

CHALLENGE



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Imperialists' Battle for MidEast Oil Heats Up

Given the continuing long-range threat posed by China's and Russia's bosses to U.S. rulers, now add the menace of these two rising powers to U.S. plans for control of Iraq's oil wealth. Chinese and Russian companies scored big in mid-December's second round of bidding for Iraqi oil fields. This opens yet a new front in the imperialists' energy dogfight.

Already within Iraq, "The dispute among Arabs, Kurds, Turkmens and other minority groups over the oil city of Kirkuk and a resource-rich area of northern Iraq remains a stark obstacle to long-term stability." (NY Times, 12/20). Imported al Qaeda fighters and Iran's nearby armed forces (which seized an Iraqi oil well on December 17) also stand to frustrate U.S. bosses' dreams of pumping 12 million barrels a day of Iraqi crude.

Now their Chinese and Russian competitors will seek to protect their new Iraqi claims with military muscle in the face of the U.S. occupation. The ink on China's and Russia's oil contracts had barely dried when their ally Iran grabbed the Iraqi well.

The raid underscored the Beijing-Moscow-Tehran bloc's strategic advantage. To occupy Iraq, the U.S. war machine must continually mount massive 7,000-mile air- and sea-lifts. Iranian troops can literally walk there. In addition to support for Iran's conventional forces, China's and Russia's new presence in Iraq increasingly leads them to back Iran's blossoming nuclear weapons program, to enhance ally Iran's position as a regional power.

The Pentagon's response entails permanent bases both in Iraq and Afghanistan, an outpost against foes China, Russia, Iran and wildcard Pakistan. Baghdad's deals with China National Petroleum Corp. and Russian Lukoil and Gazprom made even more crucial for U.S. rulers Obama's Afghan surge of 30,000 more soldiers (and up to 56,000 mercenaries, says

the Washington Post, 12/18).

Inconvenient Truth of 'War for Oil' Forces Obama to Cut China, Russia in on Iraq Spoils

In order to seize Iraq's oil, the U.S. invasion slaughtered over a million Iraqis, and maimed and made homeless millions more (including four million refugees). Two think-tanks, the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) and the James Baker institute, both linked closely to Exxon Mobil, cooked up and spread the lie of Saddam's "weapons of mass destruction" to "justify" the 2003 invasion. A pre-war joint CFR-Baker report salivated over a post-war treasure-trove of six million barrels a day (an estimate now doubled).

So why — with over 200,000 U.S. troops (including mercenaries) in his country — did Iraq's U.S. puppet leader Maliki let China and Russia in on the game? Firstly, Obama and his U.S. capitalist handlers dread a worldwide public opinion revolt against their heavy-handed Iraq tactics, especially among workers in Saudi Arabia, Exxon Mobil's single biggest oil source with an increasingly restive population of 35,000,000. The millions of Saudi workers get nothing from Exxon's Saudi arrangement, the most lucrative ongoing deal in capitalism's history.

Lately, the CIA-aided Saudi Air Force has been busy counter-attacking growing anti-U.S. militant groups on both sides of the Saudi-Yemen border. "Obama administration officials say that any hint of rigged awards, in which U.S. companies hauled in the lion's share of oil contracts, would do far more political damage by undermining U.S. credibility abroad." (Energy Intelligence report, 11/30) Secondly, Iraq let the Chinese and Russians in also because the U.S. has been unable to exercise full control, not even pacifying, let alone conquering,

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NEW YORK CITY, December 21st — Over 300 black, Latino, white and Asian high school and middle school students rallied today against the proposed MTA elimination of student free-[[transit fare cards. The students responded well to PL chants and literature. (More next issue)

2009 Marked by Capitalism's Crisis, Workers' Anger and Fight-Back

The year 2009 started off with newly-inaugurated Barack Obama sending 21,000 troops to the war in Afghanistan, and caps off with him committing 30,000 more, plus 56,000 mercenaries. Obama dealt with this year's crisis in time-honored capitalist traditions. He bailed out banks and auto-makers while calling on the working class to make sacrifices "for the greater good." He proclaimed this year a 'Year of Service' while announcing these troop increases in Afghanistan, making clear why the ruling class needs our service.

PLP has been saying for several years that the U.S. ruling class is heading deeper and deeper into a crisis it cannot control. This year the rulers could not mask their difficulties anymore. While few would use any label harsher than "recession," all media — from the stuffiest newspaper to the trashiest talk show — were comparing this year's financial disasters to the Great Depression of the 1930s, calling this period the "Great Recession."

The capitalists' crisis devastated the lives of many workers. Over 30 million are now unemployed in the U.S. Like the increasing foreclosures and homelessness, jobless rates disproportionately affect black and Latino workers, reflecting the racism built into the capitalist system. U.S. prison rates exceed those of any other nation, and figures continue to rise. Young workers are increasingly forced to look to the military to support themselves, being sent to kill and die to rescue U.S. rulers' imperialist dreams. Attacks on immigrants are rising, including the firing of all "undocumented" workers by the supposedly non-sweatshop garment manufacturer American Apparel.

Obama continued the plans of his predecessors in many areas, including extending plans for anti-student education reforms under the direction of new Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. He presided over the increasingly racist divisions of the Chicago public schools. Across the country budgets were slashed for schools, hospitals and city serv-

ices.

No media pundit or politician will ever say that we would be better off under another system, but this year was unique in its revelations about the low point capitalism has entered.

Fighting Back

While the need for revolutionary leadership is clear, in many places around the world workers have stood up and rebelled. The year began with a general strike in Greece. Students protesting the police murder of a teenage boy were joined by millions of workers in a general strike. Tens of thousands of workers, teachers, students and farm-workers defied Mexico's rulers' using the swine flu to ban May Day marches and took to the streets in Oaxaca, Puebla and other cities.

There were widespread student strikes throughout Austria and Germany. Workers brought the French department of Guadeloupe to a halt several times throughout the year as the capitalists were unwilling to meet their demands. In France, attempts by workers to copy the rebellions of Guadeloupe were channeled by unions into single-day strikes. A current strike of over 6,000 undocumented workers in France has lasted over two months, inspiring the French labor movement and a march of 10,000 to the Immigration Ministry in Paris (see page 4).

In the U.S., teachers, students and workers showed their anger at the system which is increasingly unable to meet their needs. Los Angeles teachers went on a one-hour work stoppage against the wishes of their union leadership. Washington, D.C. bus drivers imposed a work slowdown. Recently, University of California students took over administration buildings protesting budget cuts, enduring attacks by police.

Most inspiring, in the Bronx, this summer marked the end of the 11-month strike of Stella D'Oro cookie factory workers. This prolonged battle has taught thousands much about the strength of workers fighting sexism, racism and oppression in staunch defiance of scabs, police terror and unscrupulous bosses. These workers did not give up the fight, even after they returned to the factory

floor. Finally the factory was closed and moved to another state. The collective they built still stands together, contacting the workers in the new factory to let them know about the struggle. Several have joined the Party, committing to fight the whole capitalist system, no matter how the cookie crumbles.

