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CHALLENGE
THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY
Volume 54 No. 20 October 5, 2022 suggested donation $1

JUSTICE FOR RAYMOND
HOW DO YOU SPELL RACIST?!
NYPD

Left photo: Multiracial and multigenerational rally led by PL’ers and Raymond’s family and friends. Join antiracists fighting, see flyer on right for details, to smash racist police terror.

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Continued on page 5

JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL FIGHT FOR COMMUNIST REVOLUTION
★ EDITORIAL The Queen is dead, long live the working class!..p2
★ LETTERS Transit workers not scared by bosses’ tactics..p6
★ WASHINGTON D.C Smash fascist terror vs. Haiti..p3
★ RED READS Looking Foward, a window into the post-capitalist world ...p8
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 disasters that are today’s world of bickering nations in constant environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains the relationship between 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 force of all the world’s crises. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained too 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 private property, money and profit. 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 must be freed from the false teachings of religion’s false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the people begin to understand and question the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.

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

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WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?
CHALLENGE is for the working class, produced by the working class. The fact that CHALLENGE/DESAFIo articles are not signed gives proof 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. 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.

The queen is dead; Long live the working class!

In 1933, the British royal family shows its true colors with a Nazi salute. From left: Queen Elizabeth’s mother, the wife of soon-to-be-King George VI; eight-year-old Princess Elizabeth, the future Queen; Princess Margaret, her younger sister; and Prince Edward of York, better known as the Duke of Windsor, who had a mutual admiration society with Adolf Hitler. (Source: The Sun, July 18, 2015).

The nine-mile line to mourn Queen Elizabeth II, the monstrous figurehead for degenerate Nazi-loving billionaires and callous capitalist bosses, reminds us that the working class still struggles through a dark night of false unity with the ruling class. Through Elizabeth’s seventy years as the royal family’s number-one parasite, British imperialism exploited, enslaved, tortured, and slaughtered countless workers across the globe (see box on the British atrocities on page 6). The Queen “spent a lifetime smiling and waving at cheering native people around the world, a sort of living ghost of a system of racism and brutality.” (New York Times, 9/11). As the monarchist lost an estimated $28 billion from the international working class, more than 20 percent of the British population sank into poverty (House of Commons Library, April 2022).

But even though many in our class seem enthralled by the royal family’s wretched excess and lavish pageantry, including the $9 million it took to put Elizabeth II on the throne (The Guardian, 8/1), a week before the Queen’s death, more than 150,000 workers — including postal and telecom workers, trash collectors, and lawyers — were on strike to protest stagnant salaries depressed by double-digit inflation. PLP and the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a “following” around any particular individual. 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.

The workers in the Soviet Union and China got a small taste of what is possible in a society built by and for the working class. The fact that CHALLENGE/DESAFIo articles are not signed gives proof 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. 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.
Smash fascist terror vs. workers from Haiti

Nearly three years, photos above from 2019 and 2020 fightbacks, after Alex Flores’ life was snuffed out by kkops worker’s are keeping the fight alive.

LOS ANGELES, September 20—“I found the summer project so inspiring! I just wanted to find a way to do that stuff back home in LA too.” This is the sentiment that brought five new young people to our monthly Flores family action against police murder. After nearly three years of activity in the South Central neighborhood, the added burst of new, young energy reinvigorated the struggle.

On November 19, 2019, the LAPD shot and murdered Alex, 34 years old, near South Central Avenue and East 28th Street. Through this antiracist murder, young energy reinvigorated the struggle.

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Canvas for Alex

The Flores family remains courageous and hasn’t allowed their fight to diminish the two and a half years since Alex Flores was murdered. PLP has worked alongside the family and made it clear that our support is not going anywhere. This strong working class unity has empowered the communist organization to be relentless against police terror.

Our consistent efforts are starting to bear fruit. At one of the doors we knocked on, a Latin worker recognized CHALLENGE from our monthly events and signed up for a subscription. The young students who attended our summer project organized others in their base to join us in this month’s effort. One of their base members who joined us, in fact, a college student at an east coast campus who happens to be good friends with a base member of a PLP campus leader there as well. Our small effort and modest impact is stretching coast-to-coast! We still have a lot of work to do in the consolidation process with the new people around us, but our future is certainly bright.

