

CHALLENGE



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Baltimore:

Racist violence won't stop workers' fight back!



BALTIMORE, MAY 15 —After 37 days of refusing to hold any discussions with members of the Johns Hopkins University sit-in about their powerful anti-racist demands on May 8, president Ronald Daniels used state power to break into locked-down Garland Hall. About 80 armed Baltimore City police forcibly ended the occupation and arrested everyone inside after fire department personnel broke through the Hall's heavy glass doors.

This sit-in at Hopkins has helped set the foundations for future struggles, proving that the anti-racist work we do today counts. It also forces us to define the meaning of victory.

Violence against the working class

One arrestee was a trans woman. She was misgendered, strip-searched, and humiliated. That afternoon, she and the others who had been arrested at the Garland Hall occupation were released and welcomed back with great comradely respect and excitement.

Later that evening, a weekly West Wednesday was held. That week's rally was right outside Central Booking where those arrested at the sit-in had been detained. Once again West Wednesday was huge, with many participants and supporters from the sit-in enthusiastically attending.

Beating back racism with multiracial unity!

The West Wednesdays have grown as the anti-racist struggle has sharpened and taken on a mass character. As CHALLENGE reported in the last issue, right after the conclusion of the powerful 300th West Wednesday on May 1, a racist hiding out in the dark attacked two people by the car belonging to Tawanda Jones—sister of Tyrone West. That racist punched two women in the face as they challenged him about his repulsive ideas, and he then got a taste of his own medicine.

One week later, in the middle of the night of May 8, just a few hours before the large-scale police action against the sit-in, a group of about six

people, apparently led by fascists, forcibly pushed their way into the sit-in through a door that wasn't chained shut at that moment.

This group had a bolt cutter, hoping to cut the chains on various doors and end the lock-down of Garland Hall. One of them violently grabbed a Black woman and tried to throw her down a staircase. Their plan failed when members of the sit-in, despite an injury, were able to get the racists out of the building. Therefore, for West Wednesday on the evening of that same day, a security plan was quickly developed, to ensure the safety of the rally.

At the rally, everyone marched around the corner to face the jail, and chanted very loudly, in massive unison, to support not only the jail's general population, but also one of the inmates in particular: Keith Davis Jr. He was the first person shot by police, subsequent to the police killing of Freddie Gray. Davis has since been falsely accused of murder, and incarcerated in that prison while awaiting his fifth trial, scheduled for July. Rally participants were moved to see that prisoners were holding themselves up above the cell floors, keen to see and hear the rally. One of the prisoners that cheered the rally from his cell was Keith Davis himself!

Racists get scared; masses mobilize

At today's West Wednesday, the racists made their presence felt, circling with their cars and sometimes parking near the rally. One of them was driven by killer cop Nicholas Chapman, one of the two animals who initiated the murderous attack on Tyrone West in July of 2013. Perhaps his goal was intimidation. Or perhaps he was scouting out the sizeable rally and starting to seriously worry that West Wednesday, along with additional elements of this struggle, is going to succeed in getting some accountability, and he may well be facing firing, and a cell block.

By the time this article is published, participants from the sit-in will have had a meeting with Hopkins president, to push for complete amnesty and, even more importantly, to continue pushing hard for the three demands: no private armed

What you do counts!

As a result of the sit-in, that there is a new, mutually inspiring bond between activists at Hopkins and the greater community. In fact, this has become the third surge in the size and strength of West Wednesday, over the nearly six years since the death of Tyrone West.

The first major upsurge was during the rebellion in Ferguson, responding powerfully to the police murder of Michael Brown. The second major upsurge was during and after the mighty rebellion in Baltimore, against the police killing of Freddie Gray.

And there will most certainly be intense feelings at the upcoming May 22nd West Wednesday: that will be the day of Tyrone's 50th birthday. The struggle continues!

police force; no contracts with ICE; and justice for Tyrone West. Hopkins alumni, concerned academics, students, and community members are being mobilized in support. In addition, Hopkins students are being urged to continue attending the West Wednesday rallies.

The meaning of victory

There was some sense of defeat that the Hopkins sit-in had been forcibly ended without yet winning any of its three important demands.

A member of Progressive Labor Party, one of the speakers at the May 8th rally, pointed out that the sit-in actually succeeded, very effectively, at popularizing an understanding of the issues, and the need to vigorously and boldly fight racism.

The speaker pointed to a link between this struggle and early opposition to the Vietnam War. The speaker said that when the Vietnam War began, antiwar students and workers were spat upon and yelled at. Over the next seven years of leafletting, teach-ins and struggle, as well as the masses witnessing the mostrosity and devastation of the war in the evening news, most workers in the U.S. grew to become opponents of the war.

Large numbers of workers, students and soldiers came to understand that this war, which killed about two million Vietnamese and 58,000 U.S. soldiers, disproportionately Black, was rooted in the dynamics of imperialism — a system that PLP continues to fight worldwide to replace with a communist, sisterly and brotherly egalitarian world.

When U.S. capitalists suddenly expanded that war by invading neighboring Cambodia, based upon the growth of political consciousness over seven years, half the colleges in the U.S. went on strike, virtually overnight.

Similarly, said the Party speaker, the sit-in at Hopkins, through its boldness and its consciousness raising, has helped lay the groundwork for larger struggles in the future, exclaiming to everyone at the rally "What you have done, counts!"

OUR FIGHT

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

★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. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs everyone to contribute and share in society's benefits and burdens.

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

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

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

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

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

CONTACT US

Email
desafio.challenge@gmail.com

Mail
Box 808 GPO, Brooklyn, NY 11202

Internet
www.plp.org
challengenewspaper.wordpress.com
Twitter: @PLPchallenge
Facebook: Challenge Desafio

WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

CHALLENGE is for the working class, produced by the working class. The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP's criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a “following” around any particular individual.

While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual's writing of an article.

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Editorial

Cyber wars, a prelude to world war

Google's move to cut off Huawei phones from access to the company's software is a stark reminder to capitalists worldwide and a blunt message to the rising Chinese ruling class: U.S. imperialism will be ruthless in defending its global profits. Google's signing on to U.S. efforts to beat back the projection of Chinese power intensifies the pressure on European and other capitalist rulers to choose sides in the escalating cyberwar between the two superpowers. Neutrality—for companies as well as countries—will be difficult, if not impossible. But workers must choose our own side, the side of the international working class. As World War III gets closer, we must be prepared to turn imperialist war into class war for communist revolution.

High technology: spy vs. spy

U.S. President Donald Trump's assault on Huawei, the world's largest telecommunications equipment manufacturer, is an attempt to block the Chinese bosses' “digital silk road.” Chinese advances in global high technology, the centerpiece of the country's “Made in China 2025” industrial policy, work hand-in-glove with its Belt and Road Initiative to gain political power through infrastructure projects and economic thievery around the world. Huawei was born to spread Chinese power globally. It was founded in 1987 by a former officer of the People's Liberation Army (npr.org, 12/18/18). Just as AT&T and Verizon are arms of U.S. imperialism, Huawei is an arm of Chinese imperialism.