In Memoriam

In 2009 Progressive Labor Party celebrated the lives of several anti-racist, working-class heroes whose lives inspire our work as communist organizers. In the autumn many members and friends traveled to Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, to honor the raid by John Brown's integrated force of principled fighters. John Brown and his comrades, including runaway slave Harriet Tubman, who led hundreds to freedom, get short shrift in the history books, often even derided as mentally ill. But we recognize that they knew that only armed insurrection could fix the problems of slavery and stood up for what was right. Their bold actions changed their world.

This year we lost honored friends and comrades including Joseph Furr, Helen Jones, Sylvia Dick Gomez and Lee Simon. We memorialized former CHALLENGE/DESAFIO editor Luis Castro, who was an example to many of us of how to lead the life of an internationalist fighter against racism and imperialism, a dialectical materialist studying the world from a scientific viewpoint and a comradely participant in collective struggle.

Remembering the lives of these working-class brothers and sisters, both in our own lives and in history, can motivate us all to work hard for the future they dreamed of and carry their legacies forward in the coming year. In 2010 and on, we call on our members and friends to distribute more CHALLENGES and bring more coworkers and friends the ideas of the Progressive Labor Party to win more fighters for communist revolution.

Our New Year's resolution must be to get involved in, and to lead, class struggle to battle the attacks of the rulers, from budget cuts and unemployment to police terror and the increasing war abroad, with the goal of winning workers' power — communism. ☛

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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Battle for Mid-East Oil

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the country.

Norwegian-U.S. Petro-strategic Love Match — Source of Obama's 'Peace' Prize — Hits Rough Patch

Several aspects of the Baghdad oil field auction underscore U.S. weakness in Iraq. Petrostate energy ministers and Big Oil CEOs actually had to walk the last mile to the auction because suicide car-bombers had made driving too risky. None would bid on licenses for major fields amid conflicts still raging in Sadr City and Nineveh. And Norway's rulers — whose government-owned Statoil stands to profit so much from Obama's surging Afghan war that they awarded him the Nobel Prize (see CHALLENGE, 12/9) — double-crossed him.

In the Iraq auction, Statoil, teamed as junior partner with U.S. enemy Russia's Lukoil to win a major oil field. Obama retaliated by accepting

the "Peace" prize from Norway's King Harald with a Hitlerite rant extolling profit-ensuring wars: "The United States of America has helped underwrite global security for more than six decades with the blood of our citizens and the strength of our arms." Obama pointedly reminded his oil-soaked majesty that Norwegian troops serve under U.S. command in Afghanistan. Simultaneously, U.S. pressure got former Statoil advisor Kai Eide booted as top UN officer in Afghanistan.

Yet, U.S. rulers (and their British allies), as occupying invaders, do enjoy certain advantages in Iraq. In underpublicized first-round bidding in June, Exxon (U.S.), BP (British), and Shell (British-Dutch) won rights to the biggest Iraqi fields. Exxon & Co. also won bigger profit margins, crucial in capitalist competition: "The [Lukoil-Statoil] partnership will earn 56¢ a barrel....Exxon, with minority partner Shell, will receive about 93¢ a barrel." (Energy Intelligence, 12/13) And the Western firms hope Chinese and Russian firms' lagging oil-technology skills will make them miss contractual production quotas.

Letting China and Russia into Iraq hardly represents a U.S. olive branch. In fact, it brings the "world's sole superpower" closer into head-on conflict with a strengthening rival alliance. Emergence of a World War III is sped up as ongoing regional oil wars become more deadly.

For the international working class, building an anti-imperialist war movement with a revolutionary outlook becomes more urgent. PLP's leadership among masses of workers, soldiers and students, in factories, barracks, unions, schools and churches is even more vital now. We need to organize to destroy the billionaires' profit system and its endless wars. ☛

Why Articles Are Not Signed

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

Hospital Workers' Solidarity Defies Pro-Boss Union Hack

NASSAU COUNTY, NY, December 15 — The bosses have been increasing their attacks on the workers at our hospital. They have been subjecting the workers to increasing disciplinary harassment. Recently two black workers were fired, leading to increasing anger throughout the hospital. A group of rank-and-file workers are now meeting with PLP to discuss ways to resist these attacks. We distributed a message to the union president complaining about the attacks and the ineffective response of the union. The workers responded very positively to this message by making many copies and distributing them throughout the hospital.

When the union bureaucrats saw the response of the workers they attacked us sharply. They called an emergency meeting of the union delegates at our hospital and then the union president held general membership meetings the next day. This capitalist labor lieutenant tried a two-pronged attack against us. The first was that we were cowards for not signing the letter and the second that we were weakening the union by washing our dirty laundry in public. The workers didn't buy either one of these attacks. At the delegates' meeting a militant delegate confronted the president sharply. He insisted that the president stop attacking the workers

who wrote the message and instead deal with the issues that were raised by our group.

At the membership meetings the next day this hack tried the same tactics with different groups of workers all day long. At the early meeting he demanded that the "cowards" who sent him the unsigned letter stand up and be counted. All of the workers in the room stood up and said, "Okay here we are. Let's talk about what it says." He was still singing this tired tune with the last group of workers at the end of the day. They all raised their hands and said, "Okay, we'll sign it now, start talking about what it says." There were many arguments between the workers and this hack about the conditions at our hospital. Since he couldn't divert the workers from the issues, he made vague promises that things were going to change.

After this was over our group met to discuss what had happened. We were happy that our co-workers had responded to our efforts but we were also self-critical. We realized that we had led the workers down the easier path of demanding that the union fight for us. The union hacks played on this passivity. "We can't do anything unless you stand up and support us." The more experienced workers among us made the point that when we do stand up, the hacks do every-

thing they can to undermine us. Still we resolved that it would be stronger to try to lead the angry workers into active struggle against the bosses in demanding that the two fired workers be returned to their jobs.

During our discussions the idea was raised that we should fight to make these union hacks do what they are supposed to do, represent the workers. PLP members challenged this idea, saying the hacks are doing exactly what they are supposed to do, keeping the workers under control of the capitalists. We talked about the fact that ever since communists were driven out of the unions in the 1940s and 1950s the labor leaders have been serving the capitalists, not the workers. We also pointed out that these increasing attacks on the workers are necessary to the capitalists since the failure of their economic system drives them more and more to demand maximum profit.