Conversations against racism

Protestors were excited to see the articles on Haiti in CHALLENGE. One expressed delight that the paper was in Spanish. A young Black worker used the QRCode to access the newspaper on his phone. Then we joined a conversation with a worker from Telemundo and another speaker who had denounced racism toward Black workers.

The Telemundo worker from the Dominican Republic (DR) described how bus drivers in his homeland refused to pick up their class sisters and brothers from the neighboring island of Haiti. He shared that he had asked a driver why he did not pick up a young man. The driver replied, “Because he’s Black.” The worker got off the bus in anger and solidarity. Racism is a creature of capitalism, designed by the bosses to divide workers and reap superprofits. It is good for our class to reject all forms of racism, brought by bosses or members of our own class.

This engagement by PL’ers followed last year’s protest of the racist attacks on Haitian migrants in a letter published in the Washington Post. As a crisis of capitalism and civil war expands in Haiti, there will be more workers and families seeking asylum.

As members of PLP and friends in public health declare, we need multiracial unity and revolution to smash this racist sexist capitalist system!
Capitalism is the disease, communism is the cure

Washington, DC, September 19—Protests for better healthcare under capitalism continued at the White House an a Progressive Labor Party (PLP) member joined 50 people suffering from Long Covid-19. We demanded that the Biden administration expand research into conditions that follow viral infections such as Covid-19, mono, bird flu, and other infections.

Contrary to liberal president Joe Biden’s false claim, the “pandemic is NOT over.” The marchers called for a federal program like the Ryan White Act for HIV that could provide wrap-around services for students and workers suffering from Long Covid-19 and similar long-term illnesses. The pandemic is far from over! And racist healthcare for all workers will never be over until capitalism is. We need the working class to rule the world.

Capitalism is always willing to discard disabled workers who they can’t exploit for profit. As Friedrich Engels wrote in 1845, “the class which at present holds social and political control [the bourgeoisie] places hundreds of proletarians in prison every year because they inevitably meet a too early and an unnatural death.” The ruling class is fine with the social murder of our class. But we can’t let them get away with murder.

Covid under capitalism remains deadly

Later that day, a PLP member joined others in a listening session with the Office of Civil Rights in the U.S. Department of Education to explain how schools should better provide equal education to students with disabilities. The PLP member has been meeting with friends and fighters with disabilities to make demands around education sparked by the Covid-19 pandemic. These include virtual learning wrap-around services for students and workers with disabilities and bring them and their particular struggles into the PLP.

NEW YORK CITY, September 21—Governor Greg Abbott launched Operation Lonestar, a belligerent, racist campaign to criminalize workers desperate to escape the horrors of U.S. imperialism. In a clear demonstration of the bitter rivalry between the Small Fascist conservatives and the Big Fascist liberals, the Abbott administration transported migrant workers, arriving on the Texas border, to democrat run states along the Northeast. This is life under capitalism.

A few months into the offensive more than 11,000 migrant workers from Latin America and Africa have been bussed in working class neighborhoods (U.S. Today, 9/2) with thousands being dumped in New York City shelters with no money, clothing, and given few resources to ensure their survival (The City, 9/16).

In response to this abhorrent racist attack on our class, PLP members involved in college campuses and community organizations that fight for housing have been circulating literature to students and workers facing racial displacement and homelessness. Below is an excerpt of the flyer.

Around the world, close to 100 million workers have been displaced. Whether from starvation, unemployment, environmental catastrophes, or as a result of speculative, the capitalist system sacrifices workers daily for profits.

Right now, we’re seeing the global capitalist crisis in full swing as thousands of new migrants arrive from Texas to NYC. Migrant workers are fleeing imperialist violence only to find themselves in New York City, the world’s wealthiest, so-called sanctuary city. NYC has also of the most unequal, segregated racist cities in the world. They will join their Black (52 percent), Latin (22 percent), and white (48 percent) working-class siblings who make up the bulk of the City’s shelter system (Daily News, 1/22/20).