Currently China is leading the world in building infrastructure for the future 5G wireless network technology. The implications for the U.S. bosses are terrifying: A recent joint statement by several senior American military leaders noted that Chinese-led 5G infrastructure provides Beijing opportunities for forced data collection and could potentially compromise the integrity of future U.S. military operations. Moreover, they warned that this would give China's fascist government the ability to clandestinely collect private information from billions of people and use that data for coercion (nationalinterest.org, 5/21).

Of course, these U.S. fascists are hoping that everyone forgets about Edward Snowden and Julian Assange. Their revelations exposed the global expansion of spying by U.S. telecommunication firms on behalf of the U.S. National Security Agency.

China and U.S. vie for allies

In both Latin America and Europe, U.S. warnings of future Chinese spying have largely fallen on deaf ears. Huawei phones make up only 7 percent of the Latin American market, as compared to 25 percent in Europe (New York Times, 5/25). Besides, Latin American governments and workers have lived with U.S. spying for decades. Hamilton Mourão, the Brazilian vice president, gives voice to the predominant ruling class view: “China wants our products; we need trains, ports, and highways that facilitate the transport of these products” (Foreign Affairs, May 2019).

In Europe, meanwhile, close NATO allies like Germany and Britain are resisting U.S. appeals to ban Huawei from their own 5G projects. U.S. intelligence officials are conceding that Huawei and other Chinese telecom companies will “most likely control 40 to 60 percent of the networks over which businesses, diplomats, spies and citizens do business” (NYT, 5/28).

The bosses are pitching 5G technology as a big improvement in our quality of life, from faster movie downloads to revolutionary medical breakthroughs via augmented and virtual reality. They claim that 5G will tie together the “internet of things,” from autonomous cars to security cameras and industrial equipment (NYT, 5/25).

But we should remember that the primary reason the bosses are building this infrastructure is for “national security”—in other words, for internal surveillance and repression to enhance military readiness. Any “benefits” for workers will take

a back seat to the needs of the capitalists' war machine and their move toward full-blown fascism.

Trade wars push patriotism

As the superpowers' trade war intensifies, the U.S. rulers' use of state power seems clumsy next to China's state capitalists, who are more efficient in disciplining and unifying their own class—an essential element of fascism. The current impasse between Trump and Congress threatens to paralyze the U.S. government's ability to implement new policy, at least in the short term. In a fast-moving world situation, this is highly unfavorable for the U.S. ruling class. Throw in Trump's ally-smashing style, and U.S. imperialism may be isolated as it falls from its brief perch atop the profit system's global pecking order.

U.S. workers have come to rely on cheap goods from both China and the U.S. to offset some of the rampant income inequality that concentrates obscene wealth within the tiny ruling class. But as Trump imposes more tariffs and China retaliates, prices will continue to rise. Both sets of rulers will need to win many millions of workers to the idea that it is our “patriotic duty” to sacrifice and pay higher prices for “Made in the USA” and “Made in China” products. The extra dollars and yuan to flow through the bosses' respective treasuries will ultimately finance the cost of mass slaughter, as the trade war erupts into a shooting war.

Confronting China

All U.S. rulers grasp the need to keep a critical mass of war industry physical plants on the North American continent. But in recent years, a number of U.S. manufacturers, including critical sectors like aerospace (warplanes) and trucks (tanks), have come to rely on cheap steel and electronic components from China. Sooner than later, a non-Chinese supply chain will be needed.

Though the immediate outcome of this latest trade war is unclear, the rising stakes are unmistakable. Thomas Friedman, in-house cheerleader for U.S. imperialism at the New York Times, declares: “We could look the other way when trade was just about toys and solar panels, but when it's about F-35s and 5G telecommunications, that's not smart” (NYT 5/23). While Trump's style is chaotic, it puts important needs of the main wing of the U.S. ruling class, the finance capitalists, front and center.

In the U.S., the capitalist bosses—whether Republicans or Democrats—have yet to win masses of workers to the patriotic fervor needed for a serious inter-imperialist confrontation. Chinese President Xi Jinping is in the same boat. In both countries, individualism and consumerism reign supreme. To the extent that the Trump-Xi trade clash represents the start of an effort to politicize consumers with anti-Chinese or anti-American sentiment, it is a significant building block for wider war.

In 2020 and beyond, fight for communism

As capitalism heads toward world war history teaches us that the working class is the only force that can change this course of mass devastation. In the coming period, the bosses will undoubtedly attack every section of society to prepare for war. Communists must be positioned in growing mass movements, from fights for national healthcare and reproductive rights to teacher strikes and struggles against racist police murders. As we sharpen the class struggle, we must extend our work into basic industry.

PLP's aim is to build a mass base of class-conscious workers who can be won to international communist revolution. As workers reject nationalism and reformism, they will come to understand that if you leave one wolf alive, the sheep will never be safe. Only then will humanity emerge from the threat of capitalist-inflicted annihilation and advance into a future where the world's working class is free from exploitation.☪

NYC Transit

MTA workers on track to build worker-rider unity

NEW YORK, MAY 29—Recently a subway conductor for the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) got stabbed while sitting on a bench in his uniform. Meanwhile, toxic silica dust will be released during major repairs of the L Train subway tunnel and will affect both transit workers and riders. To top it off, the MTA bosses just raised the fares.

The billionaire capitalists who run New York City and control the MTA blame the workers for these problems. The MTA's plan is to try to drive a wedge between transit workers and fellow workers who ride the train. The vast majority of transit workers, have resisted their attempts, by not playing into the bosses' fear mongering. They don't fear the riding public, and are eager to help whenever they can. Similarly most riders do not blame the workers for train delays or unsafe conditions.

Mental health

Actually, the stabbed conductor was closer to the truth: "What's going on is that there's a heavy mental issue ... And I think this really needs to be dealt with... Someone like him, he's possibly a victim of mental illness ... so it's something that we have to take care of" (abc7news, 4/22).

This "heavy mental issue" is capitalist exploitation of the working class, so bosses can make maximum profits. It is the job of communists in the Progressive Labor Party to not only fight for safer working conditions, but also to unite workers to fight against the whole capitalist system.

Mental health is a major issue in this country. The stressors caused by racism and exploitation are the main drivers of mental illness. Many workers never receive the care they need, due to the closure of mental health hospitals. "The disappearance of long-term-care facilities and psychiatric beds has escalated over the past decade, sparked by a trend toward deinstitutionalization of psychiatric patients in the 1950s and 1960s, says Dominic Sisti, director of the Scattergood ..." (NPR 11/30/17)

Silica dust kills workers, as bosses profit

At a recent Transit Workers Union (TWU) meeting it became clear that the bosses and the union have the same "solution" to the silica dust health problem: "Educate" workers about the health risks it poses, while scheduling workers for routine medical evaluations. As for the health risks to riders, the bosses have no answers and the union says, "We'll get back to you." This is how the working class is treated in liberal New York City with a Democratic mayor and governor.