We pledged to continue the struggle against these attacks, but also explained that only a fight for communist revolution could put an end to this intensifying fascism. All of our group bought CHALLENGE, and with continued discussion and class struggle, we will fight to bring them closer to PLP. ☺

At Area Meetings LA PL'ers Link War to Cuts, Layoffs

LOS ANGELES, December 21 — As capitalism in crisis moves more rapidly towards war and increased fascism, schools are taking a huge hit. Here, where the schools are overwhelmingly Latino and black, this is a particularly racist attack. To reorganize the schools to meet the needs of the ruling class, the bosses here this year have laid off teachers, voted to turn 250 schools over to charters, and, on December 8th, the LA Unified School District (LAUSD) superintendent proposed a 12% pay cut, four furlough days and threatened 8,000 layoffs.

We had to respond to the tremendous anger that teachers feel toward the district and the union leadership who, faced with an injunction in May, canceled plans for a one-day strike against layoffs that had been overwhelmingly supported by a membership vote. The UTLA (United Teachers of Los Angeles) is organized in separate area meetings. Comrades went to three of those and, along with other teachers, raised various motions calling for union support for a one-day job action to respond to these attacks.

The union House of Reps had previously passed

a motion advocating support for a national day of action on March 4th to defend education, a call that grew from student mobilizations and protests at California university campuses this fall.

At our schools we're fighting to show that the only way for the working class to end imperialist war and capitalist crisis is with communist revolution; and that the working class is key to revolution. We have increased our CHALLENGE sales as well as the number of sellers. More students want to be involved in PLP communist study groups.

In one area where the superintendent has announced the first reconstitution of a high school, intending to require all employees to reapply for their jobs, there was great anger. Our comrade raised a motion calling for a one-day strike on March 4th against the 12% salary cut, the layoffs and the furlough days. He said we shouldn't pay for capitalism's crisis.

He also explained that we should be inspired by the militancy of the university students who had taken over buildings to protest the huge attacks on the universities. The motion passed 37-14 to huge applause. The militancy of the university students shows that students and workers are getting angrier and gives PLP the opportunity to point to the capitalist system as the cause of these attacks; that it can't be reformed to meet our needs, and that the only road to ending these attacks is to destroy capitalism with communist revolution.

In another area, a young comrade raised a similar motion, calling for a job action on March 4th, which also passed overwhelmingly. In a period when the federal government is sending 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan and continuing to bail out

Anti-War Film Showing Protests Obama's 'Surge' Speech

NEW YORK CITY, December 1 — At our CUNY campus tonight, the antiwar group of the Professional Staff Congress (PSC) union chapter held a screening of the film "Afghan Women" as a way to protest the Obama "surge" speech on TV that very night. A professor from the region was there to lead the discussion and argue for the immediate and complete withdrawal of all U.S. and NATO troops, mercenaries, and bases from Afghanistan. PL'ers spoke to the real reasons for the war in the first place — the needs of imperialism — something not well understood by many of our friends. ☺

banks, we need to do more. The union leadership is posing three choices for teachers: accept layoffs or furloughs or a pay cut. We must refuse to accept these attacks and fight back. Meanwhile, we need to see that our main victories will be the growing understanding of the need and potential of the working class to make a revolution and run society in our own interest.

In a third meeting, a comrade called for a one-day strike of teachers and all other public employees on March 4th and stressed the need to prepare for such an action being declared illegal by the state. While the union leadership builds fear, we must build unity with all public employees and other workers and defy any court action. A young teacher added to this by emphasizing that the unity of all district employees, as well as students and parents, is what will give us power. The motion passed unanimously.

We must learn how to put forward more of PL's analysis at these meetings. The courts and the government are not neutral and will try to crush any strike. The union leadership is doing its best to lead us into defeatism and accommodation with fascism and war. We have a responsibility to our friends and CHALLENGE readers, who look to us for leadership in the fight against the increasing fascist attacks of capitalism in crisis.

Militant action must be motivated by a growing communist understanding that in this period, the only significant "reforms" will be those that help the bosses "solve" their crisis by building fascism and wider war. We need to build a movement for communist revolution, not try to restore the capitalist education system, with its patriotism, racism, anti-communism and anti-worker ideas. ☺



'We work here, we live here, we're staying here!'

France: Undocumented Strikers' Battle Spreading

PARIS, December 14 — This evening, more than 3,000 undocumented workers and their supporters rallied in southern Paris to demand unconditional, across-the-board "legalization." Over 6,000 undocumented workers and 400 personal care providers are now on strike, affecting over 2,000 companies in 38 of the 100 French départements. Many little struggles (in which each individual worker counts) have combined into a massive, historic movement — truly making the whole greater than the sum of its parts.

This struggle represents an important battle to unite workers against the racism being generated by the French ruling class (with the help of many union misleaders) in its moves toward fascist control of the working class.

Following are a few of the many little struggles that flow together and merge into this heartening mass struggle, amid the misery and suffering of a world-wide economic crisis.

'You've got to be organized and disciplined...'

In Creil, population 34,000, 68 undocumented workers have been living in the labor exchange (union hall) for the past week, sticking together, refusing to work — on strike.

Living under self-imposed discipline, they elected two leaders and organized teams to clean, shop and cook and to welcome visitors.

They arise at 6 A.M., and the cleaning begins. Others fix coffee, fold the blankets and clear everything into a corner. Then they all drink coffee together. "You've got to be organized and disciplined, otherwise it's unbearable," said Bah.

Ninety-five percent of the workers are Muslims, most from Mali and Senegal. Touré, the elected leader and eldest, works to prevent nationalist divisions. The noon meal "is often mafé, the Muslims' favorite dish," he said, but the cooking team also fixes tiebe, a Senegalese favorite. Food costs 80 to 100 euros a day, reported the elected treasurer Sambaké.

During the day, they talk quietly, read the paper, watch DVDs, listen to music with headphones, or just think. They shower at the municipal stadium in groups of five. They take turns visiting family and friends in Paris and to pick up mail. Two months without a paycheck is making things difficult. "We need to work and to resume a normal life," said one. "It's hard," Sacko confirmed, "but we're keep-

ing our chins up."

Le Kremlin-Bicetre: Demanding Respect

Today, some 200 undocumented workers demonstrated in Le Kremlin-Bicêtre and Villejuif, just south of Paris, demanding "legalization" and protested working conditions at Seni, a cleaning company.

They rallied at Seni headquarters in Le Kremlin-Bicêtre before marching to the cleaning-company bosses' federation offices in Villejuif. They carried banners and signs demanding "'legalization' of all undocumented workers!" and "Respect for undocumented workers!" Federation officials refused to meet with them. The Seni workers have been striking since October 19, demanding the "legalization" of 250 undocumented workers.

'We work here, we live here and we're staying here...'

On December 8, 20 undocumented workers traveled to the CGT trade union congress in Nantes as delegates from the picket lines.

Modibo Traoré told the congress: "Our delegation represents the undocumented workers. I'm from Mali, I'm 31, and I've been working for a security company in France for the past eight years."