To make matters worse, members of our class are used as pawns in a battle between an increasingly divided U.S. ruling class. On the one hand is Texas Governor Abbott, who represents the Trumpian Small Fascist faction and domestic fascist fuel bosses like Charles and David Koch. This wing is cruelly us-

Smash U.S. Gestapo—workers have no borders

We demand housing for ALL! Mayor Adams says there’s no money: A LIE! These bosses are only here to serve profit, not working people. For decades New York State has given developers billions of dollars in tax breaks to build luxury housing. But, communism will mean we workers will organize ourselves to be housed and cared for.

As communists, we build confidence in our class’s ability to lead. The reform demands in this housing struggle are for politicians to stop giving our tax money to developers, build 100 percent low-income housing. This is what workers want, all workers.

We will never have access to safe, decent housing. This is why we must fight for communism!

Black, Latin, Asian, white, all workers must UNITE!

Both Democrats and Republicans cynically use immigrants to build their bases for the upcoming elections. While Small Fascist Abbott busses migrants to sanctuary haven NYC to rile up his racist base, Biden helped Obama deport more migrants than any president in history at the time. Meanwhile, top Black KKIP, Big Fascist Eric Adams smiles to welcome migrant workers, and then stuffs them into already overcrowded shelters, thus pitting homeless workers against migrant workers as he helps real estate developers and landlords jack up rents and displace more workers.

The Big Fascist liberals like Adams and Biden do not care about migrant, Black, Asian, white, Latin, or any workers. As China and the U.S. rush closest toward World War III, the Big Fascists will sacrifice more workers to their economy, whether it be in the form of mass incarceration or more homelessness. Biden, openly preparing for war with China, views immigrants as cannon fodder for his imperial ventures. The working class must not allow the fascists, Big and Small, to divide us. Our strongest weapon is our unity, and we will need to come together in solidarity to resist these fascists.

As communists and all agents are the enemies of the working class. Capitalism doesn’t deserve to exist. It be through climate or economic disaster, natural, capital outflows, or pandemics, capitalism is destroying the world. We need international, working-class unity to fight for communism, a system in which the welfare and prosperity of the working class are above all else because we will abolish the profit motive. Join PLP fight against displacement!
Inflation, morbid symptom of capitalism’s crises

Inflation is the latest way the capitalist system’s crises are deepening the oppression of workers around the world. Capitalism is driven by competition and profit accumulation, based on economic and political instability, preventing stability and well-being for the world’s working class. When the bosses face a relative labor shortage (the of-bosses’ costs. As the pandemic began to recede, the bosses faced a relative labor shortage (the of-

What is Inflation?
Inflation is a rise in average prices of goods and services. In the U.S., the annual core inflation rate rose to 6.3 percent in August. Adding in food and energy, which lifts the inflation rate to 8.3 percent annually. Food prices alone in the U.S. are rising over 11 percent annually, increasing hunger and poverty, while rising at an even faster pace in less developed countries. Wages are not rising similarly so workers’ purchasing power is falling.

After 40 years of relative stability, why inflation in the U.S. now? Causes include the monopoly power of corporations, government aiding corporations, and COVID shutdowns and shortages caused by supply chain disruptions and war. Wage raises aren’t a cause of inflation but an effort to keep up.

Different responses to crises, same goal of maximizing profit

Threats to profits during the 2007-2009 crisis led capitalists to lay off workers and cut wages and benefits (labor costs account for 60-70% of production costs). To suppress resistance, the capitalists divide and weaken workers through racism and sexism, oppose new union creation (e.g., Amazon), and cut out labor strikes. Unemployment (which reached 10% in 2009) served to further weaken workers, as competition for jobs led to lower wages. Labor’s share of the nation’s income fell while profitability (output per worker) rose sharply and profits remained strong during this earlier period.

COVID created another profitability crisis for capitalists with consumer spending plummeting and supply chain disruptions forcing up the bosses’ costs. As the pandemic began to recede, the bosses made sure the official unemployment rate reached 3.9% of the labor force, the lowest point in decades) because many workers quit working or retired during the “great resignation” or termite strikes. The bosses raised money wages (albeit lower than the rate of inflation) and improved benefits slightly, which cut into their profits. The resurgence in the labor movement, with union organizing and strikes, compounded this threat.