Progressive Action is a group of transit workers organizing against the dangers from silica dust. They also held a march to City Hall to demand that Transit Authorities take action against the assaults on transit workers. Unfortunately, this march has led to demanding more police to 'protect' transit workers, which is a dead end. Kkkops will more easily harass Black and Latin transit workers; no MTA badge will change that. This "solution" will also send more workers with mental illnesses to prison. "The Treatment Advocacy Center reported American prisons and jails housed an estimated 356,268 inmates with severe mental illness in 2012 ... That figure is more than 10 times the number of mentally ill patients in state psychiatric hospitals in the same year—about 35,000 people" (The Washington Post, 4/30/2015).

Fare hikes

But wait! The bosses want to squeeze the workers some more by raising the fares. Then they can get the media to blame the lack of money for transit repairs on fare beaters. There was a big media blitz about how workers don't pay the fare on the busses and jump the turnstiles to ride the subway. That won't be a problem under communism as public transportation will run everywhere and it will be free. Here the MTA bosses and the TWU union sellouts have a "disagreement." The bosses want more cops to go after workers who apply for too much overtime! But the union, and even

the Progressive Action group within the union, want more cops to supposedly protect the transit workers. They want the cops to protect the transit workers from other workers. When asked what the union was doing to improve the relationship between MTA workers and riding workers, union reps replied with, "y'all ain't got to worry about that because no one's gonna want to fight with a guy swinging a Jerry [slug hammer]." This was probably the most callous, and individualistic thing heard from the union misleaders. The union member responded that he cares about the safety of all workers, not just those in his division.

Then the media went after workers who worked "too much" overtime. "The study found MTA workers are putting in so many extra hours ... that the agency spent \$418 million on overtime last year (CBS New York, 4/23)." With over 50,000 transit workers, a majority is required to work seven days a week. These workers are not rolling in the dough. There is lots of overtime because the MTA bosses refuse to hire more workers.

All things change

After the union meeting a PLer had a lunch-room discussion with his coworkers. At first they were afraid he would lose his job for criticizing the company. Many felt it wouldn't change anything raising the issues with the union. They were right about the sell-out union. One worker mentioned how hard it would be just to get the workers to a union meeting, himself included. The PLer's response was that all things change. The PLer also proposed a flyer to pressure the union and to address mental illness. The workers are in the midst planning a struggle.

So what do the MTA bosses, politicians, and media lackeys have in store for the working class? More fare hikes and pay cuts in workers salary overtime. Not to mention, exposing workers and riders to toxic silica dust. We need to fight back with a united working class and eventually seize power with a communist revolution for the working class.✪

Letter: From May Day march to recruitment?

We are a church-based group in Manhattan and five of us chatted about PLP's May Day March on May 4 in Brooklyn (see page 7). Everyone was excited about the organization of the march, the effectiveness of the sound struck, and the power of the speeches. A first-time marcher was impressed that we avoided police pens and reached out to multiple communities, particularly about fighting racist police terror. Several had questions and disagreements about the slogan, "The Only Solution is Communist Revolution."

They agreed to continue to discuss this slogan at our study groups. Altogether, the Party has seven young possible recruits over the next six months—still MORE nails in the coffin of capitalism!✪



Mexico May Day

Continued from page 8

cal coverage used to achieve these plans through rigged consultations, the presidency will use the discrediting of opponents as radicalized minorities, as it has done with teachers in Michoacán and Oaxaca, or with opponents of the thermo-electric plant in Puebla, which ended in the murder of one of its leaders.

After the "democratic" simulation and discrediting of opponents, the use of state violence through the National Guard and the army will be justified, to enforce the "rule of law" and the will of the majority. The projects of the 4T are the same as those of big local capitalists and the global imperialists.

At a global level capitalism is in crisis, the threat of a war between the main imperialists is increasing. Millions of workers have to migrate from their places of origin to escape violence and poverty; migration is growing rapidly in Mexico and Central America. Contrary to the promises made in the campaign, the current government has adopted a policy of control, repression and criminalization of migrants.

The working class in Mexico has been one of the most oppressed in the world in the last decade. It receives one of the lowest salaries, with fewer and fewer labor rights, with the longest working hours, it is disorganized and depoliticized and is facing levels of violence similar to a country at war.

For the ruling class it was fundamental that a

politician like López Obrador came to power, to give an appearance of change and democracy. The new government has given a respite to the political and capitalist class in Mexico and the world, to realize their plans for exploitation and to advance fascism.

Faced with this panorama, the working class must have its own plans, to reorganize, to politicize, and to resist and fight to change the unequal capitalist system for a communist system of social equality. That is the plan of the Progressive Labor Party.

This May Day, we raise the flags of the international unity of the working class, we defend the struggle of the workers for our liberation from the yoke of capital through a communist revolution, we reject the electoral farce and we call on workers to organize themselves in action-study collectives to understand the capitalist reality and eventually change it.

Members and friends of PLP believe that changing the capitalist system will take several generations, but we are confident that our class historically has achieved the greatest social, cultural, political, technological, and scientific advances as occurred during the Russian and Chinese revolution and during all class struggle around the world.✪

Indigenous farmers demand justice, bosses offer repression and death

COLOMBIA—For 27 days 13,000 organized peasants blocked traffic on the Pan-American highway (the region's biggest roadway). This struggle persists despite the Colombian bosses' racist terrorism which has killed more than 600 local workers in the last two years. Progressive Labor Party (PLP) in Colombia is organizing the only solution to this class struggle: communist revolution.

These peasants organized themselves in indigenous rural collectives and descended from different locales and blocked the road in several points such as Cauca, Nariño, and in other towns. They were protesting and angrily demanding from the racists Ivan Duque and Alvaro Uribe (current and former Colombian presidents) an agrarian reform, resources for hospitals, schools, housing, roads, drinking water, sewerage, not spraying their crops with glyphosate and stopping the murder of social leaders and local peasants.

On March 13, the workers blocked nine miles of the Pan-American Highway and the bosses, instead of discussing their just demands, sent the ESMAD riot squads, the army and the hordes of paramilitaries that attacked the native population using tear gas and excessive force. The workers defended themselves with their only weapons: clubs and stones.

Never stopped fighting

The bosses' forces left eight peasants dead, more than 80 injured and 30 arrested. Despite the state terrorism characteristic in Colombia in recent decades and despite the paramilitary barbarism, which has resulted in thousands of deaths, disappearances and exiles, the workers of the countryside and the city, and students have not



stopped fighting. Practically all the peasants and oppressed people are proletarianized. The vast majority have no land or means of production, so they are forced to fight for higher wages and shorter work hours to save their lives.

