



CHALLENGE

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BOSSSES' STIMULUS PLAN:

\$4 BILLION FOR RACIST COPS

To help keep a lid on the New Depression's growing millions of angry, jobless workers (now 26 million unemployed and under-employed), Barack Obama is giving new life to racist community policing. Obama earmarked \$4 billion of his \$827-billion stimulus package for Community Oriented Policing Services and "other law enforcement needs." (New York Times, 2/6).

The Clinton regime, in a glaring example of fascism disguised as liberal "progress," had put 100,000 new cops on the street in the name of "community policing." Now Obama wants to double that to 200,000.

Community policing began in earnest in Boston during the early 1990s. The Boston Police Department (BPD) then formed the Ten Point Coalition with pastors in the city's mainly black Roxbury, Dorchester and Mattapan sections. The cop-loving clergy created a network of stoolpigeons. Tips about "criminal activity" — usually minor offenses like drug use or vandalism — poured in from pastors, principals and merchants. Arrests soared.

Under this scheme, cops expand their ability to terrorize black and Latino neighborhoods by finding allies among church, school and other local leaders. Pretending to combat gang violence, community policing in fact targets rebellion. That's why it hits the most oppressed — unemployed black and Latino young people — the hardest and why Obama needs it desperately in today's collapsing economy.

The cops had won the ministers to consider "all youth as their responsibility regardless of the parish the youth lived in or the youth's denominational affiliation" and to "spend time on the streets at night, getting to know the kids." (Encyclopedia of Police Science, 2006) In effect, the notoriously racist BPD succeeded in creating a new version of the Nazi's World War II-era Judenrat. The Judenrat were Jewish "community leaders" who, collaborating with the Nazis, betrayed their neighbors to the gas chambers.

Boston's top cop in the early 1990s was Bill Bratton, the rulers' leading apostle for community policing. Bratton has since brought the liberal rulers' racist gospel, with varying success, to New York and Los Angeles.

Liberals have a long vicious history. It was the liberals (anti-communist Social Democrats) who ushered in Hitler in Germany. And his party adopted the name "National Socialist" (NAZI in German) because a majority of German workers had voted for socialism so the Nazis figured they could use the liberal fig-leaf of "socialist" to win the working class to fascism.

That's why it would be wrong to think that the beleaguered U.S. bosses need to assert police power only in inner cities. They need to control all of society and Bratton-style policies help immensely. In mostly white, suburban, middle-class Topsfield, Mass., "Police are arresting twice as many people and writing twice as many citations as they were just

two years ago [after the police chief] adopted several community policing strategies." (Salem News, 1/22)

With the whole working class — black, Latino and millions of whites — being hit by the bosses' Depression, the rulers fear working-class rebellions like the ones in the 1930s, when they had to order out the National Guard every week in 1937. With Guard troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, they'll need those 200,000 extra cops here, while pushing patriotism among white youth as well to get them to join the Army.

WHITE HOUSE MILITARIZATION INTENSIFIES, DESPITE CLUMSY COVER-UP

Intensifying militarization — again masquerading in liberal guise — accompanies Obama's burgeoning police state. Facing armed conflict now in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan and eventually with Iran, China or Russia, Obama seeks to avoid imperialist predecessor Kennedy's disastrous choice of advisors.

Obama has put four-star officers in key war-planning posts. General James Jones is National Security Advisor and Admiral Dennis Blair directs national intelligence. In launching the U.S. genocide in Vietnam, Kennedy relied on academic Ivy League experts like McGeorge Bundy, who had read all the books but hadn't a clue about the technicalities of waging war.

"Anti-war" Obama's preference for war-bloodied brass has become so obvious that he backed off on appointing General Anthony Zinni as ambassador to Iraq, whom he had already promised the job. "Late last week, Lt. Gen. Karl W. Eikenberry, a former top military commander in Afghanistan, was named as the next ambassador to Kabul. That made it unlikely that the White House would name another general to a high-profile diplomatic post, and fuel criticism that it was militarizing American foreign policy." (NYT, 2/6) Phony peacemaker Obama then made the obvious move of replacing Zinni with Peace Corps alumnus Christopher Hill.

Obama's coziness with the cops and generals destroys his credibility as an agent of pro-working-class change. His choice of Paul Volcker to head a panel on economic restructuring proves Obama serves only the highest, imperialist echelons of the U.S. capitalist class. Volcker was once top economist at Chase Manhattan Bank when David Rockefeller ran it. In the early 1980s, as Federal Reserve chief, Volcker threw millions out of work by jacking up interest rates for the bankers' benefit. Now he and Obama preside over an effort to restore U.S. rulers' profits through misery and war.

In these hard times, workers can rely only on our own class. And the only purely working-class political organization is the Progressive Labor Party. We encourage the rebellions Obama and his bosses dread. It is our long-term goal to crush their top-down oppression with bottom-up base-building in the working class for a communist revolution.☪

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Rebellion, Not Non-Violence, Is Black Workers' Real History

As the U.S. government celebrates black history month this February, the bosses' media are painting Barack Obama's presidency as the positive legacy of a pacifist civil rights movement. But the real history of the civil rights era is militant black workers rebelling, often violently, against racism.

This is the history of the international working class that the Progressive Labor Party celebrates every day in our fight to smash capitalism — the system that gave birth to racism and continues to profit from it.

The many gains of the civil rights era — the end of legal race segregation, free breakfast programs, jobs for blacks, affirmative action — were concessions won by militant, mass working-class struggle. The civil rights movement involved thousands of black workers heroically putting their lives on the line. Many, many were killed in Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, and throughout the South in the fight against racism. While the movement also involved whites, including some who died, the opening of freedom schools, marching against segregation, integrating lunch counters and other struggles brought the full force of the racist system down on those black workers who stood up and fought.

Obama is part of King's legacy of misleading working-class anti-racists into the dead end of supporting the bosses' politicians and laws. There

was tremendous political struggle within the anti-racist movement in the 1960's. At the famous 1963 March for Jobs and Freedom where King gave his "I have a dream" speech, King and other march organizers toned down a student's speech attacking Kennedy, the Democrats, and the Civil Rights bill itself for failing to address police brutality, racist unemployment, and low wages.

This militancy wasn't only, or even mainly, inside the organized movement. In 1965, police harassment of a black man sparked an anti-racist rebellion in Watts, California. King went to Watts and supported the armed cops and National Guard troops, while urging rebels to be peaceful. When his pacifism was rejected, King phoned President Lyndon Johnson (who had sent him to Watts) complaining about "all of these tones of violence from people out there in the Watts" (New York Times, 05/14/02). King's last campaign to support 1,200 striking sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee in the spring of 1968 is supposedly his most radical. But King fled the March 28th protest when a group of demonstrators, frustrated with pacifist leadership, smashed



1967 Rebellion in Newark, New Jersey

blacks, especially in the public sector, although unemployment and underemployment remained (and remains) higher for black workers than for white.

Black Politicians Have Never Served the Working Class

The U.S. bosses want us to focus on political victories for black politicians (like Obama) but these black bosses are part of the same racist ruling class that is responsible for the reversal of the civil rights gains and the racist conditions today.

Despite decades of black, Latino, and Native American mayors, governors and lawmakers, racism thrives by every indicator — higher incarceration

Like King, Obama can only offer empty hope and promises. His role is to win anti-racists to support the racist ruling class.

downtown store windows.

