The PLM period (1962-1965) re-asserted the public role of communists (“out in the open, on the streets”), laying the basis for the formation of a party. There was plenty of “reporting” on the role of workers and class struggle but absolutely no communist base-building (there were very few Party members who were workers; at the founding convention of PLP we had one “trade union club” with four members out of 200 people at the convention).

From ‘65 and the establishment of PLP to around ‘68, we attempted to move members to work and into the unions, mostly to try to establish a base within the working class at the point of production and secondarily to get some stability. Since most of our members were students or ex-students, these were the people who “entered” the working class to carry out the line.

The main emphasis was to “get our feet wet” in what Lenin referred as the “muck and mire” of trade unionism. We were going to try to build a rank-and-file movement, caucuses, a left-center coalition, learn trade union and

strike tactics and organize struggle so “Marxist-Leninist conclusions could come out of the struggle.” For students and ex-students to stick in the working class – given many romantic notions of workers – and therefore to avoid adventurism, we opted for opportunism and downplaying the open Party role at the expense of avoiding sectarianism (and getting fired immediately). This meant little putting forward of the Party in the here and now. Most members were not known as PLers by their co-workers.

Developing the Idea of Base-Building

Although the Party was buried for the most part because of this, one important advance in this period was the development of the basebuilding concept which became the main speech at the 1968 party convention. While this was the height of the period of the ghetto rebellions and the anti-war movement, there was very little relation between our activities in those two movements and our work in the labor movement, partly because of the lack of a communist base among workers.

As we began to see that putting students in the “front lines” wouldn’t work and that they either left the Party or they buried themselves at work (and left the Party behind), we pulled many of them out of the industrial working class and put them in situations more related to their backgrounds, some still in unions, others in situations where they could more naturally win their peers to a pro-working class stance.

This period, from ‘69 to ‘71, was characterized by the more mass putting forward of the Party, especially through the mass sale of CD. Members were encouraged to sell the paper in front of their plants, to tell workers about the Party right at the beginning, etc. Sales of the monthly C-D reached 100,000 in the summer of 1970. Sellers’ collectives of Party and non-Party were formed. With the start of the recession 1970, Workers Councils and Unemployment Councils were formed to try to win workers directly to the Party, although done essentially away from the point of production.

In ‘71, with the advent of a big wave of wildcat strikes and general working-class unrest, we suddenly realized we were outside this movement. Members organizing sellers collectives, Unemployment Councils, selling the paper outside plants, etc., were not even attending union meetings and participating in the main mass organization of the working class. They were therefore unable to put forward politics in that struggle. So ‘71-72 marked a return to unions, slates, caucuses, union activity (both by members in unions in which ex-students were naturally accepted on the job, and by those industrial workers

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recruited out of the Councils' work), but this time on the basis of telling co-workers about the Party and the intention to recruit "out of the struggle."

In the beginning of '72, the Workers Action Movement (WAM) was formed to organize a mass-based Left organization around a major issue – 30 for 40. To WAM we would win the most advanced workers who we would then recruit to the Party. Party members would be open in WAM. It would unite the working class, engage in strike support, and fight racism. But the intention was for it to be a single-issue organization, to re-develop the Left inside the labor movement. Actually, WAM developed as a militant, class-solidarity group, with an everything-but-the-dictatorship-of-the-proletariat program. This led to the idea it was "unnecessary to join the Party because it is no different than WAM" and the Party was generally buried in WAM activities (reform work), although some workers were recruited to the Party through WAM. Yet, it was generally on a militant WAM line, not on a revolutionary line.

Fractions, Caucuses and a Mass Party

The period from Dec. '74 to the present was marked by a drive for a mass Party, to recruit those who were hidden from the Party by WAM, etc. Party membership jumped. WAM was dissolved, having outlived any usefulness it might have had, to be replaced by communist fractions (a line which began in Aug. '75). The idea was, and is, to win workers ready to function directly under the leadership and line of the Party, and from there to recruit them. Still ready to join caucuses, we now distinguish between them and fractions – the caucus is not set up to build the Party, although workers could and should be recruited to the Party or fraction out of caucus work.

Fractions were formed on the basis of "linking reform to revolution," seeing that the working class won't get Marxism-Leninism simply by working on the job, nor simply from class struggle at the point of production. The fraction, and the Party members in it, must run the whole gamut of political ideas and events, on and away from the job, since (1) a communist outlook goes far beyond the point of production, and (2) the battle for state power is one that occurs away from the factories, although occupying factories could be one aspect of a revolution. The ability to "take over" production is really dependent upon having state power and outlawing private property. As long as the ruling class has state power, it can use it to prevent workers' control over production.

However, while putting forward communist fractions and the above ideas, we have still managed to organize

fractions that are essentially reformist in nature. That is in "linking reform to revolution," we still use reform struggle as "the basis" of winning workers to the Party, which also means they can be won to the Party on a militant reform line, not on a revolutionary line. We are now coming to the conclusion that fighting for reforms without the main content being to tie the fight to the communist idea of overthrowing the system (i.e., fighting in the mass movement in a reformist way), is contradictory to the fight for revolution. Winning workers to see the need to take state power, and therefore to join and build the Party to lead to that goal, does not grow out of the simple fight for reforms. Therefore, it is only capitalism that can be built by fighting in the reform movement in a reformist way.

Yet we can see from tracing our history in this very cursory fashion, that there was both a good side and a weak side – a revolutionary side and a reform side – to our work. There was always a concentration on the working class as the revolutionary class, and, after '68, an attempt to win workers directly to the Party. Within that we developed the concept of building a communist base in the working class. We always put forward the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the necessity of the working class to seize power and smash the bourgeois state. We always put forward the need to fight racism as necessary to unite the working class to a point where it could move for state power. This central anti-racist thread, along with the analysis of the decline of U.S. imperialism, has laid the basis for the development of the line on fascism.

Each advance in the line produced something positive which we still incorporate into our current work: the working class is the revolutionary class; do communist work in the unions, lead class struggle at the point of production; build a personal/political communist base among workers; tell workers about the Party; put forward the Party in a mass way; mass sale of C-D; boldly put forward the Party at plant gates; intensify work in the unions on the basis of talking about the party and recruiting to it; putting forward 30 for 40 and anti-racism to the whole working class; uniting the working class through these issues; fractions, not caucuses, as Party units; winning workers to communist ideas beyond just the momentary boss-worker relationship; seeing that revolution will occur away from (although sometimes including) the factories.

The Road to Revolution

We published Road to Revolution I, a reassertion of the

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dictatorship of the proletariat after its abandonment by most of the world communist movement at that time. In Road to Revolution II we corrected errors on the question of nationalism, seeing that this is a ruling class ideology and cannot lead to socialism but leads to the maintenance of capitalism. In Road to Revolution III we attacked the two-stage theory of revolution, declaring that workers, peasants and others can be won directly to fighting for Socialism.

However, our practice has tended to tail this progression in our line. Part of what we have been doing is a reflection of winning workers on a two-stage basis – first to militant reform and then to revolution. We have rejected this in theory. We must reject it in practice. The fact is that when we win workers to militant reform first, it can and does just as easily turn into its opposite and away from revolution and joining PLP.

This happened because (1) of many early subjective weaknesses; (2) when it comes to a choice of pursuing a revolutionary path or a reform road, a reform fight will always meet with a lesser resistance from the ruling class; therefore, without revolutionary politics being foremost in our minds, we are most likely to pursue a reformist road; and (3) we haven't understood the Leninist thesis that the reform struggle is just one tactic in the revolutionary process. Therefore, we haven't entered the reform struggle with a communist understanding, with the primary goal of building the Party, but rather from the point of view that the working class is the revolutionary class and that "therefore" out of the class struggle will grow Marxism-Leninism.

Our practice has taught us that this is simply not true. So somewhat inherent in the way we have developed the various changes and advances in our line over the years – and there was always a positive and more advanced concept in each successive change, growing out of practice – there has also been a one-sidedness that allowed reformism to override revolution. It is this weakness that must be reversed. We can no longer have the idea, present in many past trade union programs, that we will take over the unions and from that vantage point launch a fight for state power. The ruling class will opt for violent struggle to save their system long before we "take over" the unions.

Therefore, we must, right from the beginning, win workers to the concept of state power, not to the idea that they will win through rank-and-file power first and revolution later. Sure, we should and must be active in the unions, run for office, participate in the fight for rank-and-file power against the sellouts. But only from the point of view of fitting that struggle into one for revolution,

not from the point of view that this reform of the unions precedes the fight for revolution.