"Our struggle is difficult, but united together, we're going to win ... This is a historic movement of protest against the super-exploitation of workers. We've won a partial victory. On Nov. 24, the authorities issued a circular. But it...is fuzzy and hazy and provides for arbitrary decisions. The 6,000 strikers are keen to tell you ... not to hesitate to join us in a national strike against the companies to wrest victory. The [government] ministers Besson and Darcos must negotiate and arrive at a solution, instead of playing at dividing [us]."

The congress gave Traoré a standing ovation and chanted the slogan of the undocumented workers: "We work here, we live here, and we're staying here!" The undocumented workers returned to Paris with a 3,000-euro contribution raised by passing the hat among congress delegates.

Paris

In Paris, 30 undocumented workers have been occupying the tramway construction site at the Porte des Lilas for the past two months. They struck when their boss, a temporary work agency subcontracting for a big construction company, fired some

of them without notice. They've worked for years under mostly two-week temporary contracts, without ever being offered permanent jobs.

Despite rain and cold, they've been living in three big tents on the site. Food, sleeping bags, blankets and warm clothing have been donated by neighborhood residents, the CGT and Solidaires trade unions, and support committees.

Supporting The Strikers

Organizations can support the strikers' demand for unconditional and across-the-board "legalization" by e-mailing: contact@travailleurssanspapiers.org or by mail to CGT, 263 rue de Paris, 93100 Montreuil France, à l'attention de Mme Francine Blanche. Individuals can sign an on-line petition at: <http://travailleurssanspapiers.org> (follow the links).

As we support these workers in their struggle against the French bosses' government, we should note that obtaining "legalization" is only a partial, immediate reform, hardly a band-aid on the running sore from the super-exploitation that is capitalism. From this struggle we need to draw the lessons, inspiration and energy necessary to overthrow capitalism with communist revolution. ☺



"Avec," means "with" and "sans" means "without," while "papiers" means "documents." "Travailleurs Unis!" means "Workers United!"

Raise Anti-Racism, Profit-Driven Health Cuts at APHA Convention

PHILADELPHIA, PA, November 11 — The American Public Health Association (APHA) convention met here, in the midst of financial crisis and a raging national debate around providing health care for the 50 million uninsured workers and their families. Yet universal health care was never on the bosses' table.

For the bankers, insurance and pharmaceutical companies, and elected politicians of both parties, "health reform" has nothing to do with the 45,000 people who die every year from lack of healthcare. It is mostly about slashing healthcare costs to increase profits and finance the sending of 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan to secure oil pipelines.

At the convention, PLP members pointed out that only armed struggle for communist revolution will ever serve the healthcare needs of the international working class, abolishing bosses, profits and borders. We fought for building a mass, militant anti-racist movement as the key to getting us there. We pointed out that over 12 million undocumented workers are being excluded from the current health care bill, and that budget cuts and war budgets are closing public clinics and hospitals that mainly serve millions of black, Latino and Asian

workers. We have been fighting these racist cuts at Chicago's Cook County Health Care system for the past two years.

While many people agreed with the need for universal healthcare and a powerful movement to win it, it did not become the burning question at the convention. What was missing was the revolutionary communist perspective that we are living under a capitalist dictatorship, in a crisis lurching towards more fascism and war. Many APHA members hoped their expertise would give them credibility and power. But only a communist-led fighting working class can organize a mass revolutionary movement.

There was a presentation on the dismantling of public healthcare in Chicago and its racist effects on workers. Cuts and closings of hospitals and clinics will mean workers will have to travel long distances to reach facilities that are so crowded that they may not even be seen. Areas that might generate money for the system, like Labor and Delivery and Nursery, are being snatched away by the private and University hospitals. The presentation described how health workers, patients, and professionals are fighting the cuts. It showed pictures

and a video of patients and workers shouting down County officials trying to pass the cuts off as improvements, at a town-hall meeting. People attending the presentation stayed afterward to discuss health cuts in their own cities, and many gave us contact information.

In other anti-racist work, in one of APHA's larger sections, we supported a resolution on the wave of deaths among immigrants trying to cross the U.S.-Mexico border. We urged healthcare workers to provide care for border-crossers and guarantee healthcare for undocumented detainees.

By next year's APHA convention, we will need to have a wider base for CHALLENGE and more members of PLP. The battle over immigration reform will be underway, probably with town halls worse than this summer's on health care. The convention theme will be "Social Justice: Public Health Imperative," and will be held in Denver, a stronghold of the racist, violently anti-immigrant Minutemen. Millions of workers are in need of health care, and only a world run by the working class will provide healthcare for all the working class. ☺

Boeing Workers Face Job-killing Racist Rip-off

SEATTLE, WA, December 21 — An irate rank-and-filer who demanded the District union misleader address the rumored rip-off of our 401(k) matching funds interrupted the traditional do-nothing holiday atmosphere at the December Boeing union meeting. The next day the company confirmed this thievery, capping a week that saw nearly \$2 billion diverted from our pension and IRAs to “assure the company’s ability to invest in growth opportunities.”

“Growth opportunities” are code words for a duplicate 787-assembly plant and supply chain based on South Carolina’s non-union, low-wage labor. Initial estimates of the new plant costs are between \$750 million and \$1.5 billion. Training a new workforce will guarantee huge additional cost overruns.

Boeing is getting this capital by using company stock to make the required \$1.5 billion pension payments and over \$400 million in matching 401(k) payments, keeping the cash due us. Never before has Boeing pulled such a maneuver. “They took the cash,” explained one Machinist, “giving us wallpaper!”

Meanwhile, the company is spending who knows how much to send senior executives to South Carolina to establish the new supply chain. This alternate pipeline will allow Boeing to build 787s without any union-made parts or sub-assemblies. To make sure union workers got the point, VP Ray Conner emphasized that the duplicate pipeline “will be fully operational by 2012” — just in time for our next contract.

Obama Praises CEO McNerney, Shafts Workers

Obama singled out Boeing CEO Mc-

Nerney for a concrete idea at the recent “even-lower-paying” jobs summit (12/4). He proposed special tax breaks for “small” businesses, like subcontractors. Obama added a one-year capital gains tax waiver for expanding businesses in his subsequent “jobs” speech at the Brookings Institute (12/8). This gift will be financed largely by TARP funds we’re already on the hook for. These billions of working-class taxpayers’ money will arrive just in time to pay for the new supply chain.

Obama and McNerney are creating jobs alright: low-wage, non-union jobs. This sorry state of affairs can be traced to a long history of racism, which weakened unified working-class struggle in the Southeast.

Meanwhile, the jobs with better wages we fought for over the years are eliminated. “Look at my right hand,” is how another Machinist characterized the situation. “Don’t pay any attention to what my left hand is doing.”