The previous 1,300 treaties that were agreed upon during the past 30 years were totally or par-

tially broken by different governments. This has left 3.5 million people in this area living in poverty, misery and unemployment. In addition, armed groups kill, threaten and persecute them. They are displaced from their lands, which are now dominated by companies owned by landlord mafiosos and thieving politicians. These bosses want the lands for mining, cattle raising, and to plant coca, African palm, and sugarcane.

Historical materialism teaches us to recognize the oppressive and lying nature of the Colombian bourgeoisie. We know that they will again fail to comply with what was agreed to. Alvaro Uribe rejected an agreement 10 years ago of a similar struggle, and then massacred the peasants. Thousands of indigenous workers in the public square of Caldon waited in vain to meet Ivan Duque as promised, but that never happened. The corrupt prosecutor Martinez invented the lie that indigenous groups would attack this fascist president.

In PLP, we see racism as a class problem. We understand that the capitalists use it to super-exploit and divide the workers (today the indigenous population tends to be more urban than rural in many parts of the world). Racism is a political weapon used by the bourgeoisie to obtain super profits and divide the proletariat and prevent a struggle by a united working class to defeat capitalism.

PLP's communist and anti-racist politics offers the true answer to the indigenous question from Colombia to Mexico to Peru to Ecuador. Under communism, proletarian internationalism will create a new society where production will be according to the needs of those who produce all wealth, and where any form of racism, sexism, will be fought using workers' power and the dictatorship of the proletariat.☺

Newark: Capitalism behind racist environmental crisis

NEWARK, NEW JERSEY, MAY 6 – About 75 people in this working class, mostly Black and Latin city, attended a forum whose key purpose was to alert neighborhood residents about the ongoing lead contamination of their water. Progressive Labor Party (PLP) alerted residents to the destructive nature of capitalism that destroys our environment and all aspects of our lives, from working conditions to education to healthcare.

Many of the forum's organizers were critical of the city administration's initial failure to address the crisis and their attempts to lie their way out of public criticism. PLP members have consistently pointed out that capitalism's insatiable demand for profit is the source of racist attacks on the working class such as lead poisoning. Only communism, a society run by the working class, can end these atrocities and build a world where profiting from the sale of toxic products will become a distant memory.

Liberal misleaders

Electing "progressive" politicians like Newark's Mayor Ras Baraka can never end these racist attacks. As one of the forum panelists said: "I tell my students that politicians running for president in 2020 promise us they will fix the system; but I ask my students why we, as working class parents, teachers and students, couldn't run things much better than the politicians and the rulers behind them do."

The forum opened with a short statement summarizing the 20th century history of corporate use of lead products. In the 1920s, the oil, auto, chemical and lead industry bosses conspired to promote lead in gasoline. Even before that, the lead industry was successfully campaigning to convince city

administrations to use lead pipes to transport water. While raking in billions in profits from the sale of products containing lead, these capitalists were well aware of their lethal toxicity. Years later, cities like Newark were left to deal with the murderous consequences of long-term exposure to lead.

The panelists included one of the attorneys currently suing Newark over the lead contamination, a scientist who specializes in the effects of chemical contamination, and a Newark high school teacher actively involved in the fight to rid Newark's water of lead. The panelists discussed the centuries old history of the human use of lead, the deadly long-term consequences of lead exposure, and the current status of the lawsuit.

The environmental attorney pointed out that lead poisoning disproportionately affects cities with large Black and Latin working class populations. As with Flint, Michigan, Newark's lead testing in 2017 and 2018 showed that almost 20 percent of measured households had levels above the federal action limit, and both cities measured elevated amounts among children (nrhc.org). Just as racist unemployment, police brutality, gentrification and skyrocketing rents have plagued former industrial cities like Newark and Flint, so have environmental catastrophes.

Several residents accused the city administration and Mayor Baraka of lying about the safety of Newark's water. In July of 2017, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection gave the city six months to develop a plan to address the problem of lead leaching into the water system. The city only commissioned a further study, doing nothing to remedy the problem.

In February of 2018, Newark's own consultant advised the Water Department that preliminary

results also showed that corrosion control was ineffective. But, in June of 2018, the Water Department Director issued a statement proclaiming that the water was completely safe, accusing the environmental lawyers of "outrageously false" charges. Ras Baraka said the same thing during his 2018 reelection campaign, with mass Robocalls and mailings, claiming the water was safe to drink. The city did nothing until October 2018, after the lawsuit was filed, when the final results of its study showed conclusively that the corrosion control in one of the two city reservoirs was not working.

