

CHALLENGE



THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

Union Sellouts in Bed with Boeing: WORKERS' POWER IS OUR ONLY FUTURE



SEATTLE, WA, October 14 — The six-week strike by 27,000 Machinists against Boeing looks as intractable as ever after talks between the International Association of Machinists (IAM) and the company broke down, just a day after they resumed. There is tremendous anger among the rank and file who are holding the line in a very solid strike. Financial problems are weighing heavily on many as the worldwide capitalist financial meltdown forces the realization of how serious this struggle has become.

It's reaching a point among some workers where discussion of revolution becomes much more logical. This was revealed in how workers answer the union hacks' red-baiting. When the misleaders see CHALLENGE and PLP leaflets being handed out, they say, "we don't want that crap here," to which a worker retorted right in front of the sellouts, "I read that paper, give one here!" Discussion of revolution follows. The hacks end up being isolated.

The latest deal-breaker involved outsourcing jobs of workers who deliver parts to the assembly line. Mobilizing the might of a united working class is the only way to break through this logjam.

The union agreed to allow suppliers to enter Boeing plants and deliver their parts to receiving areas beside the assembly line, work now performed by IAM members. The union insists, however, that those jobs — inventorying, tracking and dispersing these parts — remain in the IAM, now and in the future.

The company discussed protecting current IAM members in these categories from layoffs during the three-year life of the contract, but refused to guarantee these 2,000 positions would remain as union jobs over the long haul.

"Once we work out this 'job security' stuff, all the rest will fall into place," said international aerospace coordinator and head negotiator Mark Blondin. But don't hold your breath; his definition of job security and any real-world security are miles apart.

CEO Is Serious About Fascist Economic Regime

These latest negotiations began as Boeing CEO James McNerney outlined his vision of corporate fascism in the now infamous "Monday memo" issued last week. Citing the "ongoing turmoil in the financial markets," this three-page internal letter mirrors the U.S. ruling class' plan to re-industrialize through racist super-exploitation in the subcontractor factories. When he talks about "flexibility to run their business in the face of intense global competition," he means using these racist attacks on subcontractor workers as leverage to attack employees in the traditional union plants as well.

He "see[s] tremendous pressure coming from " competitors like Airbus and emerging aerospace powers like Russia, Japan, Canada, Brazil and, in particular, China. He then attacked our "track record of repeated [strikes]," vow-

ing to "change this dynamic."

"U.S. auto companies, for one, fatally wounded themselves by promising unsustainable wage and benefit levels...and job guarantees," he continues. Explaining why the company cut off negotiations, Boeing spokesman, Tim Healy, put it even more bluntly. "No company can guarantee jobs," he admitted. In other words, a decent life under capitalism is unsustainable. A system that can't sustain a decent life doesn't deserve to continue.

McNerney failed to mention that his buddy on the Boeing Board, Edward Liddy, just got an additional \$35 billion from the Feds, on top of \$85 billion in the last two weeks, to rescue the insurance giant AIG from its speculative excesses. Nothing the strikers are asking for even approaches this sum. The joke on the picket lines is that we should change our name to AIG. Then the bosses would throw money at us, instead of trying to starve us into submission.

The pro-capitalist union leaders' answer to McNerney's memo was pathetic. They scurried to Boeing Commercial Airplanes Chief Executive Scott Carson to reaffirm their support of the company's global subcontracting regime. They pleaded for a few "ancillary [related] jobs at local factories" to remain in the IAM. Even throwing our class brothers and sisters in the subcontractors to the wolves doesn't seem enough to keep these class collaborators in business.

Communist Ideas: The Alternative To Fascist Capitulation

In stark contrast to the company's fascism and the union's capitulation, stands Progressive Labor Party-led organizing and literature. On average, more than a thousand strikers have read CHALLENGE every issue throughout this strike. We've distributed thousands of additional Party leaflets advocating mobilizing the united might of the working class. The latest called for anti-racist, international unity with subcontractor workers, mass picket lines and production for need under communism as the only real-world answer to the bosses' divide-and-conquer strategy. "Workers' power is our only security," it declared.

A relatively smaller group of strikers who regularly read CHALLENGE have met every week throughout the strike to put these ideas into practice. Some sell the paper as well; more should! We have scheduled dinners during and after the strike (whenever that is) aimed at asking strikers and supporters throughout the city to buy subscriptions to CHALLENGE, and join PLP.

The mass sales and distribution of communist literature — and the mostly positive response of strikers — have inspired our friends at these meetings to have a more bold approach to organizing their fellow strikers around anti-racist unity (not to mention, giving the sellouts fits!).