Black Workers' Armed Struggle

Black workers' militant and sometimes armed struggle won the victories that are credited to King. In 1964, the Louisiana-based Deacons for Defense emerged as an armed organization to defend non-violent civil rights workers and spread to 23 communities across the south. Their actions helped win integration battles and fight off racist terror from the police, the Ku Klux Klan, and racist white mobs ("The Deacons for Defense," Lance Hill, 2004).

Then, in June 1964, the first mass big-city rebellion erupted in New York City's Harlem when masses of black workers and youth took to the streets to protest a police murder of a black teenager. They marched through Harlem's streets, displaying the front page of CHALLENGE as their "flag." PLM (Progressive Labor Movement, forerunner of PLP) was the only organization to support the rebellion — all the reformist black leaders and the "Communist Party" tried to cool the rebels and attacked PLM. The latter was barred from Harlem but defied the ban and held a mass demonstration, which sent several in PLM to jail. This rebellion laid the basis for many to follow, including in Newark, NJ in 1967.

The Detroit rebellion of 1967 — sparked by police harassment of a party for returning black Vietnam veterans and suppressed by 82nd Airborne troops diverted from Vietnam — led directly to 10,000 jobs in the auto industry for black workers.

When King was assassinated in 1968, anti-racist rebellions flared up in hundreds of U.S. cities. These rebellions led to an increase in jobs for

rates, lower wages, more unemployment, higher home foreclosure rates, less access to health care and fewer education opportunities for black, Latino and Native American workers. Over and over cops get away with racist terror — such as the murders of Oscar Grant in Oakland, California and Sean Bell in Queens, New York — while Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton urge us to be peaceful and seek victory in courts that acquit or slap cops on the wrist.

Like King, Obama can only offer empty hope and promises. His role is to win anti-racists to support the racist ruling class.

In referring to the "muslim world" as a "clenched fist" Obama uses anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism to win U.S. workers to support oil wars in Afghanistan and continued occupation in Iraq, which have killed over one million Iraqis since 2003. (Opinion Research Business, Feb 2008). Obama constantly draws inspiration from racist slave-owning founding fathers who systematically committed genocide against Native Americans to increase their profits.

Obama will not wage the battle against racism. So, just as workers in the '60s did not rely on a servant of the ruling class to wage their battles, we can't rely on the current servant to wage ours.

The gains won by our class in the '60s have been reversed. Those good-paying auto industry jobs won by black workers in Detroit have vanished. The mass anti-racist rebellions were good, but the crumbs given our class in response have been taken back. The fight against racism must take place within the context of fighting for communist revolution, the only outcome where workers can win power and establish a world free of capitalism and its racism.☪

OUR FIGHT

★ **Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to smash capitalism — wage slavery. While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions all over the world.**

★ **Capitalism returned to the Soviet Union and China because socialism failed to wipe out many aspects of the profit system, like wages and division of labor.**

★ **Capitalism inevitably leads to wars. PLP organizes workers, students and soldiers to turn these wars into a revolution for communism — the dictatorship of the proletariat. This fight requires a mass Red Army led by the communist PLP.**

★ **Communism means working collectively to build a society where sharing is based on need. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. Everyone will share in society's benefits and burdens.**

★ **Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of race.**

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

★ **Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism.**

One International working class, one world, one Party.

★ **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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500 Marchers Back Stella D'Oro Strikers

'NO CONTRACT, NO COOKIES!'

BRONX, NY, January 31 — Braving freezing temperatures, 500 Stella D'Oro strikers and supporters marched down Broadway chanting, "No Contract, No Cookies!"

As CHALLENGE readers know, the 135 Stella strikers are 100% solid on the line. They've been out for nearly six months but are determined not to let the Brynwood bosses (who own Stella D'Oro) bust their union and take away holidays, healthcare benefits and sick days, while demanding annual wage-cuts for the next five years.

While the strike involves a limited number of workers, it is significant on two counts: (1) it not only sets an example of militant workers fighting back against the bosses' attempts to make workers take the losses resulting from the bosses' crisis; and (2) it involves predominantly black and Latino workers — who, because of racism, suffer disproportionately from the bosses' attacks — giving leadership to the whole working class.

This march and rally was larger and more spirited than previous ones. Supporters came from the PSC (Professional Staff Congress-CUNY), the teachers union, District Council 37, RWDSU (supermarket employees), nurses from the NYS Nurses Association, other unions and the community.



But critically important, most speeches at the closing rally were by the strikers, not politicians who had dominated earlier rallies.

PSC's president vowed continuing support for the struggle, telling Stella strikers that, "You must win; we cannot allow you to lose." A George Washington H.S. student took the mic and showed the crowd support letters from his fellow students and funds collected at their school.

In sharp contrast to this genuine display of solidarity from working-class youth was the shameful performance of Ed Ott, NYC Central Labor Council director. He appeared for only a few minutes at the pre-march rally. When someone in the crowd called out, "Ed, Ed, tell us how much money the Central Labor Council has given to support the struggle," his pathetic answer was, "We haven't been asked yet."

PLP members have played an active role throughout the strike. At the closing rally, a PL speaker explained how the Stella workers inspired all workers and how communist revolution is necessary to eliminate the bosses and their system. During the rallies and march, 555 people bought CHALLENGES.

When some phony leftists chanted, "People's power," PL'ers overrode it with "Workers' Power!" And when they said, "People, united, will never be defeated," PL'ers responded with, "Workers, united..." In both cases, the great majority of the crowd joined PL's most class-conscious chants. PLP opposes the slogan of "people's power" because it means an alliance of workers with bosses and politicians.

One weakness in the strike is scabs working in



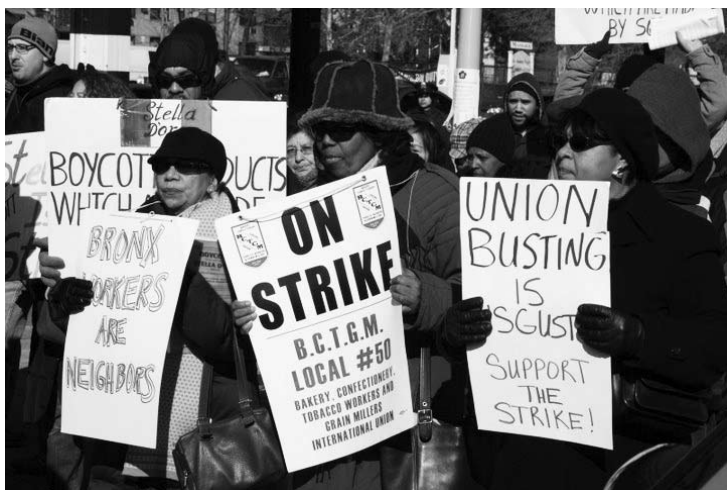
the plant. It's estimated that production in 30% of normal. With mass support at the picket line, stopping scabs becomes possible. While workers try to build a successful city-wide boycott of Stella products, the bosses' strategy may be to take losses until August when the strikers' benefits run out.

PL organizers are encouraging greater militancy. The Stella workers can reach out to other members of Local 50 in other bakeries and to other locals of the bakers' international union.

In picket line conversations we have found that the workers are interested in discussing political questions, such as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the collapse of Wall Street, and how these events will affect the working class. One worker e-mailed us a set of pictures showing the horrors resulting from the Israeli invasion and massacre in Gaza.