Unlike the financial crisis, the COVID crisis caused shortages of key inputs for capitalists production at a time when they have been less able to pay workers what they need to produce. The capitalists have instead taken advantage of inflationary pressures to bolster profits through price increases. From 2021-2022, 56% of large businesses said they had raised money wages (albeit lower than the rate of profit margins; 38.3% of price increases were for the increased cost of non-labor inputs that capitalists manage to buy; and only 7.9 percent of the increased costs went to labor costs (J. Bivens, EPI, 4/21). The higher prices cut the purchasing power of workers across the board, obliterating any improvements in money wages.

Myths about the “the market” are used to convince workers that capitalism is fair
How can the bosses inflate prices across the board so readily? Isn’t capitalism’s “market competition” system supposed to keep prices in line with costs of production? In a competitive market, capitalists would have to sell their goods at the same price as their competitors. But the 20th century saw the “discipline of the market.” Monopolists still cannot raise prices so high that the number of people willing to buy their products falls so low that they actually reduce prices. For example, when inflationary pressures are high in industries like food, housing, and energy where people have few alternatives, capitalists have “gone big” on price increases, generating profits over and above their usual profitable exploitation of workers.

To end this insanity workers must seize state power
Governments (the State), far from representing the interests of all the people, carry out policies that reinforce the capitalist system of exploitation. These policies are usually geared to help the extremely wealthy monopolists. When there is an economic crisis, the state can create lots of money and encourage lower interest rates to help such businesses. The executive branch, usually with Congress’s agreement, bails out major banks, insurance companies, and corporations, including the hundreds of billions of dollars it provided during the 2007-2009 financial crisis.

During COVID many workers could not buy pre-pandemic prices, so no profit motive makers and landlords the government issued checks to families, which incidentally temporarily lessened hunger and poverty. Capitalists have gone large to big pharma, both enhancing their billions in profits while raising prices to labor costs (J. Bivens, EPI, 4/21). The higher prices cut the purchasing power of workers across the board, obliterating any improvements in money wages.

Justice for Raymond
Continued from page 1
non-white workers even less for their labor while keeping decent housing and other necessities out of their reach. Racism, in turn, is an important tool of the system; it is critical to quell antiracist fightback.

Even after being indicted for second degree murder with a degree manslaughter and second degree manslaughter, Middleton was granted bail and evictions. Congress gave large appropriations to big pharma, both enhancing their billions in profits while providing vaccines to workers. More workers are being fired – and kept generating profits for the bosses.

With today’s inflation, capitalists and their state enhance their profits, while depriving workers of needed products and services. The system is stacked against the working class.

U.S. imperialists export inflation
As bad as inflation is in the U.S., it is far worse in other countries. Why? After World War II, the U.S. was able to establish the dollar as the world’s re-serve currency. Oil and many other globally traded goods are therefore priced in dollars, helping keep the demand for dollars high. Increases in the U.S. interest rates over the past year have made the dol-lar more attractive to investors, raising the dollar’s value further. A rising dollar means that the currencies of other countries lose value, making their imported goods that are priced in dollars even more expensive in those countries. This has led to higher inflation rates in other countries and even greater distress.

Capitalism is a system of crises, wars, and suffering
Imperialist war and rivalry disrupt the world economy with inflationary pressures as well. The war in Ukraine, for example, led to European boycotts of Russian energy resources. The resulting shortages have driven up prices of key products. Russia has prevented food exports from Ukraine, creating massive shortages globally and crushing countries like Sri Lanka, Somalia, and Pakistan.

Capitalist classes prefer stable prices, keeping inflation rates at around 2%. When inflation exceeds such rates, the capitalists use the state to fight inflation by creating recessions. This is sometimes called “cooling off the economy.” They raise interest rates and shrink the money supply. This forces workers to forgo credit-dependent big-ticket items like automobiles and houses, while the costs of debt skyrocket and businesses are forced to lessen their borrowing for expansion. As a result, millions of workers get laid off and wages fall. Many small businesses go bankrupt and many large businesses close or are taken over by larger companies. Capitalist swings between crises, creating one (inflation) and trying to solve it with another (recession!)

Why can’t economic distress be solved without increased prices? Why can’t abundance, or scarcity, be shared among all workers equitably? Capitalism, run by the dominant class for its own profit, simply can’t allow it because such a system undermines profits.

With today’s inflation, despite multiple causes, U.S. capitalists are grabbing the opportunity to maximize their profits at our expense, by reducing our real wages and saddling the world with even more severe inflation. The instability and uncer-tainty promote deeper global economic, political, and military conflicts. Why should workers tolerate such chaos? We need to smash capitalism!!