The concept of making the primary fight one of fighting for revolution, and therefore of building the Party, and the fight for reforms secondary should not view recruiting to the Party in a narrow or limited way. Winning someone to join the Party is not simply meeting some numerical quota, and after we've won 51% of the working class, we'll simply "have Socialism." Winning someone to join the Party around a revolutionary line means winning that person to go back into the reform movement, into the mass movement, participate in the class struggle in a way that sharpens the fight against the ruling class as a class, tie the reform struggle to capitalism and why and how it must be overthrown, and in that way recruit still more workers to the Party. Winning someone to join the Party is not merely an intellectual exercise; it is winning them to be active in leading and initiating class struggle around a revolutionary line, rather than just being a militant fighter for reforms.

Our Communist Line in Practice

In the recent NYC Local 420 hospital strike, a leaflet was distributed which put forward the Party's revolutionary line and explained how capitalism has caused the strikers' problems, therefore why a Party and Socialism was needed. An expanded Party meeting was called on the first day of the strike and 16 non-Party workers came. It was announced at the start of the meeting that, while it was important to discuss strike tactics, it was more important to discuss the overall ravages of the system, of racism, etc., and why it was necessary to build the Party in this strike.

The sharpness of the revolutionary line during the August 28 Detroit auto march helped recruit five workers to the Party. Many workers who have been around the Party for some time were recruited simply by asking them in a serious way to join. They had been ready for some time but had never been asked or followed up seriously.

The Party's leadership of the wildcat strike at NYC's Montefiore Hospital involved anti-racism (uniting white professionals with black and Latin non-professionals), pointing out the class nature of the system, and pointing out the necessity to join the Party and build for a revolution as the only way out. Four workers joined who participated in the struggle. Now a shop paper is being distributed there among Local 1199 members entitled, "We Tried Arbitration; Look What We Got – Revolution is the Only Solution."

The bosses in one shop posted an order requiring workers

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to submit to lunchbox inspections “because supplies were being stolen.” Black workers were singled out for special harassment. The Party put out a leaflet asking “Who is stealing from whom?” and went on to explain the robbery of surplus value by the bosses off the workers’ labor, and show how Socialism will stop the biggest thievery of all, tying the racist nature of the attack into this explanation.

There have been similar attempts elsewhere at fitting the reform struggle into the revolutionary goal. Some of this has been more reflected in the kinds of articles now being written in C-D.

These are good beginnings. As we attempt to change our approach, we will no doubt make, mistakes. But we must make decisive changes in the work. One way to do it is the following:

Instead of beginning by becoming active in any reform struggle that is occurring in our area of work, begin with studying the problems in an industry (or elsewhere) from a communist point of view: what are the main reflections of capitalism in that area (unemployment? racism? high accident rate? etc.). Then develop an explanation of how these problems result from capitalism, and therefore why we need socialism and how socialism would solve those problems. The idea is to explain why the problems exist in such a way that it would impel workers to act in a way to destroy the system, not to merely oppose the sellouts and fight for rank-and-file power. Acting in the direction of destroying the system means joining a fraction or the Party, spreading revolutionary ideas, recruiting others to the fraction and the Party, as well as participating in the reform struggle to get the opportunity to do the above.

Leaflets, C-D articles, and other written material should start with the concepts of revolution, not dwell on reform. This means that the political goals set forward, for instance, in the plans as outlined previously in the NYC Hospital strike, the S.F. city workers strike, the AFSCME

1006 strike, should be the bulk of the leaflet or article, with a much lesser amount devoted to the ins and outs of the reform struggle, and then mainly as they fit into the revolutionary struggle. In other words, we shouldn’t merely reverse the present content, putting the present last sentence or paragraph about PLP and revolution at the beginning and then just proceed with our usual concentration on reform. We must really think out how the main problems in the struggle reflect capitalism and therefore win workers to the necessity to get rid of capitalism, not merely change the union.

Finally, if we are elected to union office, we should: (1) tie every grievance to capitalism, which should make us a fighting grievance person (do not feed the illusion that a communist, or communist-led union, can make things better under capitalism; use the grievance to win workers closer to the idea of destroying capitalism and therefore joining the Party or Party fraction); (2) use the union office to conduct political discussion, at union meetings, in union committees, at shop steward meetings, etc.; (3) use the union office to win workers to join the Party.

If using our union position to build the Party in this way leads to a sharp struggle and even ouster from the position, this would be a victory if it meant that we had recruited workers to the Party, to seeing the need to destroy capitalism and take state power. That is the barometer of winning or losing, not the votes in the election or the ability to hang onto the office.

Comrades and friends: a future of revolution was never brighter. The objective situation is worsening; the bosses’ economy is headed for another slump. This will mean new attacks on the working class and increased imperialist meddling abroad, pointing to war and fascism. Against all this the working class can take the offensive, if led by a communist party that follows a line of putting revolution first, that bursts the chains of capitalist reformist ideology. This is our historic task; let’s get to it!

ZIZEK:

“Marxist” Loyally “Opposed” to Capitalism

In the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, the “Left” critiques of US power previously offered by leftists like Howard Zinn and Noam Chomsky, reformists who fell within the bosses’ frame of “acceptable debate,” couldn’t explain with any detail the economic aspects of the current crisis. The bosses needed a perspective that was more convincing. A theory that could take into account the growing concerns many students and workers had (and still have) about capitalism and growing class inequality. They chose to sell a version of Marxism. A Marxism that could deliver revolutionary language with one hand and take it away with the other.

“Marxist” and self-proclaimed “communist” philosopher Slavoj Žižek has filled this void. The Slovenian philosopher has emerged as one of the leading “Marxist” scholars of the 21st century. His political rants combine “Marxism” with Lacanian psychoanalysis¹ in an attempt to explain what he calls the many “paradoxes” of contemporary capitalism.

The bankruptcy of his particular version of Marxism was displayed quite vividly at the Marxism 2009 conference, which discussed the idea of “What Does it Mean to Be a Revolutionary Today?” At the end of his lecture, Žižek closed with a tirade blaming anti-immigrant racism on the working class, arguing that the intellectuals in the room should not be fooled: the working class is often the most reactionary, racist element in society. Only a “Marxist” favored by the ruling class could claim to be a revolutionary on the one hand and then use the other hand to smash the working class. He is the face of the bosses’ anti-working class ideology in the 21st century.

Žižek entered the Western scene in 1989 and has since acquired a cult-like following among many cultural theorists and academic leftists. His charismatic speaking style has earned him the title “Elvis of cultural theory” and “The Most Dangerous Philosopher in the West.” There are at least 14 books that provide a “critical” introduction to Žižek’s ideas. He has become required reading for many college courses and he has since become well known to students on college campuses across the country. He has published a dozen books, written numerous articles,

starred in several documentaries, and frequently speaks or makes appearances on TV, radio and college campuses.² His ubiquity has put the word “communism” on the tips of many college students’ tongues. But, as will be shown, his new and stylized version of “communism” is in fact a sophisticated attack against true communism.

Situating Žižek

The introduction of Žižek to the West and to the world stage occurred in the context of three much larger phenomena: declining class consciousness of the global working class, the rise of eastern European nationalism that followed the break up of the former Soviet Union and the subsequent scramble by imperialist nations for access to oil and gas pipelines. It is in this context that Žižek became a notable intellectual and was able to spread his revisionist, anti-communist ideas.

In the late 60’s the working class brought class struggle in the US and in many countries around the world to a head: the fight against US imperialism in Vietnam and the anti-war protest movement in the US, the Cultural Revolution in China, and the student-worker general strike in France.

However, within a few years, the internal contradictions of these movements, rooted in revisionism, led to their demise. Capitalism returned to countries like Russia, China, and Vietnam that had thought socialism could be a stage to communism. The illusions of liberalism—the belief that capitalism could be reformed for the benefit of workers—disarmed a militant working class in the US and Europe, and led workers down the road to reform instead of revolution. Around the world, cynicism in the working class began to replace class-consciousness. Détente signaled that the rulers no longer feared the threat of worldwide communism coming from the Soviet Union. The rise of imperialist rivals to US power set the stage for new period of intensified imperialist division of the world.

While PLP recognizes that by the 1950’s the limits of socialism had turned attempts at a workers state in the Soviet Union and other eastern European countries back

to capitalism, for much of the world 1989 marked the official “death of communism.” It was in this context of the break up of the former Soviet Union that European and Russian imperialists began a scramble for access to the natural resources and strategic pipeline routes of the Caspian Sea region.

The promotion of nationalism and ethnic separatism proved an effective divide and conquer strategy for these imperialists. The effects of this strategy were most pronounced in the republics of the former Yugoslavia.³ The republic of Slovenia, with its close proximity to the capitalist nations of Italy and Austria was the first of the Yugoslav republics to push for independence by aligning itself with Western European capitalism. For supporters of Slovene separatism, leaving Yugoslavia was a way for Slovenia to enter the “rich man’s club” of Western Europe and NATO. Liberal reformers inside Slovenia built a reform movement through NGO (non-governmental organization) “networking” with Western European imperialists.