Many strikers are reading CHALLENGE. We plan to organize a contingent of Stella workers and their families and friends to attend this year's May Day dinner. Fight the bosses! Build the Party! ✪

Strike Diary: 'Peaceman' and 'Hopeman' — Gaza and Stella D'Oro



BRONX, NY, January 13 — Today, a multi-racial group of 500 Stella D'Oro strikers and supporters, including PLP'ers, marched to a Target store that's selling scab-made cookies. In thinking about this strike, much in the world situation comes to mind: the economic meltdown, the imperialist oil wars, racist unemployment, and in particular, the Israeli invasion of Gaza and this strike — two sieges in a long class war — so this diary is dedicated to Peaceman and Hopeman, two friends on either side of the Gaza border who write a blog together: <http://gaza-sderot.blogspot.com>

They're ordinary folks (Hopeman is a student who can't get out of Gaza to attend his college), not very "political," who maintain their friendship to have something to rebuild with when the war and siege

forced on them are over. Of course that's very political!

They're showing how workers can build solidarity across borders, dodging Israeli bombs and Hamas rockets to find cell phone reception so they can talk, at least when Hopeman has enough electricity to charge his phone. Most of the Stella strikers who are becoming my friends are like that — they're building a base for the future. Communism does that too.

Recently A. told a young teacher and community arts organizer (who's planning a video documentary about the strike) that it was forced on the workers. The Israeli fascists and Hamas religious nationalists did the same thing to Palestinian and Israeli workers with their war.

But hidden behind the Israeli and Palestinian politicians who the bloggers despise are all the rival imperialists who've shaped the Middle East: the Ottoman emperors who ruled there until World War I; the British Mandate rulers who set up this impossible situation by guiding the founding of Israel as a European settler colony; the U.S. rulers funding Israel as their client state and military proxy; and all the others (the EU, Russia, China, Japan, Iran, India) feeling their way into a serious challenge to the declining U.S. empire.

Those same clashing imperialist elephants are

trampling the grass in this bakery strike too, hard to see until some communist comes and talks it up. Three strikers are now reading the article "A Class Analysis of the Israel/Palestine Conflict" from PL's journal "The Communist."

Imperialist rivalry caused the economic crisis smashing into the Bronx bakers and also intensifies it. Brynwood Partners, which own Stella D'Oro, is a Wall Street speculator like those who brought us this deepening depression, a "vulture capitalist" who swoops down on struggling companies to strip and flip them for resale.

Economists call it "financialization," turning real plants into fictitious capital and trading them like bad mortgages or baseball cards. The capitalist economic pressures that forced this strike are the same ones producing war in Gaza.

A. tells the young video artists the strike was forced on them, but there's nothing forced about how these workers love and honor one another, just as no one is forcing or even organizing Peaceman and Hopeman to continue their blog. The strikers stick together, like Peaceman and Hopeman, so there's something to rebuild with when the strike ends (win or lose). This solidarity grows from their working together so long, but it's really for the future, as they pull on their long johns and layer up for picket duty on the five-month anniversary of their brave strike. (Continued on PLP blog: challengenewspaper.wordpress.com.) ✪

Students Fighting Cuts: Ally With Workers, Not Liberal Pals

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA — “The rally for community colleges on February 27 is being organized by Chancellor Jack Scott and college public-relations officers,” a student leader commented, “so members of our club will need to make sure students’ wants are voiced.”

Most community college students belong to the working class. Like other workers, they’re hit hard by the current capitalist crisis. They don’t want classes cut, teachers to lose jobs, and student fees to go up.

Unlike tuition at California’s two university systems, community college fees go into the state General Fund. They help pay interest going to banks and investors, which the state constitution requires to be paid before any other expenses! Community College fees also help pay for the state’s huge and viciously racist prison system.

The governor plans to cut funding for state financial aid by \$87.5 million by freezing income eligibility limits, reducing the maximum award and eliminating the “safety net” for recipients’ children.

Budget Cuts, Tax Hikes: Racist, Anti-Worker

Most students don’t want higher taxes either, but that’s what the Democratic Party and the California Teachers Association want us to fight for. California Community College Chancellor Scott, as a “pro-education” legislator, pushed for a sales tax

hike at a Pasadena rally against education cuts last spring.

Sales taxes are racist and regressive. They come down hardest on lower-paid workers and the unemployed, including a high proportion of black and Latin workers. The poorest 20% of California households paid nearly 12% of their income in taxes, while the richest 1% of households paid only 7% of theirs.

Budget cuts are racist, too. Cuts in Medi-Cal eligibility and benefits will make things much worse in a health care system so overloaded that it already turns away many – especially in neighborhoods like South LA, where the MLKing Hospital was shut down and clinics are closing.

Legal immigrants and US citizen children of undocumented immigrants are singled out for specific racist cutbacks. Gov. Schwarzenegger has proposed eliminating the California Food Assistance Program, which feeds certain legal non-citizens who are ineligible for federal programs because of their immigration status.

Capitalism is the Problem, Communism is the Solution

The California budget crisis is a direct result of the capitalist crisis of overproduction and imperialist war. Because capitalists compete to maximize profits, and because lower wages mean higher profits, they produce more than can be sold. Then

workers are laid-off so that they can afford to spend less on consumer goods.

Meanwhile, “corporate income taxes have declined over time as a share of General Fund revenues and as a share of corporate profits. If corporations had paid the same share of their profits in corporate taxes in 2006 as they did in 1981, corporate tax collections would have been \$8.4 billion higher,” concludes the California Budget Project. (www.cbj.org) Because of Prop 13 (1978) huge corporations pay property taxes on the assessed value of their property — like Disneyland — 30 years ago!

Community colleges are promoted as a “way out of the working class.” But they are training the workers who can be the key to building a new system. Students need to ally with industrial workers and soldiers in a movement to destroy this capitalist system that brings us economic insecurity, racist inequality, and increasingly murderous imperialist war.

The alternative to capitalism is communism, a classless society where workers hold power. Cynicism will get us nowhere! PLP communists are in the class struggle – like the fight against California budget cuts – to win workers and students away from reform and to the long-term fight for communist revolution. We invite you to subscribe to Challenge, join a PLP discussion group, and march with PLP on May Day – International Workers Day! ☘

\$20 Billion Mayor Laying Off 23,000 NYC Workers

NEW YORK — Billionaire Mayor Mike Bloomberg has unveiled his doomsday budget proposal for workers here. To close a projected \$4 billion budget deficit, Bloomberg — whose private fortune totals \$20 billion (Forbes, 10/6/2008) — wants to lay off 23,000 workers and get the city worker unions to give back \$1 billion from pensions, health benefits, etc. He counts on the union leaders to convince members to take all these attacks without fighting back. That’s exactly what happened during the NYC fiscal crisis of the 1970s. Union workers were told they were saving the city. What they really saved was capitalism. They never regained the contract givebacks from thirty years ago. The working people of NYC lived with a level of city services that didn’t come close to meeting their needs. As is always the case, black and Latin workers were hit the hardest by both layoffs and the resulting service cuts. Let’s not make the same mistake this time.

Strikers at the Stella D’Oro bakery show that some workers are willing to fight against their vicious bosses. Communists in PLP vow to give leadership in the struggle to fight Bloomberg’s proposed layoffs. We will help to build the unity needed to fight the cutback plans. We will explain the nature of the capitalist system that exploits us and destroys our lives. We will explain how a communist revolution will put an end to racism, inequality and oppression.