For Raymond, fight for communism!
At an early morning rally in front of a transit repair shop in Chicago, a radical repair worker called for workers to fight back against the bosses. His words rang out as the workers cheered him on with encouragement, honking horns and smiles. “The bosses have tried to divide us, pit us against each other and disrespect us with low wages and poor working conditions.”

The transit shop stewards organized and spoke at the rally. A worker told him how one of the low level bosses has been breaking up the union, giving overtime to his friends, and trying to micro-manager the workers. This big boss wannabe had an opportunity to do the right thing - but he refused. He instead drove past our rally and called us scab names, and said he would kick our butts.

The worker who wanted to resolve issues with him was threatened with physical harm by another coworker! But our brave friend said he wanted to come to another rally and speak on the bullhorn!

The threat this manager hanged as one worker remarked, “We have been through life, and we have been through death (already) with Covid!”

The working class is in a life and death battle with capitalism every day. From the pandemic to floods from climate change to starvation, homelessness and increased gun violence against black working class that has created the conditions for all of these deadly things to keep on happening!

The flying class in Chicago is intensifying their efforts to win workers to support fascism in the form of more police on buses and trains. But as communists, we say there will be no peace and no safety for the working class under capitalism!

The members of the Chicago Transit Justice Coalition will increase our efforts to organize the workers to fight back against the bosses, the sleazy unions and officials and their rotten contracts. We are having discussions and debates about the role of the police. Members of the Progressive Labor Party will continue to distribute CHALLENGE to the workers and struggle to get more readers to spread the ideas of communist revolution.

Death to royalties, power to the working class

“Our hearts are broken” is the message of the bourgeois British media to the world on the death of Queen Elizabeth who is the symbol of 400 years of imperialist colonialism, genocide, racism and imperialism that has caused millions of horrible deaths and billions suffering lives of poverty and misery worldwide.

The contradiction of a 96 year old queen, one of the richest women in the world, living in one of her castles attended by the best medical care and servants and the daily worldwide pictures of babies with only skins with bulging eyes for heads and just ribs and sticks for bodies and legs dying by the millions from malnutrition and lack of medical care in Somalia, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Yemen and worldwide breaks my worker’s heart. Workers worldwide must recommit to end this murderous capitalist profit system from the British Empire to the U.S. Empire and nascent Chinese and Russian empires.

Fight for communism! 

PL’ers at Labor Day

In the U.S., Labor Day is celebrated every first Monday of September. This date is a federal holiday. This year we found out that the working class movement by imprisoning more than a million workers in barbed-wire concentration camps. Many, including women and children, faced “systematized violence and brutality and torture” with “forced labor and starvation policies” (Vox, News, 9/13).

In 1903, to prevent a feared Russian invasion of Tibet, Britain used the British Indian Army to invade the country and massacre more than 700 protesting workmen.

In 1909, Britain’s Parliament passed what became South Africa’s first constitution. With the British working hand-in-hand with the racist Boers, new laws stripped Black workers of all political rights and their land, and paved the way for the legalized segregation and vicious exploitation of apartheid.

In 1943, more than 3 million workers in India died of starvation after Winston Churchill forced the colony to export all of its wheat to feed British soldiers during World War II. Four years later, the British Raj partitioned India and Pakistan, an arbitrary division that uprooted 10 million workers and killed over a million more in unnecessary religious conflicts.

In 1950, a British general conceived of the Brigg’s Plan to combat communist organizing in Malaysia. British troops forcibly relocated 10 percent of the country’s population to concentration camps.

In the 1950s, as Queen Elizabeth toured the globe for photo opportunities, Britain fought off an uprisen against the newly-colonial Malayan Federation movement by imprisoning more than a million workers in barbed-wire concentration camps. Many, including women and children, faced “systematized violence and brutality and torture” with “forced labor and starvation policies” (Vox, News, 9/13).

In 1989, the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, which killed 30,000 workers, continued to spread radioactive waste throughout the region, causing cancer and birth defects.

In 1991, the Gulf War destroyed much of Iraq’s infrastructure and economy, leading to widespread suffering and death.