As reported, Obama’s Afghan surge, the continuing war in Iraq and the undeclared war in Pakistan cost trillions. Unreported is the dear price our class pays for the bosses to re-organize their basic industries, like aerospace, crucial to the war effort.

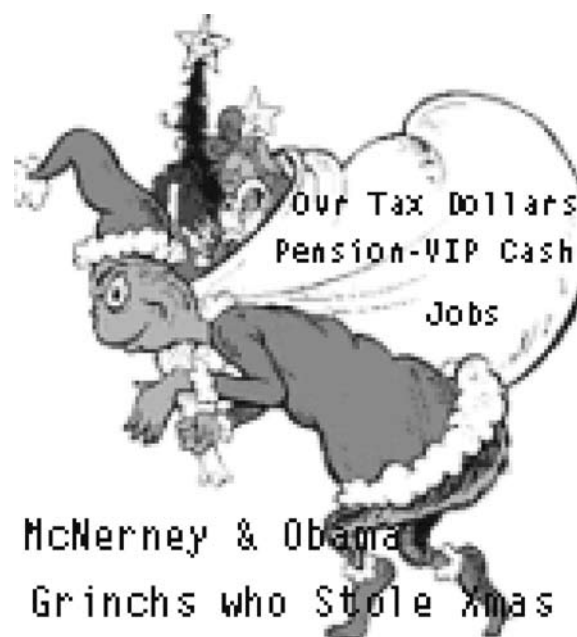
For the bosses, industrial re-organization, spurred on by government funds, is a matter of necessity, not choice. The federal government, serving the U.S. ruling class, steps in when these war industries can no longer be maintained solely by exploiting workers in unionized factories. The bosses impose, by hook or by crook, drastic cuts in wages and benefits. Pleas to our “friends in the other Washington,” as the union advocates, become even more ludicrous. Corporate fascism becomes the way of the land.

Workers Debate Significance of a Century Of Racism

“This fight-back flyer is good,” said a machine operator, referring to an “emergency” PLP leaflet rushed to print before the plants shut down for the holidays, “but don’t you think ‘they’ play the race card too much?” This provoked some conversations outlining how over a century of racism allowed the bosses to preserve this Southern non-union, low-wage area.

Some CHALLENGE readers are writing a more

continued on p. 8



PL'ers to Spur Class Struggle at MLA Convention

Brutal budget cuts, involuntary “furloughs,” rapidly rising tuition, threats to academic freedom, increasing pauperization of non-tenure track faculty: these are among the consequences for higher education of the Wall Street meltdown and the escalating wars in South Asia. Members and friends of PLP active in the Radical Caucus of the Modern Language Association (MLA) will be doing important political work at the annual MLA convention in Philadelphia, December 27-30.

The MLA is the professional organization of teachers of language and literature. The annual convention brings together over 10,000 professors, graduate students and adjunct teachers. For some securely-tenured professors the convention is mostly an opportunity for displaying ego and schmoozing with old friends. Most MLA members, though, are seriously affected by the current crisis. Many tenured professors are faced with stagnant incomes or cuts in pay and threatened or actual closings of humanities departments. The non-tenure track teachers who staff the majority of college-level writing, language and literature courses are in far worse shape. Insecure in their employment from semester to semester, rushing between campuses to cobble together the equivalent of full-time work, these “freeway fliers” work for as little as \$2,500 per semester course. Disproportionately female, these super-exploited academic laborers are often excellent and committed teachers but have little or no chance of ever securing adequately-compensated or secure work.

For graduate students earning their Ph.D.’s, the MLA Convention is known as the “meat market.” These students go to great expense to send resumes and travel to the convention to interview for the shrinking number of tenure-track jobs. The

competition is strenuous. Many graduate students, who have labored hard as teaching assistants for years, living on the financial margin, face the prospect of being adjuncts or simply giving up the profession without having ever really entered it.

The Radical Caucus will leaflet and demonstrate at the convention to protest the current assault on public higher education, exemplified in the current crisis in California, where jobs have been cut and tuition increased by 32%. The CSU system plans to eliminate 40,000 places for students over the next two years. The community-college system will eliminate a whopping 250,000 places. These are blatant attacks on working-class students, disproportionately black and Latino/a. The racism of this assault is further mirrored in the state’s decision to invest \$7.7 billion in new prisons, opening up some 40,000 new “beds.” The irony of these priorities needs no comment.

At this year’s convention, the Radical Caucus is presenting two resolutions before the Delegate Assembly. One calls for the reinstatement of Ward Churchill, a controversial professor of Native American literature who was recently hounded out as Chair of the Ethnic Studies Department at the University of Colorado by the Board of Trustees. Churchill is notorious for his assertion that the people killed in the 9/11/2001 attack on the World Trade Center were “little Eichmanns” (a Nazi war criminal). While, as this remark indicates, Churchill has zero class consciousness (in fact he is a right-winger), the attack on him is being used to attack many anti-racist and anti-imperialist teachers in Ethnic Studies and allied fields.

The other resolution sponsored by the Radical Caucus calls for tenure for all academic laborers. This demand cuts to the core of the hierarchical

distinction between “haves” and “have-nots” of the academy. It also calls for class struggle over wages: like workers throughout the U.S., college teachers have been drastically affected by the shrinking funds for higher education because of tax cuts and bloated military budgets. It is time to fight back and demand that all academic laborers have the secure jobs and decent pay that tenure has traditionally insured.

A Radical Caucus-sponsored emergency resolution opposing the escalation of the war in Afghanistan (and the unofficial war in Pakistan) may also be in the offing. The MLA Executive Council has traditionally opposed antiwar resolutions and others not directly associated with the profession and this year’s Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee (DAOC) is evidently hostile toward the Radical Caucus’s initiatives. But the ongoing struggle to get the MLA to oppose the imperialist racism of the U.S. government is crucially important.

PLP members in the MLA will be giving academic papers about literary radicalism and participating in the activities of the Radical Caucus, which has emerged as a home for the many leftist humanities professors and graduate students who attend the convention. As the class struggle on college campuses gets more intense, communist teachers and students have an increasingly vital role to play. We must be well positioned within the MLA and other professional organizations to give leadership in current struggles and keep in view the necessity for not merely reformist but revolutionary change. ☼

LETTERS



Debate Students Tell Off Ass-Kissing Flunky

At a meeting of my school's debate team, we discussed this year's policy debate resolution which deals with whether the U.S. government should provide social services for people living in poverty. I used our debate practice time to discuss the Stella D'Oro workers and what they struck for. My debaters went home and told their families not to buy these "scab cookies" until the strike ended. I invited my students to rallies, read pamphlets with them and read CHALLENGE in class and at debate tournaments.

One day, we were debating the Stella D'Oro struggle when another teacher walked in. He's usually a jerk, but this time he really pissed off me and my students. The latter asked, "Mister, will you come out to a rally and support the Stella D'Oro workers?" He replied, "Support the Stella D'Oro workers? It's not my fault they didn't go to college and now they don't have good jobs."