Workers here as elsewhere are already reeling from the financial meltdown, home foreclosure crisis and an uncertain future for themselves and their children. During 2008, city agencies twice had their operating budgets slashed by \$1.5 billion. What do an additional 23,000 layoffs mean? 15,000 of the layoffs target the city schools. They mean more students per teacher, less support staff and longer waiting time for needed repairs in school buildings. In city hospitals, people will literally die from the layoffs. That’s what happens when wards, rooms and halls are not kept clean. That’s what happens when patient-to-staff ratios increase. Every city agency will see similar results as they become less able to provide needed services from providing clean water to repairing pot holes.

What about the so-called fat pensions, health benefits and pay those on city payroll get? “Good government” types say that the average city worker earns about \$100,000 per year. In reality, the average wage of 120,000 District Council 37 city workers is about \$33,000 per year. Since 1995, they have lost between 7-10 % in real wages because their pay hasn’t kept up with the rising cost of living. Contrast that to the pay of New Yorkers making \$200,000 and over. They saw a real increase in pay of 96% during the same period (3/28/08 Chief Leader). Since pensions are a fraction of gross pay, DC 37 members can hardly have fat pensions. Likewise, city workers have been forced to pay an ever increasing share of their medical costs. If this seems similar to what’s happening to you, it’s because workers all over this country and around the world are facing a similar attack on their living standards.

We shouldn’t pay for the problems that capitalism creates. We didn’t cause the financial crisis. We should make the bosses take the losses caused by their system and their greed. If the union leaders call for sharing the pain of cutbacks “fairly,” we should say no! Rather than saving this racist, exploitative rotten system, we should be fighting to overthrow it. We should be planning to replace it with communism, a society of production to meet human needs not greed, a society where working-class unity is built while racism and sexism is outlawed. ☘

Gary Protestors Keep Heat On Racist Killer Kop

GARY, INDIANA, Feb. 6 — A mistrial was declared today in the trial of the racist cop who murdered Vincent Smith. In near zero degree weather, a group of protestors again held a demonstration at the courthouse to keep this struggle alive. The judge declared the mistrial because supposedly some jurors had “contact” with some of the workers and youth who came to protest the racist murder and demand justice. This has fired up the community and the campus. A new trial is set for July — more time for members of PLP and friends to build a bigger movement and recruit to communism.

Vincent Smith, who was a freshman in high school, was shot in the back while running from the killer cop three years ago. The police claimed that young Vincent was a criminal because he was once arrested for shoplifting! As a result of the demonstrations organized by community groups, a local campus organization and PLP, the state had to charge this cop.

When a Gary cop admits to shooting a fleeing, unarmed teenager in the back of the head, and is indicted by the prosecutor for murder, he is assigned to desk duty with full pay until the trial! That’s the racist, capitalist “justice” system at work! The phony internal police investigation concluded that the killer cop did everything right, and the city is asking the state to drop the charges – basically saying that it is legal for cops to hunt children in Gary.

Gary is among the most depressed, oppressed cities in the USA, where the steel mills sucked the life out of the working class for a hundred years and capitalist chaos has left much of the city abandoned or in deep racist poverty. The Gary police force is known for corruption and brutality. A past chief was just convicted of breaking into someone’s home and brutally beating him. Young people often talk about which cops are brutal and which cops work with drug dealers and gangs.

The bosses need vicious cops to control the working class that does not buy into the empty promises as our lives get worse day by day. So there will be more police terror and more innocent young lives will be lost. Organizing protests against police terror are one way to build a movement that can grow and bring anti-racist, communist ideas to life.

Beyond these courthouse demonstrations, we will continue to publicize and organize workers on the job, students and teachers in school, and other members of the community to fight back against these racist attacks—to take this killer cop off the streets forever, to send a message to other cops that we will not let these racist killings just pass by, and to build a movement and a Party for communist revolution, workers’ power! ☘

General Strike Jolts France:

2.5 Million Marchers Say Make the Bosses Take the Losses

SAINT-NAZAIRE, FRANCE, February 7 — On January 29, as part of a massive general strike of hundreds of thousands of workers, 2.5 million people marched for jobs and against government cutbacks in almost 200 cities across France, with 300,000 demonstrating in Paris and 200,000 in Marseille.

At least 18,000 demonstrated in this ship-building port in western France. When the sub-prefect (the local representative of the national government) refused to receive a union delegation, protesters began throwing beer cans at the riot police protecting the sub-prefecture. When the police attacked with tear gas, workers tore down the entry gate and four hours of street fighting ensued. The cops injured a number of protesters, one seriously and rounded up 16 people, partly at random, some of whom have already been sentenced to jail.

The bosses in France are very nervous. Even the government's under-stated figures show nine months of rising unemployment have left 2.1 million workers jobless, while another 2.8 million have given up finding a job. Result: a real unemployment rate of at least 17.5%!

This high unemployment has made workers anxious and angry, sparking this huge general strike and demonstrations called by eight union confederations. From 20% to 40% of public sector workers — hospital, telephone, postal and electric company workers and half or more of secondary and elementary school teachers — walked out.

All the major state radio networks shut down, and a third of television network workers struck. Almost one-third of flights from Orly airport were cancelled. Almost all the Paris commuter train workers, half the Métro (subway) workers and at least a third of urban transport workers in the rest of France went on strike.

In addition, unexpectedly large numbers of private-sector workers went out, in the banks, Renault auto plants and at Alcatel-Lucent (the world's second-biggest telecommunications equipment-maker). Autoworkers completely shut down PSA's Poissy and Rennes factories, and partly closed the Sochaux plant.

Private-sector workers do not enjoy the same job security as public workers and consequently strike less. Thus, many Auchan supermarket, Celanese chemicals, Dynastar ski, Ford auto, Free telecommunications and Tefal kitchenware workers used their holiday time to join the protest marches.

Many marchers bore signs saying, "Can you see this strike, you stupid jerk?" — a reference to French president Nicolas Sarkozy's July statement that "nowadays, when there's a strike in France, nobody notices" and his telling a farmer who refused to shake hands with him in February, 2008 to "beat it, you stupid jerk."

As usual, union leaders here are tailing the militancy of the working class. The bosses wanted to reduce the duration of unemployment benefits. The signature of two trade unions was necessary for the measure to pass, so on February 2 the traitorous CFTD and CFE-CGC obliged the government and signed.

President Sarkozy responded to the workers' strike with insult and scorn, reflecting the ruling class's estimation that any deviation from the set course could lead to their losing control. In his February 5 speech, his "answer" to the general strike, Sarkozy offered another, 8-billion-euro tax break (\$9.5 billion) to French bosses and told the working class he would continue to push through his neo-conservative counter-reforms, notably the

Teachers Shut Universities

On February 2, teachers struck at over half the 83 French universities on February 2, with the strike continuing and general assemblies being held on February 4 on many campuses. Students are gradually joining the protest movement.

The teachers are opposing counter-reforms which make it harder for members of the working class to become primary and secondary school teachers and give university presidents greater control over faculty working conditions and careers. These counter-reforms are the French enactment of a May, 2006 European Commission decision to force all European universities to serve the capitalist class more directly. A national university protest is scheduled for February 10.

non-replacement of half the public workers who retire. He announced a meeting with union leaders on February 18.

The more radical unions want to stage another strike and protest before the 18th, a move the conservative unions are resisting.