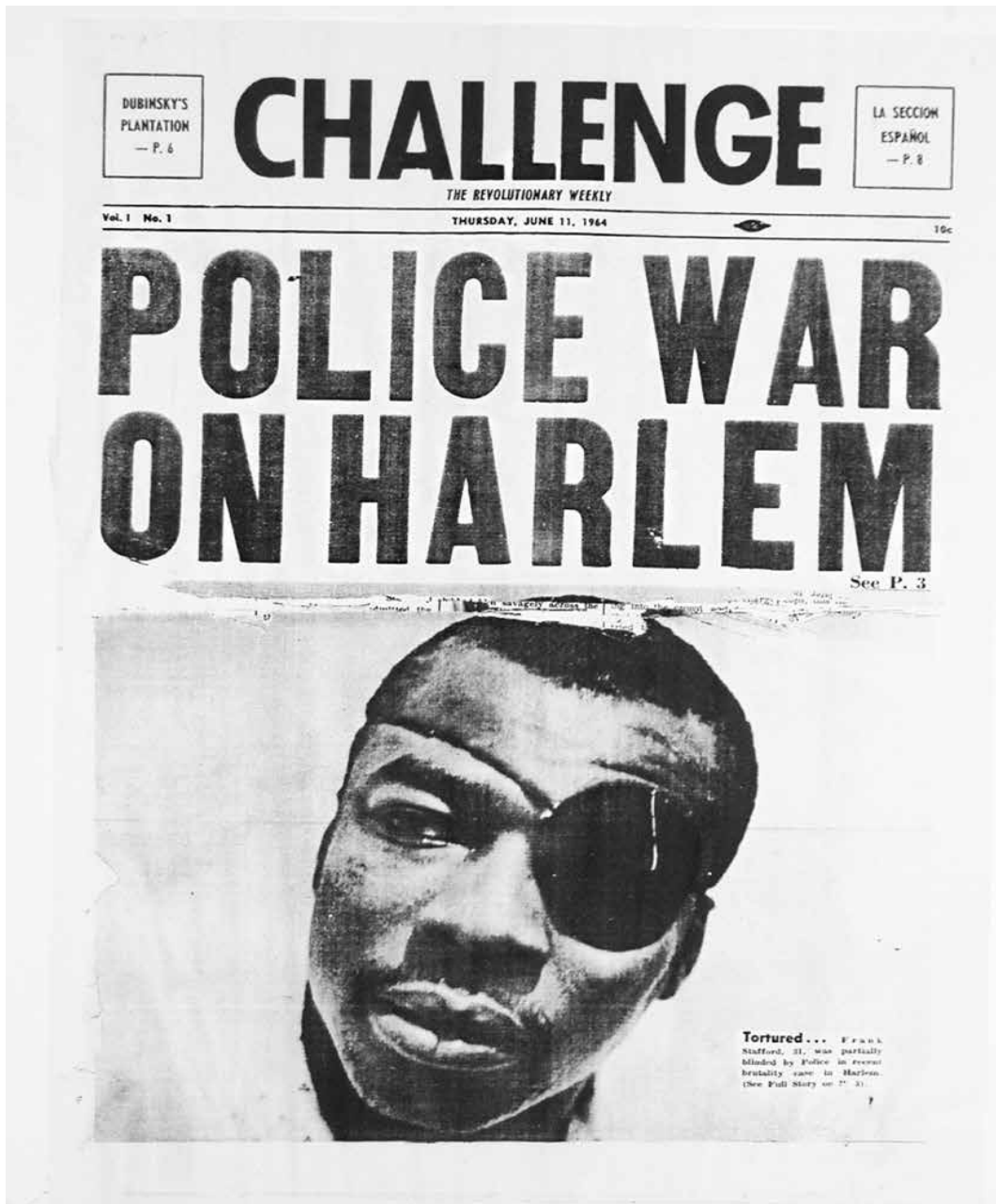
Workers need clean water and communism

Several media outlets, including the Newark-based Star Ledger, have reported extensively on the lead crisis. All of these outfits have their own motives for exposing and controlling Mayor Baraka, including keeping gentrification on track in Newark. Also, the federal judge overseeing the lawsuit has already made it clear that she thinks the city's belated remedial actions absolve it of legal responsibility for the problem. Both the bourgeois press and the rulers' courts serve the capitalists and their lackey politicians and have little care for the interests of the working class.

PLP members and friends are actively fighting for clean water. We want the local bosses and developers to pay the entire cost of the lead clean-up and we want workers and students to join us in the revolutionary struggle to overthrow this racist, capitalist system. Then we can end capitalism's environmental disasters behind and focus on building communism, a healthy and productive world for the working class.☺

55 years of CHALLENGE

Workers Salute CHALLENGE with “The Internationale”



The following story has been reprinted from Wally Linder's *Life of Labor and Love* (see ad page 6).

In June 1964, the Progressive Labor Movement decided to print an eight-page weekly newspaper; CHALLENGE was born. Our search for a printer led us to an outfit in Trenton, N.J. After laying down a deposit, the printer looked at the first issue and told us that would be the last one he'd print.

We called up the Harris offset press manufacturer and asked for a list of newspaper printers to whom it had sold web offset presses. That's how we found the Sun Publishing Co., located in the Chinese community on Manhattan's Lower East Side. We showed our first issue to the owner, Mr. Chan, and he agreed to print our newspaper. His wife and kids helped with various tasks. Milt Rosen, PLM chairperson, and I packed the papers into boxes for pick-up.

As it happened, later that month the Harlem rebellion erupted, during which the rebels were holding the front page of CHALLENGE as their flag while marching. This prompted the NYPD Red Squad to visit Mr. Chan and warn him that if he continued to print our paper he would be in for trouble. Chan told them he was within his rights to print any newspaper brought to him. "What about freedom of the press?" he shot back at the cops' threat. He was not about to abandon his only account. Years later, when Mr. Chan retired, our search for another printer led us to Brooklyn and Ballan Printing, a company that printed many small community and campus papers—and a huge number of pornographic ones that had sprung up since the 1960s. (The Mafia, in collusion with the owners, had coerced the work-

ers into a local union it controlled.) But neither the owners nor the Mafia counted on the workers' rebelliousness.

The workers read our paper and saw the various exposés we wrote about the lousy working conditions that profit-hungry bosses were pushing on workers throughout the country.

When we went to pick up the paper, the workers showed us the horrible condition of what passed for their bathroom and asked us to write about it. Our editor Luis Castro wrote an exposé for the next issue, which the workers read with enthusiastic approval. When the bosses saw the article, they went wild. They told us it was all lies and one-sided and challenged us to print their side, "the truth." We told them that there was only one "truth," the "workers' truth," which made them even crazier. From then on, they scrutinized every issue. Soon afterwards, the owners renovated the bathroom into a halfway decent condition. The workers attributed that improvement to the article we had written.

When a pre-May Day issue came out, we printed the words of the workers' anthem, "The Internationale." When we went to pick up that issue, a pressman suddenly leapt up the two flights of stairs to the top of the huge web press and in a clear, loud voice began singing "The Internationale." As the strains of the final words, "the International working class shall be the human race," drifted across the pressroom, the workers spontaneously burst into applause.

We never found out how this worker knew the song's melody, but news of the performance soon traveled to the far reaches of Brooklyn. We are now in our 55th year of publishing CHALLENGE, and have never missed an issue. ☺

Don't Undersell it!

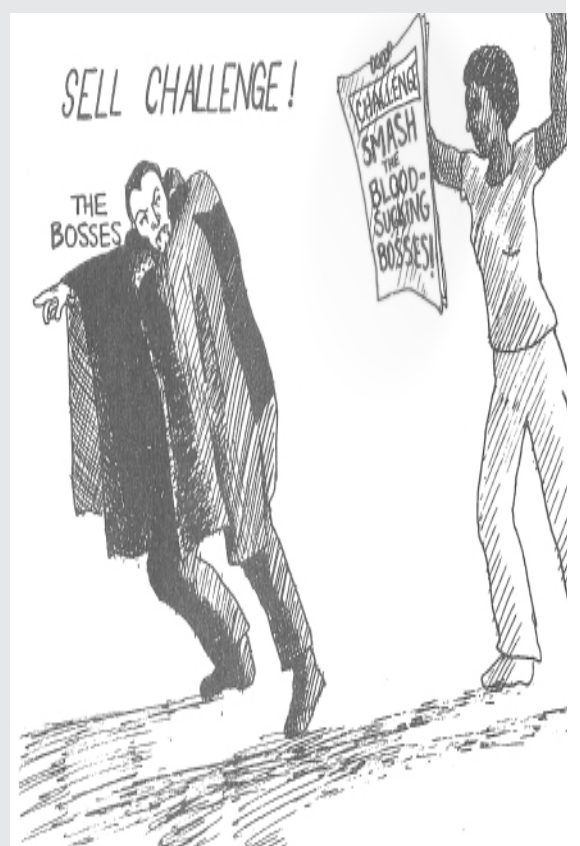
Sometimes, we think that Progressive Labor Party's modest size and modest distribution of our literature limits our influence to a few close friends.

While it is true that PLP needs to grow tremendously to be in a position to take state power away from the ruling class in any area of the world, the mass character of the response to our May Day March in Flatbush, Brooklyn bears out our line on concentrating our forces and bodes well for the future.