Slovenian intellectuals were often the public face of these networks. In the late 80’s, many of these intellectuals wrote for the “dissident” magazine *Mladina*, which served as the main voice of Slovenian separatism. Its staff columnists included Slovoj Zizek and other intellectuals who aligned themselves with Western European imperialists. These columnists pushed a hard-line Slovenian nationalism. *Mladina* also served as a base for the Slovenian intellectuals who would go on to build a case for war against Serbia.

These intellectuals got their chance to further spread their ideology in the late 80’s when *Mladina* writer and ranking member of “Alliance of Socialist Youth of Slovenia” Janez Jansa was arrested over the theft of secret military documents. As representatives of Jansa’s defense, several young Slovenian intellectuals toured the Western “networks.” Throughout the capitals of Western Europe they spread anti-communism and lies about the dangers of Yugoslav militarism.

Zizek’s ascendance into the Western academic scene was no doubt made possible from his ability to make use of these established “networks.”⁴ Along with his credentials as a founding member of the Slovenia’s Liberal Democratic Party, 1990 Slovene Presidential candidate, and Ambassador of Science for the Republic of Slovenia in 1991, Zizek had proved to the ruling class of the US and Western Europe his ability to mislead the working class into the dead end of nationalism and electoral politics and had helped open up Slovenia to imperialist competition.⁵ Zizek would soon find his niche in American academia as a Lacanian Marxist breathing fresh life into “old” Marxist ideas.

Erasing Class Through Ideology

As the class-consciousness of workers began to decline on the world stage in the late 1960’s, and inter-

imperialist rivalries began to heat up, on the academic front, “Marxist” theories about the making change were being rewritten to exclude the role of labor. In the wake of the French general strike and the Chinese cultural revolution, “Marxist” intellectuals and other academic leftists began pursuing “postmodern” and “post-Marxist” theories, which unlike traditional Marxist theories, no longer called for a key role played by the working class. These theories allowed intellectuals to cast themselves as being the agents of change rather than the working class whom they claim failed to make revolution. “Culture” replaced “class,” opening the door for a whole range of identity politics rooted in idealism and subjectivity. In these new theories, the struggle over culture and ideology replaced the class struggle.

One of the most influential of these “Marxists” was Louis Althusser. For “Marxists” like Althusser, the Chinese Cultural revolution proved that the political struggle of the “masses” decisive but it could be conceived as almost being independent of any material basis rooted in political economy. The “masses” and the “people” began to replace the working class as a transformative force. An emphasis on political economy was cast as crude Marxist “economism” and an emphasis on the political along with the ideological and cultural emerged as the primary factors in determining the possibility of revolution. Eventually this theory displaced even the idea that the “people” could make revolution, leaving only a role for the intellectual in creating such a change.

PL also argues that politics is primary. Like Marx said, “theory itself becomes a material force when it has seized the masses.” But it is the ideology of the working class that is decisive. This ideology must be rooted in an understanding of political economy. Its bedrock is the fact that the working class is the source of all value and has the only real material power to stop capitalist profit accumulation at the point of production. It is in the workers’ understanding of their own power based on an understanding of political economy that true working class consciousness can emerge. Althusser and others have attempted to displace political economy with ideology and have thus attempted to destroy any basis for working class consciousness to develop. Further, they look uncritically at the internal dynamics of socialism and its concessions to capitalism in China and instead blame the working class for the failure to make communist revolution.

For Marx the function of ideology under capitalism is not separate from economics but woven into the very fabric of political economy. In the Capital Vol. I in the chapter “The Fetishism of the Commodity and Its Secret,” Marx contends that capitalist social relations are concealed through the very structure of capitalism itself. According to Marx, the capitalist world presents itself as a world of things (commodities) instead of a world of social relations. These commodities appear to have

value in and of themselves and the fact that their value is derived from the labor performed by workers is what is concealed from the working class. This is the key that unlocks the power of the working class—the fact that all value is created by the working class but is expropriated by the bosses. For Marx, this reality behind the illusion is what must be demystified for workers in order for them to see that they are the true creators of all value. For Marx, capitalist ideology acts to conceal the true power of the working class. It is only through an understanding of Marx's political economy that the working class can fully understand its true potential.

For many Marxists and students today, after swimming in a sea of idealist “postmodern” and “postmarxist” theory that has followed Althusser's thinking, Slavoj Žižek appears to be a breath of fresh air. Žižek claims that “postmarxist” and “postmodern” theories are insufficient in describing modern day capitalism. In a supposed rejection of the idealism of these theories, Žižek has called for a return to dialectical materialism and Marxism—but with a Lacanian twist.

Žižek's career as a philosopher in the West began with his first English translated book *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. In it Žižek sets out to explain his view of how ideology functions under contemporary capitalism. He argues that unlike previous periods (and traditional Marxist theories) where capitalism simply concealed the structures of exploitation from the workers, today workers are in fact aware that they are being exploited but go on about their daily lives in a pragmatic yet cynical way.⁶ For Žižek, ideology functions not by concealing reality with an illusion but by functioning as the reality in illusion itself. For him, behind the illusion of ideology is not reality, but a reality that is itself also an illusion. He claims that this illusion substitute of reality is a projection of workers' desires and fantasies. Žižek claims that workers aren't simply fooled into being exploited, but actively participate in their exploitation through the fulfillment of their desires and fantasies. In other words, workers fantasize about their own oppression and thus don't fight back.

Following Lacanian psychoanalysis, Žižek maintains that the workers' fantasy tries to bridge the gap between the reality that people experience and true reality beyond our ability to comprehend through language called the “Real.” For Žižek and other Lacanians, the “Real” is the “objective” world stripped of all the symbolic representations of it—language, etc. We can only truly experience the “Real” when we are in an infant state and have not yet been taught language. Once we are brought into the “symbolic universe” of language, then we are no longer aware of this true “Real” reality. Because our language and symbols fail to ever fully explain this “Real” there exists a “lacking” in society. According to Žižek, we attempt to overcome this “lacking” through the creation of ideological fantasies. It is worth noting that for Žižek this “lacking” stems not from capitalist exploitation and

unequal class relations, but from something eternal and ahistorical.

In his literature, Žižek often makes use of the words “class” and “capitalism” as he contextualizes and explains world affairs with popular culture references. But his understanding of class in a Marxist sense is in reality extremely limited and highly problematic. The objective inequality between classes in the traditional Marxist sense, the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class and the expropriation of value from the workers by the bosses, for Žižek, is really a manifestation of the “lacking” of the “Real.” He claims that the subject (the worker) is alienated, not because of class exploitation, but because of a lack of access to the “Real.” Class struggle is just the synonym for the “Real.” Going further, Žižek claims that a proletarian is not someone who works for a wage and is robbed of their value, but is someone who risks everything because he is the pure subject deprived of roots. Like Althusser and other “postmarxists” before him, Žižek abandons political economy and Marxism in favor of Lacanian psychoanalysis and in the process purges the working class from its central role in making revolution.

Ultimately, for Žižek, the roots of ideology are psychoanalytic and not linked to class societies, exploitation or history. He frames class in the Lacanian triad of Symbolic, Imaginary and Real. The “symbolic” class is bankers and managers. The social “real” consists of the underclass, homeless, etc. The imaginary is the “middle class”. For Žižek, each of these classes has its own world-view that it seeks to promote and realize. However, Žižek is inconsistent in the use of his own framework, in some accounts referring to America as a whole as “Capital” and countries like China as a “working class state”.⁷ Missing from this analysis is even a remotely Marxist understanding of class, much less a theory that could take into account inter-imperialist rivalries or other concepts vital to understanding contemporary capitalism.

A truly Marxist understanding of ideology and ideological fantasies must take into account their materialist roots. It is what Marx called the “alienation” of the working class from their labor and from each other that provides that raw material for the ideological fantasies that Žižek is obsessed over. The illusions produced by movies, advertisements, brands, etc have such a strong influence not because of some “lacking” of the “Real” produced by language, but because of a structural lacking created by capitalism between the working class and the bourgeoisie. Fantasies are illusions that promise to cure alienation, a promise that can be kept only with the demise of capitalism.

Žižek claims to be a materialist, but this theory of ideology is steeped in psychoanalytic and Hegelian idealism. His “materialism” is more interested in surface appearances than in deep realities. Substituting Hegelian

idealism for a Marxist historical-materialism is his way of rejecting the analysis that the working class, because it is the source of all value, is the key to changing the system. Zizek practices what Lenin has called “objective idealism.” He is an idealist masquerading as a materialist who believes that ideology is not how the bosses conceal their exploitation of the working class, but a fantasy produced both by capitalism and workers themselves to reconcile the “Real.” Zizek’s theory of ideology is anti-working class garbage dressed up in a new Lacanian garb. Zizek, rather than helping to bring Marxist and communist ideas to workers and students, is in fact peddling a dangerous form of 21st century anti-communism.