These struggles need to confront racism since police repression, mass unemployment, among other problems have hit non-white and immigrant workers here for a long time. International solidarity with strikers in Martinique and Guadeloupe must also be part of the struggle. In this age of endless imperialist wars and economic meltdown, this means developing a revolutionary anti-racist communist leadership of these militant struggles, breaking with the union misleaders and fake leftist electoral parties. ☛

Guadeloupe General Strike Spreads to Martinique

FORT-DE-FRANCE, MARTINIQUE, February 7 — The general strike which began January 20 in the French overseas department of Guadeloupe spread February 5 to neighboring Martinique, 122 miles to the South. These workers — 90% African or African-white-Indian mixture (Indian from India) — are refusing to pay for the world capitalist crisis.

Over 20,000 people demonstrated here February 5, completely halting public transport. The marchers included all job categories from dockers to Catholic schoolteachers. They chanted, "Sarko [French President], Fillon [Prime Minister], we want jobs!" and "Jobs, yes! Precarity [poverty], no!" The twelve unions calling the strike united in a Collective, welcoming other unions and associations to join.

The Martinique strikers are demanding price cuts and higher wages for all, especially those in low-paying jobs. A Collective study shows milk costs 44.7% more and noodles almost 80% more on this island than in mainland France.

On Guadeloupe, the junior minister for the overseas departments, Yves Jégo, claimed agreement on about one-third of the 146 demands advanced by Lyiannaj kont pwofitasyon (Link Against Extreme Profiteering - LKP). In a clear maneuver to pressure LKP and Guadeloupe's workers to end their strike, French interior minister Michèle Alliot-Marie immediately released a lying communiqué claiming "an agreement has been found on most of the questions raised."

The people of Guadeloupe are super-exploited by capitalist monopolies and the Guadeloupe wealthy class. This island's population of 405,000 is 69% African or African-white-Indian mixture.

A trade unionist told French radio that four or five families control imports to the island, so rice is almost twice as expensive here as on mainland France; a toothbrush costs four euros (\$5.14).

Gasoline and diesel fuel distribution is effectively monopolized by the Caribbean Refinery Inc. (SARA), owned 50% by France's Total company,

continued on p. 7

Chavez's Cops Attack Strikers, Kill 2 Auto Workers

CARACAS, VENEZUELA, February 3 — Chanting "Workers, united, will never be defeated," and "Punishment for Killer Cops," over 1,500 workers and community residents marched from the Mitsubishi plant in the city of Barcelona, state of Anzoátegui, to the governor's house demanding justice for two workers — one from Mitsubishi and the other an auto parts worker — killed by cops on January 29. In that afternoon, a judge came to the Mitsubishi Motors plant to evict the workers who had seized it.

After a January 12 workers' mass meeting, 863 workers voted to take it over, with only 21 opposed. The workers were demanding permanent jobs for 135 Induservis subcontracted workers, used for maintenance by Mitsubishi.

The state's pro-Chávez governor, Tarek William Saab, obeyed the company's demand and sent a judge with cops to evict them. The company also had its supervisory staff "rally" in front of the plant to demand the occupation be ended.

When the workers refused to leave, the cops viciously shot at them, killing two and injuring many others.

This is the second time governor Saab used cops against workers. Before becoming governor, he had made a career of being a "human rights advocate." Workers should never trust any bourgeois politicians, even if they claim to be pro-worker.

Repression against militant workers is increasing under Chávez's "Bolivarian Revolution." On January 22, the National Guard arrested two workers following a protest by 250 workers fired by contractor Costa Norte near Barcelona city.

On December 30, Caracas Metropolitan Police attacked subcontracted workers protesting at the office of the country's Vice-President, demanding to be rehired by the Sidor steel company. Over 8,000 Sidor workers are still working as subcontractors, even after the government bought a majority share from the Argentine steel company Technit, precisely using the argument that it refused to give all Sidor workers perma-

nent status.

Also in December, two dissident union leaders were killed by hired gunmen in the state of Aragua, provoking a regional general strike on December 2. And the list goes on.

Meanwhile, a February 15 referendum is again confronting Chávez and his Bolivarian bosses, fighting the old pro-U.S. ruling class that has lost most of its political power. The balloting will decide whether Chávez can run for re-election in 2012.

Workers shouldn't take sides in this dogfight among these capitalist factions. Most hate the old pro-U.S. bosses, remembering how 20 years ago in 1989 Social-Democrat President Carlos Andrés Pérez sent the Army and tanks to crush the mass uprising by workers and shantytown residents of Caracas, rebelling against an IMF-imposed austerity package. Over 1,000 protestors were killed.

The workers' anger after this massacre gave rise to Chávez. But Chávez's "Bolivarian nationalism" has revealed its limitations. When oil prices were sky-high, he gave workers some crumbs, but now that the price has tumbled and the world's capitalist crisis has hit Venezuela like a ton of bricks, Chávez is again trying to make deals with the foreign oil companies he attacked just a year ago.

While posturing as "anti-imperialist," he's bargaining with Russian, Chinese, Iranian and European imperialists. He's now hoping relations with the U.S. will improve, with Obama in power. Just last week, he even signed a trade pact with Colombia's President Uribe, who he had labeled as a Bush lapdog in Latin America not too long ago.

Workers must shed all illusions in any so-called bourgeois "savior" like Chávez. Some militant workers are demanding the government nationalize some imperialist-owned companies, but as Sidor's case has shown, state capitalism is no solution. The only road which will lead to workers' liberation is to forge a revolutionary communist leadership and fight for working-class power.

LETTERS



From Oakland to Athens: Solidarity vs. Kop Killers

At the airport where I work many workers heard about the outrageous police murder of Oscar Grant, a 22-year-old black worker in Oakland, California by racist BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) cop Mehserle on New Years Day. We had many political discussions about how this racist murder is a part of how capitalism operates. Since the economy is in ruins (because of capitalism itself) the racist bosses need fascism and racist goons like Mehserle to terrorize workers so they don't fight back against the system.

One of my coworkers, an Ethiopian woman, said "Obama will stop these things from happening." It was pointed out that this is a deadly illusion because at the time of the murder Obama was President-elect. A black president and still black workers are being murdered! His being black won't stop business-as-usual for capitalism any more than South Africa having had two black presidents stopped racist oppression against workers there. South African workers are poorer now than they were under fascist apartheid! Black nationalism is deadly.

There was a well-received SEIU union resolution condemning this murder that was circulated to union members at the airport. This resolution was also sent to the Oakland SEIU. The Oakland murder was connected to the anti-working class murder of 15-year-old Greek student Alexandros Grigoropoulos by a fascist Athenian cop, which sparked a national mass rebellion against fascism. There will also be a PLP leaflet coming out connecting this fascist killing to capitalism.

My fellow workers and I read the letter to CHALLENGE (1/14/09) from an airport worker in Greece. As fellow airport workers we share your anger over the senseless killings of our working-class brothers and sisters by these fascist pigs. We applaud your mass fight-back against the killer cops. As you might already know, there was a mass rebellion in Oakland by multiracial workers angered over Oscar Grant's racist murder. While these anti-fascist actions are good, we as workers need to take it a step further and have a worldwide communist revolution led by PLP to get rid of the whole damn capitalist system! If you have not yet joined PLP we urge you and your friends to join us in fighting for a new world so there won't be any more Oscars and Alexandros's being butchered. In international solidarity, from Oakland to Athens, workers need communist revolution!