For quite a few years now, hundreds of people along the route of the march intently watch our march, honk in support, put thumbs up, dance to our chants, or otherwise show support for our march. Thousands take CHALLENGE newspaper. This year, near the end of the march, one comrade on the outside of the line of march told me she had seen exactly one negative response from those watching us.

I drove in from New Jersey with a full car. As soon as the closing rally ended, I headed for my car so that I could come back and pick up my passengers. As I was about to reach my car, I noticed two young Black men on bikes riding in the street. They had obviously been observing the march because I distinctly heard one of them say to the other "The big problem with capitalism is that it keeps us all separate." I marveled at the effect our communist march had on these young men, who probably just happened to be riding near Flatbush Avenue when we marched by.

No doubt the determination and perseverance of our Brooklyn comrades to expand the party and its ideas is being duplicated in other PLP concentrations all over the world. This is an important step on the road to communist revolution and workers' power. ☺



LETTERS

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

Students organize against youth jail construction

On May 18 in Newark, NJ at West Side High School, over 500 young people and supporters marched against Governor Phil Murphy's plan to construct a youth jail only five blocks from that high school.

One hundred CHALLENGE newspapers were distributed to the packed auditorium before we left for the street. We mentioned a high school student wrote the front-page article not one issue was left behind as we went a few blocks away to surround the lot where the jail was to be built.

The plans for construction were hidden from the public. A week ago, New Jersey Institute for Social Justice called the demonstration. This protest showed the willingness of youth in general to light a spark to a future of communism, where they take the lead, throwing out these lying politicians.

We linked arms surrounding the fenced-off lot of the proposed site as passing cars honked in solidarity. Two other youth prisons—Jamesburg and Hayes—remain open though Governor Murphy claimed to be closing them. Two other youth prisons are planned in addition to this one, opening the destructive school to jail pipeline.

It was obvious that the Governor's office was afraid. One speaker noted we take no notice of the state politicians recent statements that they will delay the plans. The protest reveals the deception of voting for a liberal politician after years of the conservative policies of former Governor Chris Christie.

★★★★★

Retirees need meds and red leadership

Over the past two years I have been fighting alongside union retirees against the outrageous costs of prescription drugs.

Opinion polls show that 80 percent of adults in the United States support rollbacks in the costs of these drugs.

My retiree group passed some resolutions. However, the misleaders at AFSCME (American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees) have shown little interest in building this fight. Only retirees took action in demonstrating around drug costs at the annual Labor Day parade. They also demonstrated outside the headquarters of drug manufacturer Pfizer.

Progressive Labor Party members criticized union misleaders as agents of the bosses. The fight against high drug prices shows the proof of what we say. The union leaders are reluctant to fight because union pension funds have large investments in pharmaceutical stocks. Their financial ties to capitalist profits make them unwilling to rock the boats of the capitalist system.

★★★★★

Fight fascism with communist internationalism

The CHALLENGE editorial "China's Cyber Fascism" (5/1) paints a graphic picture of 21st century fascism. The piece makes clear that China's cutting edge repression system is the envy of U.S. and other capitalist ruling classes.

China is rapidly becoming the biggest, richest, and strongest imperialist power, an obvious threat to the current top dog empire, the United States. China's manufacturing sector surpassed the U.S. years ago to become the world's largest producer of ships, steel, aluminum, textiles, computers—almost everything. The scale is hard to envision. As Graham Allison noted, "Between 2011 and 2013 China produced and used more cement than the U.S. did in the entire 20th century" (*Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?*).

China's GDP measured in purchasing power parity (PPP) surpassed the U.S. in 2014. More importantly, China has more than four times the population, graduates twice as many from college including four times the number of STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) majors, as the U.S.

So we are faced with two large trends: increasing political control of the Chinese population and increasing scientific production dominance by China. Which will have more impact on the life-and-death

struggle between the world's two largest empires? Both are needed for any country's capitalist ruling class to overpower a competitor. Mao Zedong said, "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun." For communists, the key is the political understanding of the person holding the gun. That means winning workers and soldiers in both the U.S. and China to an anti-imperialist understanding, eventually to turning the guns around and rebelling like U.S. troops did in Vietnam.

For workers of China and the United States, victory or defeat of "our" country must not be the focus. Our focus is taking power away from the murderous capitalist classes that shoot us down in the streets, read our emails, lock us up for fighting back, and, basically fear us because we outnumber them 100 to 1. (See article describing fightback and pro-communist political developments in China, 2/20/19 in CHALLENGE.)

Turning inter-imperialist war into class war for workers' power is absolutely essential, but it will require a lot from us, including becoming much more international. Let's get to work.

★★★★★

Pink-tide governments = social welfare with dead end politics

The article entitled "There's Nothing Socialist about Venezuela" in the May 1 issue of CHALLENGE left a lot to be desired.

The overall emphasis doesn't explain that social democracy in Venezuela improved the life of the poor by spending on housing, healthcare and education. This was made possible because a combination of armed/violent struggle and electoral politics allowed so-called pink-tide governments under the leadership of social democrats to run the government and spread wealth extracted from the sale of oil and agricultural commodities.

The problem is that these Pink-Tide social democrats never challenged the capitalist rulers and when the money that financed the programs dried up, poverty set in and people were justifiably angry at the cutbacks and hunger that followed. This gave the capitalists a base to reassert their power with a fascist campaign of subsequent suppression of the working class and more program cutbacks.

This often-repeated story shows that peaceful change and electoral politics won't work, can't work, to provide significant, lasting change for the working class. Whatever gains are won by democratic socialists through peaceful means will be taken back by the capitalists, through violence if necessary. Our ultimate goal must be taking power from the capitalists by force.

The corruption of democratic socialist leaders as they make increasing accommodation to capitalist powers and become traitors to the working class is a by-product of the whole degenerative process. It is nauseating, but we need to emphasize the process involved to convince people that following the U.S. democratic socialist politicians is a dead-end. Simply dismissing them as "fake socialists" won't be convincing.

CHALLENGE response: The main question to be asked here is, "Who held power?" The so called socialists represent a section of the ruling class, in Venezuela who rose to power by buying the acceptance of workers. Political power was always still in the hands of the bosses. The goal was never to dismantle capitalism and build a new society where the working class holds state power. It's not that they were corrupt; they were against U.S imperialists and became willing pawns of Chinese imperialism. For this reason, PLP denounces them.