Zizek on Racism and Imperialism

Just as Zizek claims to be a breath of fresh air in an age of “postmodern” fluff, he also claims to offer his readers a fresh take on modern day racism—one that reveals the true function of “postmodern” multicultural forms of racism. Many readers of Zizek point to his view that racism today is manifest not just in overt forms of discrimination and exploitation, but through the inclusion of those same racial groups in mainstream society but “at a distance.” He points out the ways in which cultural attire and cuisine of various ethnic groups are incorporated into the capitalist fold while the people that produced those cultural forms continue to be exploited. And it is true that this is one of the ways that racism continues to adapt and thrive in an age of multiculturalism and “tolerance.”

With the election of Barak Obama, there has been an intensification of racism and racist slaughter of workers around the world. On his watch workers have witnessed widening imperialist war and slaughter in Libya, Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen, and others; the deportation of over one million immigrants; a widening the police state apparatus in the US targeting black, Arab and Latino workers; and the delivering of an unprecedented bailout gift to the major auto companies and banks and the subsequent slashing of workers wages and benefits. In this way Obama is truly the embodiment of “postmodern” racism: a person of color at the helm of the racist US imperialist system. However, Zizek’s view of “postmodern” racism, like his view of class, is inconsistent and stops short of being applied in any meaningful way.

During the 2008 Presidential election, many cynical leftists like Chomsky, Zizek argued, supported Obama but “without illusions” that he would significantly improve the system. Zizek, however, claims to have taken the much more “radical” position, arguing that Obama’s election was “a sign of hope in our otherwise dark times” and was a significant rupture from the past that “widens our freedom and thereby the scope of our decisions.”⁸ Here Zizek provides the legitimation of the ruling class by the left that the bosses hoped for. Not only does Zizek embrace Obama along with all his policies, but he does so

as a “radical” act. This is a truly dangerous path for the working class.

While appearing to advance a sophisticated analysis of nationalism and racism in today’s “postmodern” capitalism, the essence of Zizek’s analysis, rooted in Lacanian psychoanalysis and Hegelian idealism, is an anti-working class view that is itself racist and blames the roots of racism on the working class and not capitalism. Zizek’s background as a columnist for the Slovene nationalist magazine *Mladina* in the 1990’s gives some context to his position on race. In general the magazine promoted a line of anti-Serbian racism as a way to justify breaking away from the “poor, shiftless, criminal South” of Yugoslavia. It was through the established NGO “networks” mentioned earlier that the image of Serbia as a dictatorship ruled by a man akin to Hitler (Milosevic) was transmitted to Western European human rights groups. It was this image that eventually served as justification for the 1999 Kosovo “humanitarian” war.⁹

In an article circulated on the internet following the 1999 NATO Kosovo bombing, Zizek argued that the Serbian people were not merely manipulated by Milosevic but “let themselves be manipulated with (an) obscene pleasure” of racist nationalism. Again, Zizek blames the roots of racism on the fantasies of the working class. Not only does Zizek argue here that racism against ethnic Albanians emanated from the Serbian working class but that the amount of NATO bombs dropped on Serbia at the time was “not yet ENOUGH bombs.” For Zizek, the only way to rid the Serbian workers of the racism that supposedly emanated from them was by continuing the racist NATO slaughter.¹⁰

In all, Zizek’s analysis erases the role the bosses play in creating racism and pins it to the fantasies of the working class who “let themselves be manipulated.” Where many “postmarxists” simply ignore or deny the revolutionary role of the working class after 1968, this type of analysis pegs the creation of capitalism’s most violent ideological weapon, racism, onto the working class.

Ultimately Zizek’s commentary on race has proven effective for the bosses in many ways, the least of which is the justification of expanding imperialist war. In the case of Kosovo, Zizek’s writings gave Western capitalists the racist ammunition they needed to justify the slaughter of Serbian workers for oil pipelines. However, the bosses’ need for this type of ammunition is ongoing and Zizek has proven to be someone who can sell war to a cynical public while masquerading his justification for war as a radical “critique.”

In his book *Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle*, Zizek argues that imperialism is a political matter about choices and not rooted in the drive of capitalist accumulation of surplus value. In a video appearance called “Living in the End Times” Zizek unleashes a critique of the anti-war Left. He illustrates his take on US imperialism with a joke. Zizek

tells the story of a man looking for his lost key under a street lamp and not in a dark corner where he actually lost it because, the man claims, “the light is here and not over there.” He uses this story to argue that the US is in Afghanistan because it cannot attack its ally countries where Al Qaeda really is: Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. He gives no facts or evidence to support his claim. He makes no mention of Afghanistan’s strategic location on the Chinese border or potential gas pipelines. All he gives is a joke and his assertion that it must be so. Further, he appears to be making the case that the US should in fact eventually attack Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

This analysis of war is echoed throughout his work. The capitalist processes, the law of overproduction and the tendency for the rate of profit to fall, that have driven US imperialism into Afghanistan are erased and presented instead as merely choices made by greedy individuals. In his video appearance he goes on to say that for the US to simply leave Afghanistan is “too easy.” He claims to take an even more radical position. He argues that the US must stay and clean up the mess they created. It is clear, for Zizek the “radical” position is not to oppose war or oppose the racist bosses. The only “radical” thing to do is to embrace them.

In an age of expanding imperialist war, the working class needs a true explanation of why imperialist wars occur, an understanding rooted in an analysis of inter-imperialist rivalries that are driven by the laws of capitalism. Zizek provides no such analysis and is helping the bosses lead the working class further into a dark night.

Zizek and Communist Practice

Ultimately Zizek’s work, despite its Marxist trappings, is an assault on the very idea of communist practice. Like his “postmarxist” predecessors, he rejects the agency of the working class in favor of the agency of the intellectuals and the individual. While he frequently makes reference to the need for “revolution,” the core of his thinking leaves little to no room for a revolution led by the working class.

In his book *Revolution at the Gates*, Zizek sounds almost as if he advocates a Leninist party to lead a revolution. He makes the case that we should in fact emulate Lenin. He claims we must become intolerant in our thinking in the way Lenin was of capitalist ideology. However, this shocking embrace of Leninism proves to be nothing more than a strategy to rewrite Lenin as a slave to spontaneity.

Lenin is not presented as a leader of the working class who learned from practice and then applied Marxism to the situation in Russia. Instead, Lenin is presented as a situationist – someone who acted not on a real principle but only according to a strategy that changed as the situation changed. The essence of Lenin as a disciplined revolutionary leader is replaced with a depoliticized Lenin who relies on spontaneity and strategy. Zizek forgets that

Lenin said that spontaneity always leads back to capitalist ideology. The party must be intolerant of capitalist ideas because of their ubiquity. Any concession to capitalism is an attack on communism. Zizek’s caricature of Lenin is an attack on the foundation of Leninist thought and its roots in Marxist ideology and historical practice. Again, the appearance of Marxist language is nothing more than a cover for bankrupt capitalist ideology.¹¹ Zizek’s view of Lenin is that of the modern day academic leftist. It completely undermines the need for and the very notion of a communist party.

His attack on communist practice is taken further in his writings on Stalin. In the documentary *Zizek!*, he is asked to explain why he has a picture of Stalin hanging in his home. His explanation leads the viewer to believe that he has a more sophisticated and perhaps positive view of Stalin than most anti-Stalin accounts. However, after reading his writings on Stalin, it is clear that this self-proclaimed “communist” has the most sophisticated anti-communist and anti-Stalinist view to date. In a 2004 interview, Zizek claims that “Stalinism” was in fact more perverse than Nazism. Zizek argues that even though the Nazi’s killed people for being Jewish, “Stalinism” was more perverse in the way it supposedly forced innocent people confess to crimes they did not commit. For Zizek the Nazi’s were more honest and open about their atrocities. Unlike the anti-Stalin lies of Robert Conquest who claim Stalin killed millions of people, Zizek’s approach attacks Stalin and the practice of socialism/communism in a way that is much more dangerous. Not only is he attacking socialism/communism in the past, but he is setting up an argument that the very notion of an organized party is deceptive and perverse.¹²

In a New York Times piece “20 Years of Collapse” Zizek takes this anti-communism further and elevates anti-communist crusader and Soviet Union defector Victor Kravchenko to the status of hero. Kravchenko, whose memoir “I Chose Freedom” details his anti-Stalin lies and lies about famine in the Ukraine proved to be primary source for spreading anti-communism for the bosses. For Zizek, Kravchenko is a model we should follow. Eventually Kravchenko was so disillusioned with capitalism that he shot himself. Zizek argues that we need new Kravchenkos—those who both realize the deception of 20th century communism and are disillusioned with modern day capitalism. According to Zizek, these new Kravchenkos will have to start from scratch in their search for justice and create their own ideologies.¹³

It is around the idea of putting communism into practice that Zizek’s reliance on idealism, psychoanalysis, and spontaneity coalesce in the most dangerous way. Instead of a prescription for how the working class might put Marxist ideas into practice based on an understanding of their own power through history and political economy, we are told to invent a solution to the problems of capitalism by relying on individualism, spontaneity and idealism.