Airport Red

'Get out in front' on Politics Behind Capitalist Crisis

"My father is in his nineties and says this is worse than the [Great] depression," said my friend at Boeing. His father lives in Detroit; generations of his family worked for GM. My friend asked me to explain racist unemployment and, in particular, the 10,000 layoffs announced by Boeing CEO McNerney. "I just don't get it!" he admitted.

Turned out he understood more than he was letting on. Holding a minor office in the union, his initial reaction mirrored the union leadership's line that all the company had to do "was the right thing." After a little discussion, this CHALLENGE reader revealed his understanding of the worldwide crisis of capitalist "overproduction." "World war seems the only way out of an 'economic' crisis this big," he concluded.

We discussed the Obama administration's panic over Afghanistan. They're rushing in troops by the 10,000s, while publicly abandoning any pretext of humanitarian development and aid.

We discussed Afghan President Hamid Karzai's overtures to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The SCO, led by Russia and China, counts among its members all the "stans," except Afghanistan. Even India and Iran are considering joining. My friend enthusiastically agreed this military buildup was about oil and oil pipelines, not terrorism as Obama paints it.

"Just wait," I warned, "pretty soon we're going to hear all the dirty shit about Karzai that the bosses have been hiding from us for seven years." Sure enough, within days the bosses' press began to expose Karzai's brother-in-law's drug connections. It was shades of Vietnam's President Diem all over again. (The U.S. had their own man killed in 1963 to better carry out their imperialist carnage in Southeast Asia.)

Interestingly my friend never tried to defend Obama on this issue.

I have no illusion that one conversation has won my friend to abandon his hope in the new administration, but it does show that we have to get "out in front" on the political implications of the worldwide capitalist crisis. Confidence in the working class will be richly rewarded as this crisis unfolds. We went back to our workstations agreeing that the situation cried out for more struggle and CHALLENGES.

One who's beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel

Sunday School Teaches Class Solidarity

Recently, our Sunday School has been very politically active. Just before Christmas we bought books as gifts for the children of the striking Stella D'Oro workers and wrote them letters inviting them to take part in our activities.

We performed a play for the church showing how King Herod killed all the little boys in Bethlehem to wipe out any rivals to his power. Each of us then gave some food to our own "baby Jesus" in the name of a child who has been killed in Iraq or Gaza. Two weeks later six of us from the church marched against the Israeli attack on Gaza. Most important, three of our high school students will participate in the PLP winter retreat!

Sunday School Students and Teachers

Arab-Jewish Workers' Unity Antidote to Nationalist Poison

"We hate Obama, too" said one comrade to me, a student and leftist active in a left-wing party in Palestine. Israeli massacres of civilians in Gaza, which killed over 1,300 men, women and children, recently have come to a temporary halt. But, in the West Bank and Gaza, dissatisfaction is boiling over with the new U.S. imperialist president Obama and his puppet, Mahmoud Abbas of the ruling Palestinian Authority (PA) party, Fatah.

Thousands of working-class Palestinians have demonstrated in the West Bank in solidarity with Gaza, fed up with the collaborationist, U.S.-supplied-and-trained PA leaders that have done nothing while civilians in Gaza are massacred. Workers are facing detainment and torture at the hands of these outsourced-Israeli-occupation forces, their supposed "representatives." These attacks are aimed at trying to smash dissidents and grassroots resistance to the occupation and Israeli fascism. The racist Israeli ruling class has detained over 750 Arab-Israeli citizens participating in anti-occupation demonstrations side-by-side with Jewish workers. These leaders fear working-class, Arab-Jewish solidarity more than anything!

PA leaders like prime minister Salam Fayyad, an ex-IMF executive, have close ties to international capitalists and support the World Bank, the European Union, and rich Arab tycoons' capital investment in the West Bank, which will only lead to more worker exploitation, unemployment, and police repression. They are pushing for a "two-state" solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict, but this would continue to be a capitalist state, no friend of the working class.

These corrupt capitalist leaders are appearing more and more despicable to the working class in Palestine. Now Hamas is gaining popularity through-

IN MEMORIAM:

Joseph Furr

Joseph Furr, age 28, a long-time friend of the Progressive Labor Party, died unexpectedly during the week of January 27, 2009 from complications of diabetes. A diesel truck mechanic, Joe had attended many PLP and InCAR events since childhood. He marched every May Day for many years.



Joe had been a close friend since boyhood to many members and friends of PLP. Hundreds of them attended a celebration of his life at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Orange, N.J. on February 7, 2009.

We will honor his memory by carrying on the fight for the working class, the "salt of the earth," of whom Joe was one.

out the Arab and Muslim world, even among some leftists, after the recent Gaza attacks. But the illusion that Hamas is the only alternative and the only real resistance to Israeli violence and oppression needs to be shown for what it really is: an enemy of the working class. Religious fundamentalism does not offer the working class liberation, and Hamas' charity programs do nothing to attack the core of exploitation and imperialism — capitalism.

Palestine has a long tradition of leftist activism, but after years of repression and demonizing propaganda by ruling-class stooges on both the Israeli and Palestinian side, the left has been weakened. Now more than ever, nationalism and alliances between the left-wing parties and the pro-capitalist ruling agents (Fatah) are commonplace. As communists, we must struggle to build the left and show that Hamas is not the only alternative to PA capitalist-class corruption, and that nationalism is only a dead end for workers. Communist revolution is the only way to bring about long-term victories and justice for working families in Palestine, the exploited Israeli working class, and all workers of the world.

The struggle against Israeli fascism, imperialism, and capitalism must move beyond national boundaries and nationalist solutions. International unity between Palestinian and Israeli workers is vital to this struggle. PLP must push communist politics against nationalism, and struggle with our comrades on the Palestinian left as well as the Israeli left to see nationalism as the worker's enemy. Working people have no nation! Fight the occupation and exploitation!

Red in Palestine

Lauds PLP at Boeing, Poses Sit-Down Strike Strategy

The Boeing strike has been over for a while now, but unlike most of capitalist culture, we communists don't just forget about yesterday and move on to today's hot news. During the strike, the Party seems to have done a good job getting out PLP's communist ideas, especially CHALLENGE newspaper and building communist study groups. These are crucial to building a communist movement instead of a reformist movement. It seems that solid efforts are being made to deepen close personal ties with other workers, which is a key way to learn and teach that communism is a way of life.

I have a question about the Party's strategy. In the past, during strikes, we have often called for militantly completely shutting down the plants, blocking production and organizing a sit-down strike inside the plant. Of course, we might not win enough workers to carry this out. But shouldn't we still be putting that forward in all of our literature as the strategy to work towards?

A reader

Win Oaxaca APPO Congress Rank & File to Red Ideas

OAXACA, MEXICO, February 10 — In a very violent setting, due to the sharp contradictions among the leaderships of the organizations comprising the APPO (Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca), Section 22 of the SNTE (teachers union) has pushed for the convening of the Third Congress of APPO on February 20-22. The APPO participated in the mass social-political movement of 2006, fighting to oust the fascist Governor of Oaxaca, Ulises Ruiz Ortiz (URO). The goal is to develop another intense period of actions locally and nationally to confront the privatization, unemployment, repression and poverty enforced by the ruling parties and to insist on the ouster of the murderous governor.

The brutal repression in 2006 unleashed by the criminal Oaxaca Governor in open alliance with Vicente Fox, departing President of Mexico, could not destroy APPO. However, the sharp contradictions within APPO — as revealed in the corrupt actions and betrayals of the opportunists — have divided and challenged APPO, sowing discontent, disappointment and apathy among thousands of the participants.