The students' onslaught condemning his statement was amazing. I didn't have to say anything. Their replies included such messages as, "Mister, you don't know what you're talking about. Just because you bend over for the principal all the time doesn't mean the workers have to"; and, "Look at you, you don't do shit all day and you get paid good!"

Although these militant responses were great, I need to help my debaters turn these responses into militant fight-backs against the bosses' attacks. We're talking about the budget cuts now, and what we can do as a team to fight them.

Red Debate Coach

Retiree Teachers Back Stella D'Oro Strikers, Hit Imperialist War

I'm a member of PLP who recently retired from teaching. I went to a meeting of the retirement chapter of the the teachers union on November 10th. There were 200 retirees present. CHALLENGEs were distributed and I asked a question of what the union could do to help the

Stella D'Oro strikers now that the factory in New York is shut and the Stella D'Oro name and production have moved to a non-union shop run by Lance Foods in Ohio. A couple of retired teachers from the floor of the meeting volunteered to write up a motion for the December meeting.

About 500 members attended the December 8th meeting. The two who had volunteered read their motion, which was to organize the non-union Lance shop and galvanize the labor movement. The motion to organize Lance unanimously passed. Then two members of PLP raised a more sharply political motion on the floor, one that asked the retiree chapter of the union to take a stand against sending 30,000 more troops to the imperialist war in Afghanistan to keep U.S. companies in control of Middle Eastern oil. This came close to getting the needed two-thirds majority in favor of allowing it to come to the floor for a vote to make it chapter policy. About half the vote was in favor, but this was not enough to pass.

After the meeting several people took CHALLENGEs and thanked us for raising the issue of Afghanistan. We were invited to join two committees of the union. On hindsight:

- ☛ We should think beforehand about what we will do at the meeting and put out a leaflet so people can think about the question.

- ☛ We should set up a PL study group with some friends from the meeting.

- ☛ We should be active in the committees in order to keep in touch and raise issues with our friends and potential friends.

Looking forward to continuing our political work with the retirees.

Retired, but still in motion

Profits Drive Capitalism to Waste Space

Looking at an ornate but abandoned building near our job site in the south Bronx, two co-workers and I started talking about how much of a waste the building was.

One of my co-workers imagined detailed plans of semi-luxury condos aimed at high-income families. He thought the building and community needed profitable investment to reduce the blight.

At first I schemed right along with him. My wife and I are looking to buy a home and I thought about what she and I would want for 200,000 dollars. But then he talked about using the renovation to bring in wealthy white yuppies and kick out poor black and Latino people. That's when I half-jokingly, half-seriously told him, a black worker, that he was racist and evil.

I explained that the real problem was that capitalism could never maximize the use of space because the system is about maximizing profit, not need. I could have better explained that capitalism guarantees abandoned buildings concentrated in black and Latino neighborhoods; while homeless and overcrowded families could move into unused spaces if workers had state power. But my co-worker got the gist of what I was saying.

He admitted he would be a greedy capitalist bastard if he ever got the opportunity and that at heart he didn't care about people. That's when I said that for all the trouble and risk of investing and renovating property I'd rather spend my time and money trying to destroy capitalism for the sake of all workers, even workers like him who think they're part of the capitalist class.

My other co-worker, who was mainly listening to our back-and-forth, laughed when I criticized our friend. He knew that the whole renovation scheme was a dream and he agreed with some, though not all, of what I was saying.

Raising these communist ideas helped me see different outlooks of my fellow workers and helped me sharpen my own outlook towards raising politics with my co-workers. The main things in making communism a mass movement are class struggle, building relationships with many workers, and selling CHALLENGE. But little conversations like these are opportunities to raise communist politics that further ideological struggle.

Bronx Comrade

U.S.-China-India Imperialist Rivalry Explodes at Copenhagen

When Shakespeare's Hamlet said, "Something's rotten in the state of Denmark," he couldn't have described the recent UN meeting in Copenhagen better. For two weeks, almost 200 governments have said they won't cut their carbon emissions unless everyone else does.

The global warming problem, like everything under capitalism, is trapped in inter-imperialist rivalry (the fights between the capitalists for domination of markets). Hanging over this summit was the rivalry between the U.S. and developing imperialists like China and India. The U.S. bosses have consistently and cynically built and used the Green movement. It has manipulated people's concerns over pollution and climate change, to mobilize young people in the U.S. and worldwide to attack its rivals. It's no coincidence that today China is in the crosshairs of the Green movement.

U.S. Secretary of State Clinton made the empty offer to contribute to an international \$100 billion fund to help "developing countries" switch to clean energy; but, (always "but"), only if China and India cut their emissions, and allow inspections. Of course China and India balked at this. They want the same unrestrained advantages the U.S. bosses had as they were developing into the world's main superpower.

Meanwhile Obama "pledged" by 2020 to cut U.S. emissions by a lousy 17% relative to 2005. This is equivalent to only 4% relative to 1990.

Even such pledges are lies, considering that the U.S. signed the UN's Kyoto Protocol in 1997 to cut its emissions, but the Senate refused to ratify it. The U.S. (and world) emissions have

been soaring since then. Moreover Obama dropped his earlier pledge to cut 80% by 2050.

For over a century, oil, natural gas and coal have run capitalist economies. Auto and oil companies in the U.S. bought and destroyed city rail transportation, forcing the use of gasoline cars and making billions in profits.

The kinds of changes required to switch to clean energy are not happening due to the imperative of the capitalists to accumulate capital and compete in deadly inter-imperialist rivalry. Some energy companies are seeking profits by investing in solar, wind and nuclear energy, but the U.S. government gives much larger subsidies to oil companies like ExxonMobil, the world's largest corporation.

Emissions fill the air and poison water and food, with an additional two million people dy-

ing each year — 50,000 in the U.S. alone (World Health Organization). Global warming melts glaciers, expands oceans, raising sea levels and forces whole populations to flee their land. It causes droughts here and floods there, and produces more deadly violent storms.

The clash between rising and declining imperialists in Copenhagen reflects sharpening contradictions, reflected in wider wars for resources and low-paid labor. Expecting capitalism to clean up the planet is futile. A decent healthy life for the mass of the world's people is inseparable from the fight for a society run by and for the international working class. Join PLP's efforts to achieve this goal.

(For a fuller communist analysis of global warming, read the forthcoming issue of the Communist Magazine.) ☛

Climate Scientists' E-mail Battle is Part of Capitalists' Dogfight

Oklahoma's Senator James Inhofe, the highest paid U.S. politician by the oil companies (almost 2/3 of a \$1 million this decade), using hacked e-mail messages from a few climatologists in the U.S. and U.K., created a furor by falsely claiming that the climatologists have lied when they state that the earth is warming.