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Have you wondered about chemicals or other harmful substances in our food and water? Do you assume governmental agencies—like the FSIS (Food, Safety, Inspection Service), the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) and the CDC (Centers for Disease Control)—look out for our best interest, health, and well-being? Are we safe with high quality food and water? After reading this article, ask yourself these questions again.

Weed killer in our bodies

A Time Magazine online article (2017, October) reviews several studies, showing that glyphosate, a weed killer known as Roundup, is increasingly showing up in people's bodies. Here's some evidence:

- A study published in JAMA tracked people over the age of 50 in Southern California from 1993-1996 to 2014-2016. Researchers found that the percentage of people who tested positive for glyphosate shot up by 500 percent in that time period.
- One trial from the United Kingdom, in which rats were fed low levels of glyphosate throughout their lives, found that the chemical contributed to a higher risk of nonalcoholic fatty liver disease. Recent studies have found that many weeds are now resistant to Roundup, so growers are using more Roundup. (The Guardian 7/9). A CDC study found glyphosate was present in most urine samples drawn from children and adults. (The Guardian 7/9). This chemical is linked to cancer, a finding scientists have called “disturbing” and “concerning.” (Lianne Sheppard (University of Washington) co-authored a 2019 analysis that found that glyphosate exposure increases the risk of non-Hodgkin lymphoma.
- A 2019 study found that in our water, this attack on the working class is viciously racist. There's even now a phrase for it: environmental racism (nydailynews.com, 1/28/20).

Lead in workers’ water puts bosses “racist system at work

In 2014, Flint, Michigan changed its water supply from Lake Huron to the polluted Flint River without testing the water. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) declared the water safe to drink.

Residents of Flint immediately exposed the brown color and odor coming from their taps on social media, which the Flint officials denied. The child lead poisoning rate doubled, Hurley Medical Center created a health registry and proved that lead in the water was poisoning children. Flint has a population that’s 54% Black. As often is the case, Black workers suffer from the most extreme forms of environmental terrorism.

In 2021, nine Michigan officials, including the former Michigan Governor, were finally indicted on criminal charges including manslaughter and neglect of duty for polluting Flint water. In June 2022, the Michigan Supreme Court tossed out the indictments on procedural grounds. The situation in Flint is repeated over and over nationwide. While the government treats an industry’s action to pollute rivers, lakes, waterways and the ocean as a sacred right, the working class’ need for clean water is treated as a luxury. Fifty percent of U.S. lakes and rivers are “too polluted for swimming, fishing, and drinking” (EcoWatch, 3/29).

San Francisco Bay is polluted with radiation from Navy shipyards and barrated industrial chemicals, mercury from gold and silver mining. The Pacific Ocean is polluted with radiation from atomic bomb testing and the Fukushu-ma meltdown. The list goes on and on.

The State exists to serve the needs of capitalists, not workers. As you ponder our safety regarding the basic necessities of life, food and water, remember the social and economic benefits from pollution are reaped by the capitalist class while the social costs are paid by the working class.

Weed-killer glyphosate in our urine and lead-fouled water in our taps are just two examples of neglect of public health by U.S. governmental authorities, federal, state and local. The entire food and water supply is polluted by pollutants, pesticides and additives like sugar, preservatives, salt and unhealthy oils. The FDA doesn’t prevent the food industry from profiting by pushing harmful foods on us. Why don’t they protect us from bad food and foul water? Why is there no effective government system in the U.S.? Why don’t governments care? Because the purpose of government (the state) under capitalism is to serve the interests of the capitalist class. If harmful food and water is more profitable for the capitalists, then the government protects their right to supply it, over the dead bodies of the working class.

Some say that politicians and officials are bought off and the working class can root out corruption to correct the problem. Denying our class’ interest “costs” us the health of our children. Some say profits are too large and buying off the government is necessary. Our party calls to build a new society, governed by and for the working class. To do so, we need to smash capitalism and its state.
Looking Backward, a window on the post-capitalist world

Not only do tens of millions of people around the world hate capitalism and want to see it replaced with communism, but they have felt that way for many generations. 125 years ago, Edward Bellamy wrote the novel Looking Backward, 2000–1887, a powerful and intelligent critique of capitalism, a system that Bellamy considered trivial and wasteful. But Looking Backward also contains a vivid description of some aspects of an egalitarian society that might replace capitalism.