They and many others had great hope for APPO to bring important changes to society, eliminate injustices and corruption, and above all, to end the capitalist dictatorship, represented by the PRI, the ruling party which oppressed Mexico's workers for nearly 80 years.

But to destroy these evils, it's necessary to get rid of capitalism-imperialism with a communist revolution. That requires winning thousands of city and farm workers, teachers, students and soldiers to communist ideas. This means recruiting millions to the working class's only communist party, the Progressive Labor Party. To achieve this goal we must spread communist ideas, including reading and building networks of distribution for our communist newspaper, CHALLENGE.

APPO cannot, nor could it ever, assume this role. APPO grew as a broad spontaneous movement that mobilized thousands, but lacked founding principles, discipline, organization and correct political leadership. Opportunist and revisionist (fake leftist) groups took advantage of the movement to seize the

leadership of APPO and use it for their own interests.

Among them, the Popular Revolutionary Front-Union of Workers of Education (FPR-UTE), subsidiary of the misnamed "Communist" Party of Mexico Marxist Leninist, maneuvered its leader, Zenén Bravo, to become a deputy in the local Congress. Meanwhile, Flavio Sosa, after having been imprisoned, as the most publicized leader has waged a propaganda campaign to become a deputy for the PRD (Party of Revolutionary Democracy), like César Mateos.

We workers must understand that any organization that is not a communist party fighting for communism will eventually betray our class interests. Good intentions are not enough. Even the giants of the old international communist movement saw the great Russian and Chinese revolutions reversed because they carried too much baggage of capitalism (the wage system, etc.) into their socialist society which they thought they could transform into communism. But the opposite happened. Today Russia and China are capitalist, imperialist vultures fighting with the U.S. and European imperialists for control of the world's resources, especially oil.

Amid deepening capitalist economic crisis, expanding imperialist wars and the threat of World War III, the honest participants in the APPO Congress should think seriously about waging communist class struggle to confront the enemy and advance as the working class to our necessary goal, building a new communist society. Only then can we destroy capitalism, a chaotic and murderous system that only meets the needs of the rich.

Capitalist elections won't help workers. Participating in them perpetuates the chains that bind us to capitalism's evils. Only communist revolution will end them. That's why it's necessary to read and distribute CHALLENGE and join the Progressive Labor Party.

Guadeloupe

continued from p. 5

with Exxon and Texaco also holding a stake.

Jégo claims to have obtained a one-year 10% price reduction for 100 staple goods in 60 supermarkets. He says he'll "put heavy pressure" on the bosses to grant demands for higher wages. LKP wants an across-the-board, 200-euro-a-month wage hike. Jégo said before negotiations even opened that all workers would get at least a 2% raise. If accepted, a percentage-based raise would widen the gap between the highest- and lowest-paid workers, potentially dividing workers when the bosses inevitably move to eliminate the increase.

LKP is also demanding a rent freeze, improved health care, permanent jobs for all temporary workers and no racism in hiring. "The high rate of unemployment on Guadeloupe [35%] has to be taken into account," said Jean-Marie Brissac, CGTG trade union general secretary. "Even though our young people are highly qualified, they can't get a job here. The big corporations get their job applicants through Paris job agencies in order to exclude Guadeloupe youth."

Jégo claimed LKP has asked him to be the "moderator" in negotiations. Posing as a "neutral mediator," Jégo has induced the strikers to lower their guard. All gas stations were to re-open February 5, and two hypermarkets and a large number of shops have re-opened.

Meanwhile, in this good-cop-bad-cop routine, Guadeloupe bosses are dragging their heels at throwing any crumbs to the strikers. "Have a thought for the companies!" one local boss is said to have shouted at Jégo.

On the other hand, LKP called for a demonstration on Feb. 4 to shut the hypermarket and shopping center in Baie-Mahault, which had re-opened.

This apparent indecisiveness is reflected in the LKP platform: "People of Guadeloupe, workers, farmers, artisans, retirees, unemployed, entrepreneurs, young people, Lyannaj kont pwofitasyon is our organization, our idea, our tool, our consciousness." The inclusion of "entrepreneurs" — capitalists — in the Collective indicates confusion about the nature of the struggle. LKP apparently believes in unity with some bosses on a nationalist basis, because these bosses form part of "the people of Guadeloupe." Such illusions are fatal in the class struggle.

It's the job of communists worldwide to explain that the government is never "neutral" — it is always on the bosses' side. The working class can obtain justice only by overthrowing the bosses' government with communist revolution, in order to institute workers' rule.



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

Migra lied on immigrant raids

NYT, 2/4

Run by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, even as complaints grew that teams of armed agents were entering homes indiscriminately.... Federal immigration officials had repeatedly told Congress that among immigrants they would concentrate on rounding up the most threatening — criminals and terrorism suspects.

Instead newly available documents show the agency changed the rules, and the program increasingly went after easier targets. A vast majority of those arrested had no criminal record, and many had no deportation orders against them.

Clinton workfare strangles poor

NYT, 2/2

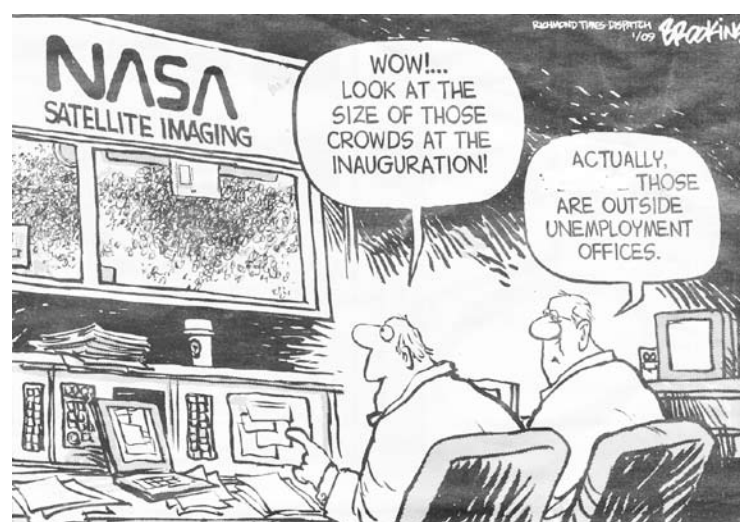
Despite soaring unemployment and the worst economic crisis in decades, 18 states cut their welfare rolls last year, and nationally the number of

people receiving cash assistance remained at or near the lowest in more than 40 years... Signed by President Bill Clinton in 1996 amid bitter protest... The program, which mostly serves single mothers, ended a 60-year-old entitlement to cash aid, replacing it with time limits and work requirements....While it was widely praised in the boom years that followed, skeptics warned it would fail the needy when times turned tough.... Years of pressure to cut the welfare rolls has left an obstacle-ridden program that chases off the poor, even when times are difficult.

Army suicides at 30-year high

NYT, 2/6

The suicide count for last month would exceed those killed in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan during the same period.... "If we lost this many soldiers to an enemy weapon, the entire country would know about it and we would demand defensive measures."...Most soldiers were reluctant to seek help for fear it would derail their careers.



Workers see capitalist betrayal

GW, 2/6

Workers around the world began to mobilise in reaction to rising unemployment and increasing fear about the economic crisis. France was paralysed by a wave of strike action....But while the outlook may be dark in the big wealthy democracies of western Europe, it is in the young, poor states of central and eastern Europe that the trauma looks graver. Exactly 20 years ago they put their faith in a capitalism now in crisis and by which they feel betrayed. The result has been the biggest protests across the former communist bloc since the days of people power.