Like the inter-imperialist fights, this battle within the U.S. ruling class reflects disputes between different sets of capitalists. The domestic fossil fuel-funded global warming denialists are similar to the tobacco companies, who denied that smoking causes cancer (ads like "more doctors smoke Camels"). They represent the smaller capitalists from the south and southwest that are held in check by the main imperialist butchers from Wall Street and Big Oil.

Today Al Gore is the main flag-bearer of the Big Oil "environmentalists," whose targets have expanded to include not just their local rivals, but also China, India, Russia and other rising powers. The big guys Gore represents have killed millions in their wars for oil. Their penchant for murder makes Inhofe look like a street punk.

In Memory of Comrade Sylvia Gomez

ALBANY, CA, December 7 — Over 200 friends, comrades and family members packed Albany Community Center to memorialize Sylvia Dick Gomez. Sylvia died in October at age 55 from multiple sclerosis (MS). As the evening went on, story after story revealed the picture of a dedicated comrade who was intimately connected to a large, diverse group of people. Sylvia was an organizer and a fighter. She battled her debilitating disease but it never conquered her.

Sylvia fought to change the world. Meeting her in the last few years of her life was meeting a threesome: Sylvia, her wheelchair and Miel (her trained helper dog). Late one night Darryl, her friend, was arrested and jailed on account of mistaken identity (he was walking-while-black). Before dawn, Sylvia, her elderly mother, her daughter Rose, her wheelchair and Miel were at the police station demanding Darryl's release.

Sylvia came from a working-class family of activists and communists. She was an active organizer in her high school, in the National Guard, as a physical therapist, and against the Klan. More recently, as her MS took over more and more of her life, Sylvia periodically went to anti-war and disability rights demonstrations in her scooter and, later, her wheelchair.

To say Sylvia hated racism, sexism, capitalism and imperialist war is not to reduce her to a collection of slogans because she breathed life and meaning into them, giving them an understandable and personal dimension. She had a love and car-

ing for almost all the people who came into contact with her. She was a communist. One of the most moving stories came from a Jamaican woman. As a single mother of an elementary school child, an immigrant, new in the city, she was suddenly confronted with an after-school care crisis. It was Sylvia who heard her cry for help and it started an enduring friendship.

Another story came from Carla, a Latina family member. Arriving in the U.S. with no English she had been dumped into high school classes she couldn't understand. Sylvia gave her a tape recorder and then, each night, translated the lessons Carla had recorded in class. "Las luchas obreras no tienen fronteras" (Workers' struggles know no borders), we chant at demonstrations. Sylvia gave it a domestic dimension, putting it within all our reach. Her communism was an everyday communism.

Sylvia was at all May Days, CHALLENGE sales, meetings, and demonstrations when she was able-bodied. However, when the MS took over she had to cut back, but she still did what she could. Her last participation was to open her house to a dinner raising funds for the LA Summer Project. The event exhausted her but she was still excited to hear the speeches from the new younger comrades about the political aims of the Project.

Perhaps overall the single most inspiring aspect of her life was her revolutionary optimism. MS is a devastating disease that, over the years, relentlessly attacked her physical abilities, but Sylvia did not complain. Instead she saw opportunities in her



increasingly limited movements. The physical indignities that accompany the disease didn't cause her to retreat from social life but provided a source of humor to draw others closer. Being wheelchair-bound did not translate into inaction but instead opened the door to the disability rights community. We all die but we don't all die leaving such rich lessons to live by. In the spirit of Sylvia, we will carry on the struggle against the capitalist class and for communism. ☘

RED EYE ON THE NEWS

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

U.S. built up Afghanistan 'bad guys'

Creators.com, 12/4 – Obama stated Tuesday in a speech announcing a major escalation of the war... "we did not ask for this fight."

Of course we did. The Islamic fanatics who seized power in Afghanistan were previously backed by the U.S. as "freedom fighters" in what was once marketed as a bold adventure in Cold War one-upmanship against the Soviets... President Jimmy Carter, aided by a young liberal hawk named Richard Holbrooke, now Obama's civilian point man on Afghanistan... decided to support Muslim fanatics there.

Holbrooke began... in Vietnam... and he is now a big advocate of the counterinsurgency program... to once again win the hearts and minds of locals who want none of it....

Defense Secretary Robert Gates... knows that Obama is speaking falsely when he asserts that it was the Soviet occupation that gave rise to the Muslim insurgency that we abetted. Gates wrote a memoir in 1996 that, as his publisher proclaimed, exposed "Carter's never-before-revealed covert support to Afghan mujahedeen – six months before the Soviets invaded."

...So here we go again, selling firewater to the natives and calling it salvation.

Minority youth jailed in hellholes

NYT, 12/14 – New York's system of juvenile prisons is broken, with young people battling mental illness or addiction held alongside violent offenders in abysmal facilities where they receive little counseling, can be physically abused and rarely get even a basic education.... Excessive force was routinely used at four prisons, resulting in injuries as severe as broken bones and shattered teeth....

In 2007, more than half of the youths who entered detention centers were sent there for the equivalent of misdemeanor offenses, in many cases theft, drug possession or even truancy. More than 80 percent were black or Latino....

Many of the detained have addictions or psychological illnesses for which less restrictive treatment programs were not available.

Poorer kids are over-drugged

NYT, 12/12 – Children covered by Medicaid are given powerful antipsychotic medicines at a rate of four times higher than children whose parents have private insurance. And the Medicaid children are more likely to receive the drugs for less severe conditions than middle-class counterparts.

Antipsychotic drugs can also have severe physical side effects.... Many children from poor families receive powerful psychiatric drugs not because they actually need them – but because it is deemed the most efficient and cost-effective way to control problems that may be handled much differently for middle-class children.

Mexican workers hit from 2 sides

GW, 12/11 – Remittances from Mexicans working [abroad], most of them in the U.S., recorded their steepest drop in October, as expatriate workers had less money to send home....

In Mexico... almost half the population lives below the poverty line... The minimum wage in Mexico is 35 pesos, or about \$4 a day.

Many poor people work in the informal economy, selling food and goods in makeshift stalls, at traffic lights and door to door.

The ministry of labor... reported last month that the number of workers in the informal sector had exploded in the capital to about 1.05 million people because of the weak economy.

I.C.E. cuts detainees off from help

NYT, 12/3 – Growing numbers of noncitizens, including legal immigrants, are held unnecessarily and transferred heedlessly in an expensive immigration detention system that denies many of them basic fairness... a human rights organization concluded in reports released jointly on Wednesday....

Detainee transfers by Immigration and Cus-



toms Enforcement were so haphazard that some detainees arrived at a new detention center without having been served notice of why they were being held....

Government data show 1.4 million detainee transfers... most of them since 2006. The transfers are accelerating, the report found, with tens of thousands of longtime residents of cities like Philadelphia and Los Angeles being sent to remote immigration jails in Texas and Louisiana, far from legal counsel and evidence that might help them with release.