★★★★★

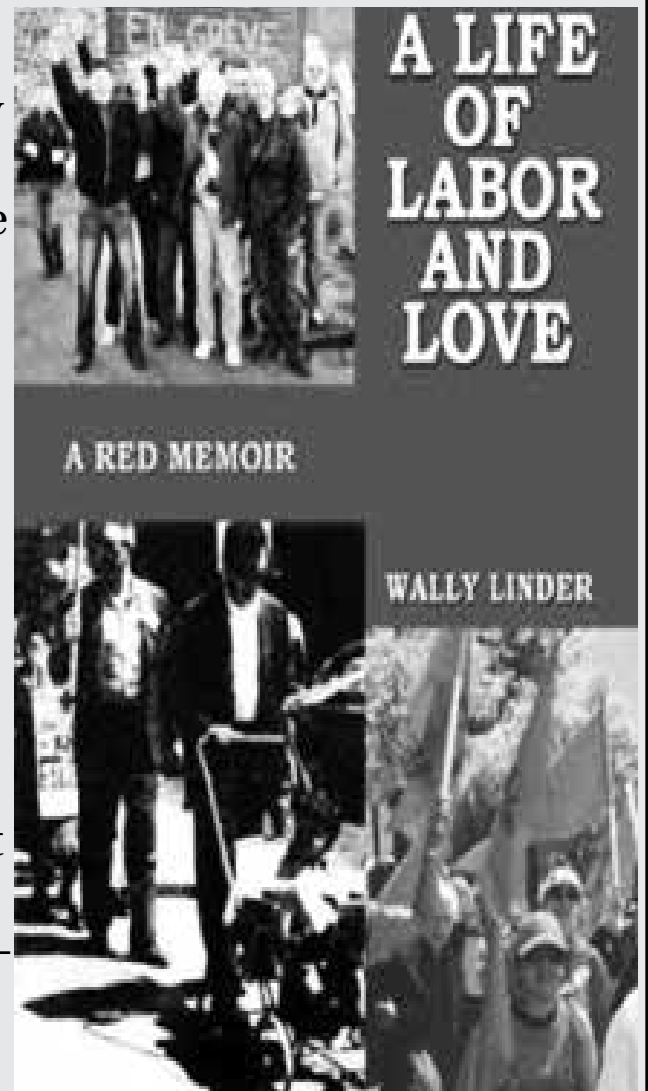
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LETTER

Fight the good anti-racist fight!

Progressive Labor Party has been working in our small, multiracial church for 24 years now. We've had modest success this May Day March for Communism. Every year, our numbers swell to an average of 30. This will only grow as we win more comrades and friends themselves to be May Day builders on a weekly basis starting in January.

There are at least two factors leading to our modest success:

- Always putting the Party first in the context of our anti-racist struggles
- Deepening our ties, personal and political, with every comrade and friend we know and are getting to know.

Sooner than later

The goal is to introduce every new friend to CHALLENGE as soon as we know enough about them. The rule is "Sooner than Later." And in every contact and at every meeting, some aspect of the Party's politics is at the forefront of our discussions, and we always make sure CHALLENGE is available, and we try to make reference to an article or editorial that we find is relevant to the discussion at hand.

Beginning in January, the May Day date is announced at every gathering, and we explain the importance of this crucial event to the struggles we are engaged in—here and worldwide.

Eggcited for May Day!

Currently, we are building the campaign to stop the New York Police Department from murdering people undergoing a mental health crisis. We meet twice a month to plan. The morning



of May Day, everyone was invited to the church for "Eggs for Encouragement." Over breakfast we discussed how to make our participation most effective: Fourteen marchers volunteered to carry large posters, each with the name of a police victim.

Two "Good Shepherds" volunteered to carry a large poster in Spanish, Creole, and English saying "Stop NYPD Killing People in Mental Crisis." The "Shepherds" job was to keep our contingent together for maximum visibility by our sisters and brothers along the route.

Three "Evangelists" gave out flyers in three languages inviting participation in this struggle

against racist police terror. Everyone, of course, understood that this was a communist PLP event.

One second-time marcher was so enthused that she sent out the list of our chants widely to others. Her only criticism was that we needed many more posters and banners making all chants fully visible to onlookers.

Celebrate the joy, share the sorrow, fight the good fight

Little of this would've been possible without ongoing organization—week in and week out, among our comrades, and with our friends, new and old. Celebrating the joy of anniversaries, birthdays, new births, and all other important life events cement ties, personal and political.

But equally important is the mutual support we bring in times of pain, sorrow, loss and racist oppression.

Particularly, the horrid suffering endured by our Black and Latin members and friends calls forth both practical and emotional support and exploration of possible new fronts for struggle.

For example one comrade, a young single mother, has suffered continual deprivations from the NYC "Human Resources" Administration. We plan to mobilize for her next fair hearing, and involve her peer-friends in an anti-racist campaign that we hope to spread citywide.

After this excellent May Day, we are in a stronger position to advance all of this work. As we end every meeting, we continue to shout, "Fight the Good Fight!"



RED EYE ON THE NEWS . . .

Below are excerpts from the capitalist press that may be of use for our readers.

NYT=New York Times
GW= Guardian Weekly

Millions poisoned by toxic water systems

NYT, 5/22 — Water is currency in California, and the low-income farmworkers who pick the Central Valley crops...labor in the regions' endless orchards made possible by sophisticated water systems, but at home their faucets spew toxic water tainted by arsenic and fertilizer chemicals.

"Clean water flows toward power and money," said Susana De Anda, a...water-rights organizer"Homes, schools and clinics are supposed to be the safest places to go. But not in our world."

Today, more than 300 public water systems in California serve unsafe drinking water,...a slow-motion public health crisis that leaves more than one million Californians exposed to unsafe water each year...

...In east Orosi, a farmworker community...surrounded by fields of oranges...residents complain of...nitrate exposure in the tap water...which...have linked to an increased risk of infant death, and...an elevated risk of cancer in adults — compounded [by] other difficulties like far-away grocery stores and doctors, [and] grueling work conditions...

...Chemical fertilizers and dairy manure seep into the ground and cause nitrate contamination...

Arsenic...can become worse with exhaustive ground water pumping...

...The failing infrastructure at the heart of the potable water crisis...is tinged with the...one in Flint, Mich. "Flint is everywhere," she said.

Big Pharma scheme hiked generic drug prices — \$18,375 for 100 pills

NYT, 5/12 — Leading drug companies including Teva, Pfizer, Novartis and Mylan conspired to

inflate the prices of generic drugs by as much as 1,000 percent...

The industry-wide scheme affected the prices of more than 100 generic drugs...including...an asthma medication; fenofibrate, which treats high cholesterol; oral antibiotics; blood thinners; cancer drugs; contraceptives and antidepressants...

...High drug prices have been driven...by an illegal conspiracy among generic drug companies to inflate their prices."

Court documents...lay out a brazen price-fixing scheme involving more than a dozen drug companies and just as many executives responsible for sales, marketing and pricing

...The companies colluded to raise prices on as many drugs as possible...

The Israeli drugmaker Teva Pharmaceutical...charged \$18, 375 for a bottle of 100 pills...for Wilson disease. Mylan has...rais[ed] the price for a two-injection EpiPen set to over \$600 from \$100...[in an] organized effort to maximize profits.

U.S. rulers backed racist Guatemalan murderous death squads

NYT, 5/12 — Guatemala is a beautiful country, traumatized by centuries of white Criollo racism towards the Mayans and other indigenous people.