In his book, *Living in the End Times*, Žižek argues that global capitalism is reaching a terminal crisis, a zero point. In his conclusion he argues we have three options on what is to be done: 1) Do nothing, 2) prepare for revolution, 3) engage in local pragmatic interventions. He argues that because the power of the elite is maintained not only thorough physical coercion, but through the “libidinal investment” in power by the ruled, the masses should first stop dreaming and fantasizing about being exploited. The next step is then, instead of actively resisting power, do nothing. By first doing nothing, Žižek claims, the masses suspend their “libidinal investment” in power. Again, Žižek blames the working class for its own exploitation and further, he rejects the Marxist materialist notion that the working class learns to fight capitalism through collective practice. Instead, the power of the collective is inverted and “emancipation” becomes a narcissistic game of passivity.

After first answering the question of “what is to be done?” with “nothing,” he then goes on to propose option two. In the book’s final sentence, Žižek tells an old Bolshevik joke where a communist sent to hell makes his way to heaven and convinces god that god does not exist and that he should in fact become a communist. Žižek then concludes that the true radical act is an act of erasure, where one denies one’s existence and passes over “entirely into the love...of the Party or emancipatory collective.” Here Žižek, like so many times before, posits a Marxist and revolutionary sounding position of creating

a Party or collective, only to rip out any materialist base. By “erasing” one’s self like god is “erased” and convinced he does not exist, the material reality of the working class and the material roots of exploitation that provide the very basis for the need to overthrow capitalism are replaced with some idealistic notion of “love.”

Students, intellectuals, and the working class need a real analysis of global capitalism rooted in Marxist materialism. “Marxist” theories rooted in idealism and psychoanalysis are just a new form of anti-communism repackaged for a new generation. Currently U.S. capitalism is facing more and more competition from its imperialist rivals in China and around the world. The possibility of future imperialist conflict is becoming more intensified so the bosses are desperate to win the allegiance of all workers and students while their attacks on the working class are also intensifying. Žižek’s work provides a Marxist cover for capitalist ideas. His words work in a way that both win workers to US capitalism and imperialism as a “radical” act and away from any truly Marxist or communist analysis of world events. Workers need a fighting party that advocates struggle over passivity and that learns from the material struggle and experience of the working class. They need the revolutionary communist party found in the PLP that puts the fight against racism and capitalism front and center and that relies on the working class as the true agent of revolutionary change.

¹ Jacques Lacan combined Freudian psychoanalysis with linguistics.

² Over 550 lecture appearances in 25 years, mostly in the west

³ Johnstone, Diana. *Fools’ Crusade: Yugoslavia, Nato, and Western Delusion*.

As early as 1882 Hungarian aristocrat, Benjamin von Kallay, an authority on Serbia and Bosnia, recognized the utility in promoting ethnic nationalism in the region. “His job was to exacerbate the social and religious divisions introduced by the Turks, the better to divide and rule.”

⁴ Fools’ Crusade

⁵ Other positions include: Society for Theoretical Psychoanalysis in Ljubljana (founder and President); International director of Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities; and he wanted to become Minister of the Interior, or Head of secret service

⁶ “The cynical subject is quite aware of the distance between the ideological mask and the social reality, but he none the less still insists upon the mask.” <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/slavoj-zizek/articles/cynicism-as-a-form-of-ideology/>

⁷ Robinson, Andrew and Tormey, Simon. “Žižek’s Marx: ‘Sublime Object’ or a ‘Plague of Fantasies’?”

⁸ <http://www.inthesetimes.com/article/4039/>

⁹ Fool’s Crusade.

¹⁰ Slovene anti-communism reached its logical ends in 2000 when heads of Slovenia held a commemoration for the “victims of communism” where speakers ridiculed anti-Nazi fighters and praised Slovenians who had collaborated with the Nazis.

¹¹ Harpham, Geoffrey Galt. “Doing the Impossible: Slavoj Žižek and the End of Knowledge.” *Chicago Journals*

¹² http://cardiff.academia.edu/PaulBowman/Books/595515/The_Truth_of_Zizek

¹³ http://www.believermag.com/issues/200407/?read=interview_zizek

¹⁴ <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/09/opinion/09zizek.html>

NOTES FOR STRIKE TALK

Unions are not revolutionary communist organizations. In today's world, Progressive Labor Party (PLP) is that organization. Unions, no matter how united, well-organized, or militant, are severely limited by their reformist nature. At best, they are fighting for small improvements for the workers—improvements that can be and are, soon taken away when the capitalists use their power. The strike led by the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) in September, 2012, is a perfect example of a strong reform activity that leaves the capitalist system intact. The role of the PLP within that strike illustrates both the possibilities and limitations of building for communist revolution in the current period.

The strike occurred during a time of steady decline of the labor movement and increased attacks from the ruling class. It was fully supported by CTU members, (there were fewer than 25 scabs out of 24,000 strikers) as well as parents, students, and other working class people throughout Chicago and the world. In spite of CTU's tremendous victory in leading a strike that mobilized, unified, and politicized its participants, the gains accomplished by the strike were necessarily limited by the nature of capitalism.

Because the capitalists own and control the labor of every worker and also control education, health care, transportation and other needed services, the lives of working class people as a whole cannot improve under capitalism. In fact, the evidence indicates that fascism is developing and things are likely to get much worse before the working class destroys capitalism once and for all and establishes an egalitarian communist society.

Furthermore, the working class can never win what it needs through a strike, no matter how militant and well-supported. Winning what workers need—fulfilling lives in a society that provides education, health care, housing, human services, and an opportunity to participate in and contribute to the building of egalitarianism—will take a communist revolution.

However, strikes are a great opportunity for workers

to see both the potential power of the working class and the limitations of that power under the capitalist system. Although the capitalists have tried to convince many that communism is “dead” or “unworkable” or “dictatorial”, Progressive Labor Party can effectively challenge those ideas within the context of class struggle. That is why PLP members internationally organized letters of support from their unions, came to Chicago to participate in the strike, organized fellow Chicago workers to distribute PLP leaflets and Challenge newspaper to strikers, and developed discussion/study groups about communism.

Inter-imperialist Rivalry and Growing Fascism: the Context of the Strike

The strike was largely a response to the intensification of racist attacks on the education of working class students and their teachers. These attacks are taking place because of capitalism and its primary aspect in this era: inter-imperialist rivalry. As the number of countries with a developed capitalist class has grown, competition among these capitalists has increased. That competition drives down wages to the lowest common denominator. If the Chinese capitalists can pay slave labor wages, U.S. capitalists must come close to doing the same, or China will increase their share of the market and eventually drive many U. S. companies out of business.

Part of the “wages” paid to the working class comes in the form of health care and education. The workers pay for these themselves, partly through taxation, but, because of imperialist rivalry, the capitalists need a bigger portion of city, state, and federal money to go to profits. Even though governments always claim poverty when it comes to services for the working class, money to bail out failing businesses or go to war is seldom in short supply. Also, to the extent that services are provided, their purpose is to benefit the profit system. Buses, hospitals, and schools are built because companies need workers to be able to get to their jobs, be healthy enough to work, and have a certain level of education. These “services” do not serve

LETTER from Red Chicago Teacher

I continue to participate in my first strike as a worker and as a teacher. I have gone to show solidarity to other workers' struggles in the past, but now I am in the midst of my own. The first day there was a sense of the unknown felt by others at my school. People were posted in different locations around the building in five different groups. Some were well acquainted while others had only seen each other in passing.

As we spend more time on the picket line, we as a staff have grown closer. With the staff being split into two buildings, the time to bond is extremely limited, especially with the extended day. We have begun to exchange our feelings about everything on the line. Veteran teachers have shared some of their experiences from being in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) with new teachers.

The first day CHALLENGE was distributed, teachers showed interest. They liked the leaflet that accompanied it as well. Little by little, we have begun to have conversations about what CPS schools are like for children from working-class neighborhoods. We have spoken about how capitalism and racism affects what children bring into the classroom that impact not only their academic performance but their life altogether.