Afghanistan Center of Imperialist Dogfight over Oil, Gas

The U.S. imperialists are desperately trying to regain full control of their empire's cornerstone at any cost: possessing the world's energy reserves, especially those of the Greater Middle East. Since their main focus now is the Caspian Region, Afghanistan is Obama's main foreign policy objective.

How many more U.S.-NATO troops Obama will sacrifice in this war is not known yet, nor how many more Afghan workers, women and children will be massacred. But the stakes are high for the U.S. rulers, and they aren't going to let the prospect of more blood on their hands stand in the way.

The stakes are also high for their capitalist-imperialist rivals in the region, particularly the Russians and Chinese bosses. Russia's rise as an aspiring hegemon is dependent on controlling the world's energy resources; while China needs ever-greater quantities of crude to fuel its industrial and military might. Their contradictions with the U.S. will develop into military clashes, with large-scale war looming on the horizon.

If pacified enough, the U.S. rulers hope Afghanistan's strategic location will transport vast energy resources, bypassing Russia's territory, and positioning them to replace Russia as the main controller-distributor of Caspian-Central Asia's energy.

This would break the energy chokehold Russia has on the European imperialists, crucial if the U. S. hopes to get the EU's support on important geopolitical issues, wider wars and the coming global war (See Box). A U.S. success in Afghanistan would also pressure China to become U.S.-energy dependent.

All Roads to Afghanistan Go Through Moscow, China and Iran

U.S. bosses' military success in Afghanistan depends on supplying their troops, which has become ever more difficult. At present, three-quarters of supplies bound for Afghanistan must pass through Pakistan where "almost half of the US supplies [are] pilfered by motley groups of Taliban militants, petty traders and plain thieves..." (Asian Times on

Line, 1/27/09)

With the Pakistani rulers less willing or capable of guaranteeing their supplies safe passage, the U.S. rulers must find alternative routes. But, the only possible routes, besides Iran and China, run through either the Caspian Region or Russia, all of which require Russian cooperation. Thus, the U.S. rulers' big dilemma is how to get it and at what price. Nevertheless, whatever agreement these imperialist butchers reach will only intensify their contradictions and speed up their military confrontation.

Afghan President Karzai too Close to Russia and China

After seven years of racist U. S. terror and genocide against Afghani workers, a resurgent Taliban controls between 50% and 70% of the country and the U.S.-NATO forces are losing the war. To try to salvage the situation, Obama's approach is to pacify Afghanistan enough to build the pipelines to safely transport energy resources to market. Thus the U.S. bosses are trying something that was unspeakable in the days after 9/11, the "inclusion of the Taliban or Taliban elements in a coalition government." (George Friedman, Stratfor, 1/29/09)

This plan calls for dumping Karzai, who is refusing to go quietly. He is railing against Afghani civilians murdered by U.S. raids and moving closer to Russia and China. Against U.S. opposition, he recently accepted Russian military aid offerings. Also, in Moscow last January 23, Russian and Afghan diplomats "pledged to continue developing Russian-Afghan cooperation." (Asia Times Online, 1/27/09)

Furthermore, Moscow will host a conference on Afghanistan under the aegis of the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization, comprised of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan). Russian President Medvedev is adamant that "nothing can be resolved (regarding Afghanistan) without taking into account the collective opinion of states which have an interest in the resolution of the situation".

Russian Ukraine 2009 Gas War

The European Union imports 40% of its gas from Russia, 80% of which transits through the Ukraine. The U.S. encouraged the Ukrainian bosses to shut this pipeline when Russia stopped subsidizing the price of gas sold to the Ukraine. The U.S. bosses were hoping to divide the European and Russian imperialists. Had it been successful, it would have put the EU squarely on the U.S. side, especially on Afghanistan. The gamble failed as the EU pressured the Ukraine to re-open the line. Now Obama can't count on the EU to pressure Russia. "Given their dependency on the Russians... the Germans, and many of the Europeans, are in no position to challenge Russia on anything, least of all on Afghanistan." (Obama Joins The Great Game, George Friedman, Stratfor, 1/19/09)

Russian Imperialists Ready to Defend Their Backyard

Russia will soon approve a new national security strategy that identifies the United States as Russia's primary rival. It singles out controlling global energy resources as the long-term source of conflict, which could develop into military confrontation. (Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 6 Issue: 2 January 6, 2009) To this end Russian just gave Kyrgyzstan \$2.4 billion to kick the U.S. out of its Manas airbase, used to supply allies' troops in Afghanistan.

Workers, soldiers and students worldwide must realize that capitalism inevitably leads to wider wars and eventually to World War 3. We must break with all politicians and bosses, be it Obama, Putin, Karzai or the religious holy rollers. Let's turn their imperialist wars into a revolutionary storm to wipe out capitalism and build a communist society where we share and allocate the world's natural resources according to our needs, not the bosses' profits. ☺

Racist D.C. Metro Bosses Attack Transit Workers, Riders

The bosses are using the financial crisis to bludgeon workers all over the country, and the action has begun at the D.C. Metro Transit system. The Metro bosses have declared that there is a \$154 million operating deficit for the coming fiscal year. That could mean layoffs and position reductions of up to 15% of the workforce. Despite the rising demand for mass transit, the local governments that own Metro have decided to cut service and lay off workers. Whether this is their real plan or just a ploy to justify a fare increase is yet to be seen.

Rank-and-file workers at Metro are getting ready to fight back. A public hearing on cutting back Metro runs in D.C. is planned for February 19 at Metro Headquarters. Workers will be there in large numbers to say no to cutbacks in service, no to layoffs, and no to fare increases, with no help from the union leadership. Although the union contract expired on June 30, 2008, a new one has not been negotiated. The union has refused to mobilize the membership to fight for a new contract. The union president's excuse is that the workers don't want to fight, and instead is relying on her political friends. Some good that will do! But many workers remember the mass demonstration we had with communist leadership during the last contract fight and declare that we should do more bold and militant actions.

A fight-back is needed! In addition to service cuts and layoffs, the workers' pension fund is in trouble, having lost about 1/3 of its value due to the crash, and the bosses are trying to weasel out of their contractual responsibility to make the fund whole. The bosses are building racism by using the crisis to pit D.C. area workers against the mainly

black workforce of Metro.

Metro bosses have joined in this racist onslaught and have begun a terror campaign against operators. Minor safety violations, which have always been punished with a written warning, now result in a five-day suspension. Talking on a cell phone while laying over is now a five-day suspension. An operator with a poor work record as defined by the bosses can be terminated without warning, i.e. no final warning. These attacks are to soften up the workers to be savaged by the bosses who want to take out their crisis on our class.

There have been no actual layoffs at Metro since 1995. At that time, we organized large numbers of workers and riders to protest the cuts in service and the loss of jobs. The bosses backed down and

reduced their plans for cutbacks. This time the crisis is much more serious, and our efforts must reflect that.

We must unite with the community as well to oppose any fare increase that the bosses may be planning. Our brother and sister workers who use Metro are being squeezed from all sides by the bosses. We must not be part of this.

A system that can find billions (and even trillions!) of dollars for oil wars and to bail out bankers who still get billions in bonuses — but can't pay Metro workers without further soaking the working class — such a system needs to be smashed with communist revolution. Metro workers and riders should join in this fight. ☺

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