During the early 1980s, military-backed death squads rampaged through communities on the spurious principle that "indigenous villages were the rivers in which leftist guerrillas swam...." The United States...supported the paramilitary marauders.

War criminal Trump pardoning war criminals

NYT, 5/19 — ...Trump...is considering pardons for several American military members accused or convicted of war crimes, including...murder [and] attempted murder....

One...is...Special Operations Chief Edward Gallagher...on charges of shooting unarmed civil-

ians...

Others...include...a former Blackwater security contractor...found guilty in the deadly 2007 shooting of dozens of unarmed Iraqis...

...Gallagher...indiscriminately shot at civilians, gunning down a young woman in a flowered hijab and an unarmed old man...[and] also stabbed a teenage captive, then bragged about it in text messages...

Trump...prais[ed] Chief Gallagher for his service to the country.

Trump and Obama enable U.S. rulers' support of Saudi genocide in Yemen

NYT, 5/19, op-ed Kristoff — America [is]...complicit in the deaths of almost a quarter million Yemenis so far, many of them children who have starved to death....

...Every 12 minutes, another child in Yemen dies....

...Because of [U.S.'s] bond with Saudi Arabia [it is] helping to starve and bomb Yemeni children....

...The Saudis have helped cause...the world's worst humanitarian crisis...

It is Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates that drop the bombs on Yemen, but Washington supplies weaponry and intelligence that allows this war to drag on indefinitely. American policy is to support the starvation of Yemeni children....

...Barack Obama backed the Saudis in Yemen, and President Trump has doubled down on that support...

A recent U.N. study calculated that if the war ends this year, it will have claimed 233,000 lives, and that if it continues until 2022, it will claim a total of 482,000 lives...

"Nearly every family has either lost someone, is hungry, has children out of school and is battling cholera...which worsened recently with more than 300,000 suspected cases so far in 2019.

From Mexico to Haiti, Workers celebrate May Day



MEXICO, MAY 1—This May Day, just over thirty enthusiastic friends and members of the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) commemorated this international working class holiday with two marches, one in Mexico City and another in Oaxaca. We distributed 4,500 Challenge fliers, chanted slogans and sang communist songs. The presence of our modest contingents represents a small flame that, with dedication and work in organizing our class, will eventually become a conflagration that will reduce inequality, racism, sexism, exploitation, fascism and nationalism to ashes.

The working class must understand the real meaning of the Fourth Transformation (4T) that the current government is carrying out. It is really just another deceptive trick of the capitalist system. For centuries, capitalism has generated huge profits for the bosses at the cost of exploitation, misery and death for workers all over the world. The working class does not need more capitalism, what it needs is a system of social equality like communism.

Behind Andres Manuel López Obrador's rhetoric, under the 4T's plans the profit system remains intact, as well as the theft of the impoverished majority by the billionaire minority. For proof all we need to do is review the main policies that it promotes.

The labor law reforms that will take shape in the Senate in the coming days, tackle three main issues. For starters, it attacks the union structure. Even though this structure has not been the most revolutionary, it has been used by workers as a vehicle for class struggle. The reforms are also trying to impose direct voting for the union leaders, regulate their decision making process and make their pay more transparent. Under the pretext of eliminating the union leaders' power, an important worker defense mechanism is being weakened.

Another proposal is to improve

the mechanisms of labor flexibility, which will not reverse the weakening of labor contracts with subcontracting as its maximum expression. The bosses want to force women and young people to join the labor market with "training contracts."

A similar situation can be observed with the approval of education reform, which maintains its punitive and repressive character against teachers and opens the doors to the privatization of public education, so desired by the bourgeoisie.

Criminal violence continues to increase, the alternative of providing economic support for the vulnerable population will only serve to promote political and electoral patronage. Even worse, the approval of the so-called National Guard, will increase the police and military presence that will mainly ensure the realization of national and global capitalist projects such as the interoceanic corridor, the Mayan train, the Dos Bocas refinery, mining, oil, water and biodiversity exploitation.

These projects will face working class resistance, as is currently happening in several parts of the country. Workers have organized against mining projects, mainly, but also against the airport in Texcoco. In addition to the media and politi-

HAITI, MAY 27—"We have to destroy capitalism to make room for communism." This was the most memorable sentence at the Progressive Labor Party's May Day activities. To mark the International Workers' Day, PLP participated in a number of militant activities in several locations.

Red discussions

One event was organized in a community of agricultural workers and their families where PLP has been active for a long time. A discussion was held under the Mapou tree on May 1 about the history and importance of May Day as a worldwide workers' celebration of fights against the capitalism. "Today is really not a fête," said one of our comrades. "It is a moment of reflection about how to organize ourselves noting the difference between May Day as a day of commemoration of struggle and not just the celebration of 'agriculture and work' as the Haitian capitalist class would have us believe."

These ideas were greeted with smiles and applause. The comrade noted that Haitian workers and students have contributed to this worldwide movement in their fight against corruption, unemployment and all the misery that capitalism brings to workers and their families.

Mass mobilizations

In the capital city, Port-au-Prince, several participated in mass mobilizations of thousands of workers and students. They continue to build confidence inside the working class about the necessity to fight back under the communist leadership of the PLP. The current period is favorable to these ideas because there is a real lack of leadership among those engaged in spontaneous mobilizations against the Haitian and international bourgeoisie.

The current economic, social and political context is an objective condition for the class struggle. The PLP takes the opportunity to raise awareness and organize masses for the class struggle.

Destroy this rotten system

On May 5, in the provincial town, we organized a full day of activities. A militant anti-capitalist professor and a PLP comrade hosted a talk about the ruling class's mafia-like strategies. Workers, employed and unemployed, high school and university students all had the opportunity to struggle, with much animation, over the ideas about revolutionary communism. One of them underscored the conclusion: "We have to build the Party to destroy this rotten system, capitalism!"

A PL'er spoke about why May Day calls for ongoing reflection and organization. "Thanks to struggles of workers under communist leadership for almost two centuries, the working class has had many victories. Yet many of those victories have been reversed, such as the Bolshevik and Chinese revolutions. Unless we permanently bury the capitalists, they will always find a way back."

The comrade used the labor code as an example of a legal maneuver used by the capitalist state to guarantee their rule. "Labor regulations are designed by the bosses and voted into law by their valets, the bought-and-paid-for politicians. A portion of the labor code states workers' strikes must be announced in advance and cannot go on for more than two days! At this, one worker exclaimed, "We must put an end to all this, the politicians are not in favor of the masses, we must no longer vote!"

For his part, the professor criticized the imperialists' savage exploitation of the natural resources and the labor force of the working class, particularly here. He highlighted the lies concocted by the rulers and their stooges to make workers believe that the investments made by the bourgeoisie will change their lives so that they passively accept the bondage imposed on them.

At the end of the day, we shared some tasty food prepared by the organizing collective, while the participants took the opportunity to express their satisfaction and confidence in our line. Indeed, our Party is getting stronger day by day. ☺

Continued on page 3

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