We all agreed that we needed more nurses, social workers, psychologists, and overall support to assist our students in being successful in the world that surrounds them. It was also mentioned time and time again how these school closings were aimed at the children of the working-class. This angers me in particular because I take it as the Board of Education seeing our students as disposable objects that shouldn't be taken into consideration.

This reveals how the Board is trying to separate teachers from the environment in which he/she teaches and how it directly affects a student's performance. There is no mention of this when the talk is raised of teacher's evaluations, which are based on students' test scores.

Comrades from Chicago and New York City have come out to show support at my school. They are participating in these conversations as well as explaining that the only way to change all of this is to fight for communism.

Many of my school's staff were really open to these discussions. I thought that perhaps they would hear the word communism and dismiss everything. But it has been the opposite. People have been reading the leaflets brought by comrades and discussing how it is time for a change. It was easier to point out the false hopes the Democratic Party gives to workers when Romney showed support for what Mayor Rahm Emmanuel was doing.

I remember asking one colleague if she still was going to vote for Obama. She said yes. I asked her what was the difference between the Democrats and Republicans if Rahm Emmanuel was behaving like a Republican. She stood quiet and said, "That's a really good point..."

Ever since Romney's support for Rahm came out, the line between a Democrat and Republican has been blurred. I see this as a great opportunity to continue these conversations about what is wrong with the public school system that only a communist revolution can change.

This is only the beginning of our struggle. That is why it's critical for those in the Chicago area to make the effort to win teachers to PLP. The potential is too great for us not to act on it. This strike has set a foundation for the workers of the world to unite.

Red Teacher

the interests of the working class.

There is a new wrinkle to allocation of government money for education or other services. The ruling class has figured out how, in addition to supporting failing businesses and fighting wars, this money can go directly into profits. By diverting much of the \$500 billion in the education sector away from workers' salaries and into direct profits for education companies, the capitalists grab a bigger portion of the resources that belong to the working class. Charter school proliferation is one example of this: teachers get paid less while Charter Management Operators thrive. Online learning, which is the "next big thing" in education, is hugely profitable and increases the teacher-student ratio to about 100 to 1.

The Latest Education "Reforms"

The U.S. ruling class is brutal, profit-driven, and committed to capitalism no matter the human cost, so of course lying is an everyday thing for them. Instead of announcing their desire to grab a bigger piece of the education market and more directly control what students learn, the ruling class propaganda machine has relentlessly pushed a false version of reality. In this version, poverty and racism have no impact on student learning, bad teachers are the main problem in education, charter schools are wonderful, class size is unimportant, and monetary incentives for a few along with pay cuts for most will greatly improve education. The fact that none of this is true is irrelevant to the rulers' mouthpieces.

Arne Duncan, the current U.S. Secretary of Education, was CEO of Chicago Public Schools from 2001 through 2008. During that time, he initiated the Renaissance 2010 (“Ren10”) plan, originally proposed by the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago, an institution of the city’s ruling class. Under Ren10, 100 new schools were opened, most of them charter schools. Another 60 schools were shut down or “turned around” (by firing all the staff), almost all in African American neighborhoods. Under the guise of “providing better educational opportunities”, CPS disrupted tens of thousands of students and families, eliminated the jobs of 2000 Black teachers, and fattened the pockets of “edupreneurs”. These policies have led to no overall improvement in students’ education, yet CPS is planning to do more of the same!

It was during this period that the seeds of what was to become the Caucus of Rank and File Educators (CORE) of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) were sown. Union members at schools under attack started publicizing the Ren10 plan and pushing the CTU to oppose it. At the time, the CTU was led by the typical union hacks, mostly in it for the money and prestige, with little knowledge of or interest in class struggle. Still, so as not to look totally useless in the eyes of the members, they did agree to set up a Ren10 committee. Early in 2008, some of the members of the now defunct Ren10 committee decided to start a caucus, CORE, within the CTU, to more effectively work inside the union and organize opposition to attacks on students and teachers.

Many (but not most) of those attracted to the caucus were formerly or currently loosely connected to various “left-wing” groups. Unlike those in other groups, Progressive Labor Party (PLP, or “the Party”) does not view militant struggle, in and of itself, as a building block towards communist revolution. Only if the priority of PLP within every struggle is communist revolution will the working class will move in that direction. The Party rejects the theory that the movement for communism must be built in stages: first get people to oppose capitalism, then get them to fight for socialism, and then after years of socialism, move on to communism. That was more or less the theory of the founding communists like Karl Marx, in the 1850’s, but the history of revolution in both Russia and China clearly shows that “stages” don’t get the working class to communism. (For a more detailed analysis, read *Road to Revolution 4*, available at plp.org.)

The heart of CORE’s analysis of the education “reform” movement is that the ruling class wants to impose a business model on education, break the unions, pay teachers less, and use standardized test scores as a battering ram against students and teachers. As a group, one of the first things CORE did was read and discuss *The Shock Doctrine*. The theme of this book is that the ruling class uses crises, manufactured or real, to demobilize workers and rapidly implant right wing policies as the “solution” to the crisis. One of the many things wrong

with this analysis is that it minimizes the important part ideology plays in the dominance of capitalism.

That aspect of the attacks on education is downplayed by CORE and others as well. Capitalist education “reform” is not just about transferring “public” money to the capitalist class, it is also about shoring up the role of the schools in building ideological unity for racist, individualist, imperialist ideas.

The imposition of national standards, which came under the guise of states’ “voluntarily” agreeing to Common Core State Standards if they wanted to get federal education dollars, is the basis for more effective promotion of capitalist ideology. The capitalists plan ahead. They know that world war is in the future and that a draft will be necessary. They do not want a repeat of the Vietnam War, where soldiers deserted, killed officers, and became revolutionaries. The ruling class knows they need to win young people to think the next war is in their own interests.

Setting up a system whereby the curriculum is more tightly controlled gives the ruling class a better organized mechanism for promoting their ideology within the schools. The tests that are tied to the standards are meant to determine what students learn and teachers teach. That is why tying teacher pay and job security to “evaluation” based on these tests is so important to the ruling class.

Teacher evaluation is also important to the capitalists because they want to break the bonds between teachers and students and force teachers to think of their job in terms of “outputs” (test scores). This enables the ruling class to directly push their ideology onto students by having student success in school and teachers’ jobs depend on learning this capitalist ideology, as evidenced by standardized test scores. While the ideology embedded in these tests is in many cases subtle at this point, the tests will undoubtedly move in a more ideological direction as the U.S. imperialists move towards World War and need more committed soldiers. The May, 2014, Rialto, California eighth-grade test question that asked eighth-grade students to argue whether the Holocaust was an “actual event in history” or a “political scheme created to influence public emotion and gain wealth,” is an example of the way tests can be used to promote capitalist ideology.

Even now, the emphasis on standardized tests pushes teachers away from developing conceptual understanding, clear communication, creativity, and other behaviors that help students think deeply. Whereas communists want students to learn about the world in order to change it, capitalists want students to learn about a narrow slice of the world, in a shallow way—just enough to be productive workers and be susceptible to capitalist propaganda.

Racist Attacks on Teachers and Students

Capitalists in all countries rely on racism to divide the working class but the U.S. is a world leader in this regard. Some of the worst promoters of racism have learned to do so without uttering an epithet, without keeping Black people out of the expensive country clubs, and without segregation by law. In a much more insidious way, the racist capitalists and their politicians (including Blacks and Latinos) institute racist practices which are inseparably intertwined with capitalist practices. In education, this means segregated schools in segregated neighborhoods, lower pay and higher unemployment for parents of Black and Latino working class students, predominantly white teaching staffs (the result of massive layoffs of Black teachers and barriers such as discriminatory “Basic Skills Tests”) and huge disparities in funding and resources, particularly in segregated African American schools.

The ideology comes in when the capitalists win working class people (of all “races”) to see segregation as “voluntary”, to think the “achievement gap” is about students’ race and not the continuing legacy of racist, inadequate schooling, to think poverty has nothing to do with education, and to think the school system is set up to give everyone equal opportunity.

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is only 8% white, reflecting years of botched integration plans in what has long been the most segregated city in the U.S., “white flight”, and the city’s large number of private/parochial schools. Nearly 70% of Black students in CPS attend schools that are so racially segregated that fewer than 10% of students are non-Black. An equally segregated situation exists for 40% of Latino students. Although Black male students are about a quarter of the CPS population, they were the majority of suspensions and $\frac{3}{4}$ of the in-school arrests. CPS has closed over 100 schools in Chicago, replacing them with charter schools. Most of the closed schools were predominantly Black.

Most CPS students (75%) live in poverty. In line with their need to maintain racism that produces super-profits, the ruling class does not want to spend money on educating poor, working-class Black and Latino students. They want to turn teaching into a revolving-door, lower-paid job, and use teachers to prepare students for low-wage jobs, mass unemployment or the military, to kill sister and brother workers in imperialist wars.