One reader wrote a "thank you" note to L.A. subcon-

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U.S. Rulers' Biggest Bailout Scheme: Global War

U.S. capitalists are finding it extraordinarily difficult to organize their way out of the worsening global economic crisis they created. The most powerful sections of the ruling class are beginning to assert themselves by either taking over smaller, failing banks and companies or eliminating them. This will enable the top financiers to control the entire banking system and enforce their long-term strategy of fascism at home and war abroad to protect their oil empire. All the out-of-control profiteers seeking short-term gains are now being disciplined, to follow the top guns or fall by the wayside.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Paulson's original bailout bill couldn't make it through a rebellious Congress and the remake failed to inspire investors and contributed to Wall Street's worst week since 1933. "Some \$8.4 trillion has been lost from US stock markets in the past year." (Times of London, 10/12/08)

Another failed cure was Paulson's decision to let Lehman Brothers go under. Rather than cleanse the investment banking system, the move worsened the situation. Wall Street investment giants Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley and Merrill Lynch have all had to find new ways to exist.

Even a massive bailout from Washington may not save General Motors as an independent company, it having launched merger talks with Ford and Chrysler. Tens of thousands of auto jobs are at risk, on top of the 750,000 jobs lost overall this year.

MEGA-MONEY BOYS SOROS, BUFFETT, BLOOMBERG TAKE CHARGE

But economic chaos and destruction represent only one side of the coin. While the bosses appear to be losing control, the biggest U.S. capitalists, those with major stakes in U.S. imperialism, are in fact tightening their economic and political grip. Billionaire George Soros — who bankrolls anti-Russian regimes in Eastern Europe and urges anti-China "intervention" in Tibet and Darfur — helped steer a big shift in the bailout policy.

The New York Times reported (10/12): "Two weeks after persuading Congress to let it spend \$700 billion to buy distressed securities tied to mortgages, the Bush administration has put that idea aside in favor of a new approach that would have the government inject capital directly into the nation's banks — in effect, partially nationalizing the industry."

On Oct. 1st, Soros had written in London's Financial Times, "Instead of just purchasing troubled assets the bulk of the funds ought to be used to recapitalize the banking system." Nationalizing the banks helps imperialists like Soros & Co. control capital and channel it to their own, increasingly military, needs to maintain U.S. rulers' super-power status. That the Soros position prevailed over both Bush and the Congress reveals the true nature of state power. As Lenin said ninety years ago, politicians are ruled by finance capital.

Financier Warren Buffett, Forbes Magazine's "Richest Man on the Planet," is another master of U.S. capitalism's rapidly evolving new universe. Buffett, an ally of the Rockefeller-led Eastern Estab-

Henry Kissinger. Others were J.P. Morgan Chase chief James Dimon, Goldman boss Lloyd Blankfein, and financier Wilbur Ross. The latter is bent on safeguarding U.S. industries like coal, steel, and textiles, all crucial to the manufacture of weapons, tanks, warplanes, troop uniforms and gear, and all the other ingredients of modern warfare.

GLOBAL WAR: OBAMA, MCCAIN AGREE ON GOAL, DIFFER ON APPROACH

Stopgap measures like bailouts, buy-ups, and partial nationalization can only bring a mix of successes and setbacks to U.S. rulers. Their imperialist wing, however, eyes the Big Bailout, top-to-bottom militarization for global war with rivals like Russia and China. Liberal Robert Reich, Clinton's Labor Secretary, let that cat out of the bag in an October 9 NY Times column.

Encouraging broad federal spending to counter the current crisis, Reich said, "the government will probably have to run deficits to keep the economy going anywhere near capacity, a lesson the nation learned when mobilization for World War II finally lifted us out of the Great Depression." That's when the mass unemployment of the 1930's — 17 million jobless in a 50-million workforce — was "solved" by drafting 14 million into the military.

Candidate Obama vows to put millions to work — in low-wage jobs — in New Deal-style programs to rebuild strategic infrastructure. His call to reinvigorate the nation economically serves the rulers' war agenda even better than McCain's openly militarist appeal.



"Capitalists can buy themselves out of any crisis, so long as they make the workers pay," said Lenin.

lishment, has a big say in who survives the current carnage. He just threw multi-billion-dollar lifelines to two of U.S. imperialism's flagships, worldwide deal-maker Goldman Sachs and arms maker General Electric.