The book begins with the main character, Julian West, who suffers from insomnia, going to sleep under hypnosis in 1887 in Boston in a fortified chamber. A fire destroys his home but not the chamber, and Julian awakes in the year 2000 and discovers that life as he knew it has changed dramatically.

A glimpse of communism

Capitalism’s individual struggle for the means of life (food, clothing, housing) under capitalism has been replaced with a cooperative system that provides everyone — men, women, children — with an equal share of society’s surplus, in the form of a credit card. There is no money. Bellamy envisioned a new society in which the private ownership of the means of production and distribution has been replaced by public ownership.

Every person capable of working is required to do so, but only from the ages of 23 to 63. Everyone is free to pursue hobbies, further education or travel. Young people are well-educated and encouraged and assisted to find jobs they are most interested in and capable of doing. Harder jobs have shorter hours in society’s “industrial army.”

Every neighborhood in Boston — and every other city and town — has high-quality dining halls, libraries, recreational facilities, theaters, and clothing distribution centers where people can select what they want using catalogs and paying with their credit cards. There is no more poverty and crime has been greatly reduced. The new society has more wealth because it’s eliminated the waste, lack of planning, competition (including needless advertising), and the cost of an extensive state apparatus (including the police and an army that had been used to protect the property of the wealthy, suppress working-class rebellions and deal with crime caused by poverty).

Socialism restores capitalism

Bellamy’s new society is more than socialism. Money has been eliminated and since everyone — those working and those not working; husbands, wives, children — receives a credit card with the same amount, people receive according to the communist principle of “to each according to his needs” rather than the socialist principle of “to each according to his work.” The communists who led the revolutions in Russia and China fought for socialism as a stage leading to communism. But socialism retained features of capitalism such as exploitation through wages, small businesses, and some private ownership of land. Thus socialism led to the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union and China.

Looking Backward was a best-selling novel in the late 19th century, third in popularity after Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin (anti-slavery novel that exposed the viciousness of slavery and helped build the abolitionist movement leading to the Civil War) and Lew Wallace’s Ben-Hur. Bellamy clubs sprang up around the country to discuss how to organize to win the changes depicted in the book. And Bellamy wrote a sequel, Equality, to describe the new communist-type society in greater detail.

Yet the novel does have its imperfections:

• Bellamy was averse to class struggle. So in the novel the new society comes about in the early 20th century when enough people were horrified by the chaos, poverty, violence and misery of capitalism and decided collectively to replace it. A revolution had not been necessary, only the widespread realization that the big corporations needed to be nationalized, money eliminated and each person provided with an equal share of society’s bounty. Bellamy was a believer in gradualism and evolutionary socialism, which is the ruling class will never accept — either in 1887 or today.

• The mills in New England, where the novel is situated, were populated largely by immigrant workers, yet immigrants are virtually invisible in the book, and there’s no mention of Black workers trapped in sharecropping plantation system, nor discussions of racism.

• There’s no indication that the new society changed the nature of work. The “industrial army” seems to function the same way it would under capitalism, except that salaries are the same. A doctor and a factory worker receive the same pay, although the latter is likely to be less satisfied with his or her work. The new society has evidently not abolished the division of mental and manual labor, a crucial feature of class societies.

• The novel does show how the new society improves the lot of many, dependent on their husbands for money. But it does so in an off-putting Victorian manner, with women (through Edith, one of the main characters) portrayed as delicate and feminine, which is a little different from her prototype in the 19th century.

• Bellamy’s egalitarian society, while impressive in many ways, is presented as flawless, with no suggestion that struggle would be necessary to maintain its egalitarian nature and prevent the rise of a new ruling class. In the novel, on top of the new society sits a paternal central government that competently plans and controls production and distribution. There’s no revolutionary party and no more political struggle, because society is now portrayed as perfect. But every new society is subject to tensions between individuals who subjectively may want more privileges and benefits for themselves and their friends, and the collective that maintains objectivity and its egalitarian features.

Despite these reservations, Looking Backward is a beautifully written, powerful plea for a new world, a communist world. The novel played a key role in the radicalization of some of the most prominent labor leaders of the day, such as the Socialist Party leader Eugene Debs. It can still play that role in our time.