PLP members have exposed this racism publicly and in private conversations. For example, at a school board meeting in July, 2010, A PLP member underscored that racism continues to be perpetuated by Board policies. She pointed out that there are 2,100 fewer African-American teachers now than in 2002, a drop from 40 to 30 percent of the total teaching force. White students are disproportionately enrolled in selective enrollment high schools and Black students are disproportionately enrolled in schools that CPS closes or “turns around”

(replacing the whole staff). The PLP member concluded by stating, “The Board runs a racist school system that provides separate and unequal education for over 70 percent of the system’s African-American students. In addition, it is decimating the system’s African-American teaching force.” She was met with loud applause and handshakes from the audience, and frozen, stony faces from the Board. In an era where many think the U.S. has moved “past racism,” it is incumbent on communists and others to expose it at every opportunity. Capitalism will not be destroyed unless anti-racism leads the fight.

Throughout the four years that the Party has been working in CORE and CTU, we have put forward that the fight against racism must be central to all campaigns. Capitalism and racism are deeply intertwined, and as long as capitalism still exists, so will racism. Integral to every anti-student, anti-parent action taken by CPS is racism. Building anti-racist unity among parents, students, and teachers, therefore, is a necessary part of the fight against CPS, just as it is a necessary part of the fight for an egalitarian, communist society.

To a certain extent, CTU and CORE did adopt anti-racist positions. CTU used the term “education apartheid” to describe the conditions of segregation, lack of needed services and well-rounded curricula, school closings, and test-based schooling prevalent in Black and Latino schools. On the other hand, during the strike CTU formed an alliance with the police union and many in CORE believed that was a good thing. PLP members opposed alliances with the police, pointing to their racist policies of stopping Black workers without cause, brutalizing many of our students, and in general being the armed guards of the ruling class. Because CTU does not attack the basis of racism, the capitalist system, nor advocate for its overthrow, they ally with working class enemies such as the police and politicians.

The Work of PLP in Mass Organizations

The work of Progressive Labor Party members within CORE (or similar “reform” organizations, whose goal is improving conditions, not destroying capitalism) is complex. Winning large numbers within the working class to decide to fight for communist revolution is a long-term, uneven process with many ups and downs. The work is complex, because it is necessary to both play a very active role in the reform organization and promote communist revolution and a communist analysis within that context. Communists cannot be disrespectful of the opinions of those we are trying to win but at the same time cannot opportunistically refrain from fighting for our positions. The work of Party members is subject to unevenness as well, and the Party’s activity in CORE suffers from inconsistency.

After the formation of CORE in 2008, the caucus grew rapidly. Members were attracted by CORE’s bold

opposition to school closings, by the wide variety of activities, including leading fights in their schools against abusive principals or CPS actions adversely affecting students and organizing against school closings. CORE filed an EEOC complaint against the disparate impact of turnaround schools on African American teachers, had regular meetings, social events, fundraising events, built the membership, and played an active role in the CTU House of Delegates meetings. In the spring of 2009, the caucus decided it was important to run a slate in the 2010 union election and attempt to unseat the opportunists running the CTU.

Throughout this process, the Party played an active role in CORE, including struggles within schools, speaking at school board meetings, and working to help CORE win the CTU election. Within the context of this work, PLP members discussed the Party's ideas with our new friends, distributed and discussed Party literature, particularly Challenge newspaper, and to a certain extent, involved them in PLP activities such as the May Day Dinner. The contradiction between a reform outlook vs. a revolutionary one became apparent in this work. Many friends saw the immediate necessity of being deeply involved in fighting the assault on education, but did not feel the same urgency to learn more about and/or advocate for communism.

There is another argument that some union leaders and members make, even though they say that capitalism needs to end. They say that right now the revolutionary movement is too small and therefore, all that can be done now is to work within the system, work with people where they're at, and be militant reformists.

This strategy is very different from that of PLP, although some may see superficial similarities. PLP does recognize that we are small now, but also sees that for communist revolution to happen there must be a growing group of committed Party members who consciously learn the lessons of history and, to the best of their collective ability, apply dialectical materialism to current situations, recruit more members, and attempt to move masses toward a communist future.

To that end, we do work with people "where they're at" and within organizations like unions whose purpose is at best militant reformism. However, the strategy of doing this mass work is to build deep relationships within the working class and win our friends away from reliance on capitalist thinking and towards seeing the nature of state power, imperialism, racism, and the need for a communist party to lead the working class to power. Our goal is not to "win" the reform per se.

The issue of anti-communism came up when CORE ran for CTU office. The incumbents in the election ran a nasty campaign based on lies and red-baiting. One campaign flier threatened that the "militant idealist socialist" CORE would go on strike immediately and the union would be destroyed. Because CORE had organized

alliances with parents, students, and community groups, the incumbents claimed that if CORE won, they would turn the union into a community organization.

Interestingly, the red-baiting was countered by many members who thought the union would be better off if led by militants. This is not to say that a sophisticated red-baiting campaign could not be successful, but it does indicate a potential openness to communist ideas. The conviction that large numbers of people can be won to these ideas underlies PLP's strategy of advocating for communism consistently and openly. This strategy sets us apart from other groups calling themselves left-wingers.

State Power: How the Bosses Use their "Legal" System to Control the Working Class

Because the capitalists control state power, they determine what they will allow the workers to gain temporarily. They do have disagreements, but they are united on exploitation of the working class. It is not true, as believed by many in CTU leadership and in CORE, that if workers just fight hard enough, involve enough people, and are tactically smart, they can push back the tide of capitalist attacks on students and education workers. The only way to do that is to build a movement for communist revolution to destroy capitalism and set up an egalitarian system. The fight against the capitalists is important, not for what might temporarily be gained, but for the experience it gives the workers in class struggle and the opportunity to learn first hand about the need to smash the whole system.

Because they don't have this perspective, the CTU leadership chose to participate in electoral politics. In November of 2010, CTU supported the Democrat Quinn over the "greater evil" Republican Bill Brady in the gubernatorial election. Even though there are virtually no differences between the Democrats' and Republicans' education policy, without a revolutionary communist perspective, the cynical choice is to support the Democrats.

In addition to participating in elections, CTU also "had a seat at the table" during negotiations with Illinois state legislators over Senate Bill 7. This bill was proposed by the infamous Stand for Children (called "Stand ON Children" by their opposition), who showed up in Illinois for the first time during the November, 2010, elections, and gave unprecedented amounts of money to politicians they backed. In December, their bought-and-paid-for legislators convened hearings on education, whose purpose was to ram through significant changes in education law in a short period of time.

They wanted to replace teacher tenure with "performance ratings" in the state, make strikes illegal in Chicago, allow CPS to change the length of the school day without union bargaining, and make it easier to fire teachers in the state. While the argument was made that

the final legislation was not as bad as it would have been without the participation of union leaders (although it included much of what was in the original draft), that argument is short-sighted. First of all, under capitalism, any gains workers make are temporary. It is a stretch to call “not as bad as it could have been” a gain, but the argument made by proponents of “being at the table” is that it is a win that strikes were not made totally illegal, as the ruling class wanted.

The main problem with this approach is it replaces reliance on the working class with reliance on politicians and laws. The working class needs to learn to fight for what they need; ultimately that means making a communist revolution. Strikes are often illegal, but workers have struck in spite of their illegality. Revolution is certainly an illegal activity! The important thing in these struggles is what workers learn about what it will take to actually beat the capitalists. To the extent that unions lead workers to think that change will come via the Democratic Party, they are undermining the fight to end capitalism.

Lead up to the Strike

From the beginning of their term in July, 2010, the new CTU leaders developed the goal of being “strike ready” after the expiration of the contract in June 2012. Accomplishing this meant changing the way most members thought about the union. The process of being “strike ready” required members to learn to be activists, see themselves as “the union” and move CTU from a service to an organizing model. The underlying assumption of the leadership’s approach is that if the union fights hard enough, in a principled manner that engages “allies” as well as members, they can win significant reforms and beat back the attacks on education.

Although there is value to the type of organizing implemented by CTU and the working class struggles that resulted, the value is not in what those struggles do or do not “win”. The value is that the workers learn how to organize themselves, how to push fellow workers to do the right thing, and how to stand up to the bosses. These are important lessons for the fight to take power away from the capitalists.

At the same time, it is misleading to put forward the idea that if we fight hard for reforms we will win them. The capitalists hold state power—they own and control the means of production (the factories), they control the laws and the courts, they decide the quantity, the quality, and the type of transportation, health care, education and housing they will make available to the working class. They set racist policies in place that determine how many and who will be incarcerated: More than 2 million adults and 70,000 children are in prison, with another 5 million on probation or parole. 40% of prisoners are Black and 35% are Latino. Ruling class policies determine

unemployment: Blacks have had twice the unemployment rate of whites for many years. Capitalist policies also determine who will be forced to fight for the imperialists—a number that will increase rapidly when the next world war begins. Reform struggle will not take state power away from the bosses.