I.C.E. is increasingly subjecting detainees to a chaotic game of musical chairs, and it's a game with dire consequences."

Homelessness doubles in N. Orleans

NYT, 12/12 – Households earning between \$20,000 and \$35,000 a year have been priced out of the private market in Orleans Parish, where the gross rents have jumped more than 40 percent between 2004 and 2008....

Area residents are... likely to pay at least half their household incomes on rent and utilities....

With rents so high, no one should be surprised that the homeless population of the New Orleans area appears to have doubled since Hurricane Katrina.... Nearly 6,500 people, many of them elderly and suffering from debilitating illnesses, are living in abandoned buildings.

MORE ITEMS AVAILABLE ONLINE:
www.plp.org

A Lifetime of Struggle for the International Working Class

El Salvador — This is the story of a comrade, an ex-commander in the FMLN guerilla army, who met the PLP through an old ex-fellow combatant with whom he shared many wartime experiences. His old friend related PLP's communist ideas to him, how other workers internationally were organizing in the working class with PLP's line. This gladdened him, but first he began reading CHALLENGE regularly before participating in discussions.

He was invited to several PLP club meetings but decided to take some time before actually joining due to all the experiences described below. Currently he attends meetings punctually. Initially he listened carefully to the analysis. His level of participation and responsibility in the armed struggle and his analysis of current events make him very prudent.

He has brought his wife (another ex-combatant) to recent meetings. He has been very honest and correct politically, open about his contradictions — the illusion in elections and the stages theory of establishing communism, using Cuba's example, and has helped the club to better explain PLP's politics. His subordinates in the war in El Salvador were very approving of his participation in PLP. They asked him to write his history for CHALLENGE and he agreed, saying that he would try to write as honestly as possible about his life and his understanding of PLP's politics:

Part I

I was born in the Department of Morazán. We lived in extreme poverty. In my village there were 85 houses, of tile with wooden walls, with approximately 5 to 8 people per family in each. The situation was critical since we had no income. We lived by planting corn, beans and sorghum.

My father died when I was 3. I grew up alone with my mother who was accompanied by another man. When I was 8 I didn't go to school because I had to work so my family could eat. That's how

most people lived in El Salvador. I made half a colon a day (20¢US). My mother was, and is, very religious. Luckily she still lives with us today.

In 1974 Miguel Ventura came to our village to take charge of the Catholic Parish. I liked how he discussed the bible's themes and related them to our lives. He talked a lot about farm workers and the way our people lived in general.

In 1975, he sent two catechists (lay people who help teach the bible) to explain the gospel. I liked to accompany them. They assigned me, as a community leader, to motivate area youth for this religious movement. One day that year, the idea arose about the necessity to organize around other ideas because the bible alone could not help us. The church then was called "subversive," especially because we exposed the injustice toward the farmworkers and the whole working class in the country.

Through questions about some of the themes in the bible, we understood that we live under a capitalist system that causes tremendous poverty and repression, and that the military only defends the interests of the rich. We then understood that we had to organize ourselves in groups and fight to change the situation. We also understood there were sectors of workers who were already organized.

One sector was Popular Leagues of the 28th of February (LP-28), and another was FAPU. These groups included university students. The right-wing government oppressed the working class, the students and the churches because it saw these groups were organizing to demand their rights. In 1975, through Miguel Ventura, we organized the Revolutionary Peoples' Army (ERP) to which I belonged.

We organized with youth and older people. Our orientation with people was to form committees. This helped us coordinate the movements with both political and military preparation. One theme included topics like the international and national political situation. We also learned to use weapons — pistols, 22-caliber rifles and shotguns some

neighbors owned.

In 1976 the organization asked me and six youth to join the army as infiltrators. Our mission was to learn the army's policies, its military tactics using its different weapons and then to take some weapons and ammunition.

If needed, we could desert with all the assigned equipment, but it was better to stay in the army and serve our time. I served two years and then left with plenty of experience. When I left, my friends asked about everything I had learned about the military and the army's political preparations.

Two months later the armed forces had an operation in our department of Morazán. They came to my house and took me and two other comrades away, detaining us for three days. They tortured me but didn't kill me because they thought that I would give them a lot of information. On the third day they released me but continued to hold my comrades for a year. I went home to tell my mother I was free but that I had to leave because the army would come look for me to kill me. I told my family that when they came for me to say they hadn't heard from me since the day I was captured.

A month later, the organization decided that six of us should go to Nicaragua because the Sandinista Liberation Front was in a critical phase of the war there. They were concentrated in the mountains and preparing to destroy the Somoza government and his army, that it was necessary to gain this useful experience because after Nicaragua was liberated, El Salvador would follow.

I asked when will I leave here and they replied, "This has to be done quickly." Shortly we were in Honduras and then passed to the mountains of Nicaragua. Three of us, including me, were sent to the northern zone at Estelí. The other three were sent to the capital, Managua.

(Next issue: Part II; the battles in Nicaragua and El Salvador and moving from the reformist FMLN to the revolutionary PLP) ✪

Did You Know...

October, 1892 saw the first united strike of black and white workers — three unions of longshoreman, teamsters and transit workers struck in New Orleans for the 10-hour day. Most of the city was brought to a halt, and despite attempts by employers, the press and the government to divide them, the workers remained united and won.

October, 1933 saw the first strike against California cotton growers, uniting 18,000 Latino, black and white workers on 114 miles of picket lines. Two strikers were killed by growers on Oct. 12th. The strikers won a 75% increase.

On January 1, 1904, the Telleride and Cripple Creek, Colorado miners, members of the Western Federation of Miners led by Big Bill Haywood, won a 15-month strike against the 84-hour week and established an 8-hour day. In this violent struggle, 42 workers were killed, 112 wounded, 1,345 imprisoned in concentration camp-like "bullpens" and 773 were deported.

Boeing

continued from p. 8

detailed article. Even this machine operator took extra leaflets for the first time after we explained the crucial importance of multi-racial unity to the working class.

A CHALLENGE reader who normally gives PLP literature to his family said he wasn't going to show this leaflet to his wife because, "She's a big Obama supporter." He, too, changed his mind when he asserted, "Obama is no dummy; he knows what he's doing."

"Besides, that's what we have to do: get people

to confront these issues," he added, preparing himself for the long, sharp struggle ahead.

The bosses and their government agents have their necessities; we have ours. The bosses aren't waiting till the end of the contract: neither can we. We must build unity — black, Latino, Asian, Native American and white, union and non-union, women and men — with LA subcontractors and southern aerospace-corridor workers. And we must start fight-backs here against the racist rip-offs. Most importantly, we have to continue to build a movement that can deal this corporate fascism a fatal blow with communist revolution for workers' power. ✪

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