Capitalist policies anger people. This anger is one of the reasons PLP is able to recruit members to join the fight to end capitalism once and for all. It is also the basis for leaders of reform movements, such as CTU, to organize members to fight back. CPS had been angering school workers, students, and parents for quite a while. The policies enacted by Rahm Emanuel, who had become mayor of Chicago in spring of 2011, were in many ways the last straw and played a role in helping CTU organize members.

In September, 2011, principals all over the city were asking teachers to take a “waiver vote” that would extend the school day past the hours stated in the contract. In exchange, schools would get a sum of money to be used for additional student programs. In the end, only 13 schools agreed to the waiver. However, this was a tremendous organizing opportunity for CTU. Meetings were held at hundreds of schools, delegates were elected in schools with no delegate, members turned out and made their voices heard, and new school leaders emerged.

The CTU organized many exciting and powerful actions leading up to the strike. Because the union movement as a whole is so bankrupt, these actions stand out. CTU organized contract committees in every school, trained delegates to be school leaders, and led 10,000 teachers and supporters to march in the streets wearing CTU red, in a show of great unity and strength. These were exciting and important accomplishments.

It is important for workers to learn to organize themselves and to directly take on fighting the bosses. However, fighting without a plan to eventually take over the whole system can lead to cynicism or false ideas about being able to change the ever-more exploitative nature of capitalism through petitions, voting, and militant actions. Because CTU is a union and not a revolutionary communist party, it is limited to organizing for the purpose of trying to improve capitalism or to ameliorate its horrors.

Things are not going to get better under capitalism, no matter how powerful or militant the struggles. If workers view the purpose of their struggles as winning smaller classes or enough social workers, or sufficient pay, they will ultimately be disappointed. But if the goal of the struggle is to build a movement that can eventually be strong enough to take power from the capitalists, that goal will eventually be met (although it may take longer than we would like). In many instances, educators felt let down after the strike, because when they went back to work, conditions were still bad and school bosses were still attacking.

The Strike

The CTU strike was powerful in that it fought around issues important to students and their education and not issues narrowly pertaining to union members. For that reason, the strike had the support of parents, students, and community members. Every picket line had a constant parade of honking cars going past. In spite of the inconveniences associated with the 7-day strike, close to 70% of CPS parents said they supported the strike, an unprecedented number. The strike raised issues of smaller class sizes, no merit pay, fair health care costs, and a full curriculum for students. Some minor gains were made as a result.

The new contract included a 3% salary increase, maintenance of health insurance costs, minor positive changes to working conditions (such as availability of books on the first day of classes, locked cabinets and a private space for social workers), defeat of merit pay, holding the line on class size, and postponement of evaluation for tenured teachers. Teacher evaluation and merit pay had been major issues in contract talks. There is a big national push to tie teacher's jobs and pay to a rating based on test scores, and doing so will not be beneficial to students. Although CTU was able to push back on the percentage of teacher evaluation based on test scores (30%, instead of the typical 50%), they were not able to completely stop implementation of this ruling class initiative. It is important to remember that a contract is an agreement between workers and bosses about the terms of the workers' exploitation. It is not possible to have a "good" contract.

The state of Illinois had passed a law in 1995 which established mayoral control of the schools and narrowly defined what CTU could bargain over. Basically, it limited bargaining to pay and procedures. Therefore, it was difficult to win non-economic demands through contract negotiations. This illustrates once again the way the capitalist system uses its laws to control the working class. It also illustrates the need for the workers to break the bosses' laws and overthrow the system.

The strike ended seven school days after it began. Members on the picket line spent the last two days of the strike reading and discussing the proposed contract and their delegates voted by a strong majority to suspend the strike. Later, about 80% of CTU members voted in favor of the contract. Many of those who opposed the contract ratification argued that the demands seen as most student-centered, for a wider curriculum, more social supports, and smaller classes, were not sufficiently addressed. Although minor gains were made in these areas, no one argued that those issues were sufficiently dealt with by the contract.

The fight continues. CTU members are currently organizing against school closings and standardized test mania. Some wondered, what did the strike win

for the workers? The main thing the strike won was not in the contract. It was way people were changed by their participation in this massive event. For example, teachers in better resourced schools with more middle class students joined in the fight against school closings of segregated Black schools. Teachers in some schools went as a group to the principal to stand up against abuse. In general, those involved in the strike learned (to varying degrees) that the working class could fight back against the capitalists.

Fighting is good, but the working class needs an offensive strategy to take power away from the capitalists. PLP has collectively studied and learned from the successes and mistakes of past communist movements and is currently leading the fight for an egalitarian society. History as well as current events show us that the ruling class will to continue to escalate their attacks. Educators had to go on strike for seven days, just to get a little teeny bit of improvement, which the bosses are already plotting to take away.

The capitalists have shown time and again that they have no intention of educating working class students for anything but low-wage jobs and the army. The communist view of education, on the other hand, is one of arming every student with the knowledge they need to help make the world a better place. For example, imagine how much further along humanity would be in the development of a cure for cancer if every student were educated in science and a cure was worked on collectively instead of fueled by drug company competition over profits. Capitalism wastes the minds of millions of working class students, who they have no interest in educating, other than to the extent necessary to make them efficient workers and soldiers. They would just as soon replace most teachers with computers and are moving quickly in that direction.

The Growth of Fascism and the Future for the Working Class

One thing the CTU strike demonstrated is that workers are hungry for fight back. Right now, that fight back is mostly confined within the system. However, things can change quickly. In September, 2011, most CTU members did not favor going on strike. By September, 2012, they were ready, and virtually every member participated in vibrant school picket lines and downtown or neighborhood rallies by the tens of thousands. Right now, the numbers of workers participating in PLP events is far smaller than it needs to be. However, things can change quickly.

When workers fight back, the bosses' usual response is to attack harder. Many educators are experiencing this in their schools, as some principals have gone out of their way to make life difficult for active union members. Undoubtedly, the ruling class is planning to destroy the CTU, or at least destroy it as a fighting union. Because

the union leaders do not take fully into account the viciousness of the ruling class, they have not prepared the members to withstand attacks.

In May of 2013, CPS closed 50 schools. Thousands of education workers, students, and parents had marched, rallied, petitioned, and in many other ways expressed their outrage at the CPS plan to close so many schools, most of them serving African American students. When CPS closed them anyway, some wondered if the strike had been worth it. Instead of feeling powerful, as they had during the strike, the inability to stop the school closings made many feel discouraged. PLP members were involved in many of the anti-closing activities. The Party encouraged those angry about the closings to see that the capitalists would always take whatever they could from the working class; the solution is to fight for communist revolution.

CTU leaders put forward a different solution: electoral politics. Because the ability to close schools is a power granted Chicago's Mayor and his hand-picked school board by the state legislature, they reasoned that the only way to stop closings in the future would be through legislative action. The CTU was heavily involved in a March, 2014, campaign for two state legislative candidates. They formed an Independent Political Organization (IPO) with other unions and community organizations. The purpose of the IPO is to advocate for certain agreed-upon issues among political candidates.

Union leaders and members who support this approach see it as the only way to bring about systemic change. Instead of a communist revolution to end capitalism once and for all, they envision changing capitalism one legislator at a time. These ideas are commonplace in this era, due to the demise of the world-wide communist

movement (see the PLP document "Dark Night Shall Have its End", available at plp.org).

The CTU still advocates for direct action, such as the refusal of about 30 teachers to give the state standardized test last March. However, it is a move in the wrong direction for the union to promote political campaigns. The more reliant workers are on the political system, the less likely they are to seek other ways to fight. While the strike was a strengthening action, political involvement weakens union members by giving them false hope that the capitalist system can be reformed to a point where workers' needs will be met.

Internationally, the U.S. capitalists have their back up against a wall. Their power is threatened from many corners, and they have no choice but to tighten control over the working class in order to maintain their economic and military prominence. However, tightening control over the working class involves instituting fascist measures, such as making unions illegal, forcing workers to work in unsafe conditions for less than a living wage, locking up millions, pushing racism to divide the working class, forcing young people into the military, and winning a large core of anti-communist patriots.

The bosses will continue to step up their vigorous attack on workers and students. Some of our class will continue to look for ways within the system to fight back, but others will see that capitalism has nothing to offer the working class. They will see that the only solution is to join PLP in building the revolutionary communist movement. That movement will and must grow and it is the responsibility of everyone reading this article to be part of the collective that will make the inevitable seizure of power by the working class for communism happen sooner rather than later. We can and must do this!