Known for having a long-term outlook, Buffett recently invested heavily in U.S. railroads. Though not very lucrative at present, Buffett's railroads will prove indispensable in mobilizing for global war and are beginning large-scale infrastructure rebuilding. Without an efficient rail system, it becomes very difficult to move large number of troops, supplies and weapons coast to coast.

Buffett is also the largest single owner of Wells Fargo, which bested Citigroup in its attempt to seize Wachovia, saddled with toxic subprime mortgages.

Wall Street darling Bloomberg's bid for a currently illegal third term as New York mayor serves the same imperialist capital-concentrating purpose. On October 2, thirty ruling class big shots published an Open Letter in the NY Times urging lawmakers to "extend term limits [to three terms] in order to give New Yorkers the opportunity for whomever [sic] they think can do the best job during these tough economic times, including our current mayor."

The signers included ultra-imperialists like David Rockefeller and his war criminal henchman

The rulers well know that most U.S. workers and GIs in World War II did not back the McCain-like, patriotic, right-wing "America First" line. Opposed to Hitler's fascism, they bought into "The American Way of Life," Roosevelt's promise of state-sponsored post-war prosperity. This built the illusion that "reformed" capitalism can guarantee a decent life and tie workers to the profit system. Obama hopes to revive that illusion.

Neither economic crisis nor voting can eliminate the class dictatorship finance capitalists blatantly flaunt every day. Only communist revolution can because it abolishes profits, bosses and their wage slavery system and puts the workers in control of state power, guaranteeing our class — which produces all value — will share the fruits of our labors.

The profit system's crisis, with its wholesale attack on workers' wages, pensions, housing and healthcare, its racist super-exploitation of black and Latino workers, opens up limitless opportunities for communists to expose the anti-working-class nature of capitalism.

However, no matter how low capitalism sinks, it will not topple itself as long as the bosses hold their ace-in-the-hole — state power. That's why the revolutionary communist PLP must be built and win workers to bury capitalism in the garbage heap of history.✪

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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Troops, Cops, Tanks and Copters Can't Crush Morelos Teachers' Strike

MORELOS, Mexico, Oct. 10 — For several days over 2,000 Army troops and state and federal cops, using tanks and helicopters, viciously attacked teachers, parents (many of them indigenous) and other supporters blocking a national highway. Some 24,000 teachers in this state have been striking for two months against a government "reform" called Alliance for Quality Education that aims to privatize schools and intensify attacks on working conditions teachers have won through many decades of struggles.

The teachers are not only fighting the repressive arm of the bosses' state but also the "mother of all union sellouts," Elba Esther Gordillo. She is "President for life" of the SNTE (National Teachers' Union), a Senator and firm supporter of the government of Felipe Calderón.

The militant teachers and supporters have also repudiated all the bosses' parties, burning electoral propaganda of the PAN, the ruling Party, the PRI (which ruled Mexico for 60 years) and the so-called pro-people PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution).

The teachers and their supporters fought against the military-cop attack even after being forced off the highway, battling the cops and troops from side streets. The rulers sent more reinforcements. Helicopters launched tear gas against protesters. Homes were raided and numerous arrests made, with many injured.

It was another major class battle workers and their allies waged against the capitalist dictatorship ruling Mexico. In the last several years, similar struggles occurred during the massive strike and popular uprising led by teachers in Oaxaca and by striking miners who repelled a massive attack by cops and troops.

During this battle, teachers and supporters marched from three different places and rallied at

a major square to oppose the assault. Contingents of teachers from Oaxaca, Mexico City, Michoacán and Guerrero joined the demonstration.

On Oct. 8, in Mexico City thousands of teachers from 17 different regions marched to the Secretary of Education headquarters opposing the educational "reform" and denouncing the violent attack against teachers in Morelos. The marchers stopped at the Interior Ministry, ripped down fences surrounding the building and fought federal cops. They then set up a permanent "plantón" (picket line) at the Secretary of Education.

Some PLP teachers and friends from Oaxaca have gone to Morelos to support fellow teachers there, bringing our communist literature to them. Marches have been held in Oaxaca to support the struggle in Morelos. A national teachers' strike is now pending and should become a general strike of the entire working class.

These militant actions take place amid the global capitalist economic earthquake which is hitting Mexico very hard since it is tied to the U.S. economy. The recent drop in oil prices and the decreased funds sent to Mexico from immigrants in the U.S. — who have lost their jobs because of the U.S. recession — have worsened the economic crisis here. Even the fortune of Carlos Slim, one of the world's richest capitalists, has been cut in half because of



losses in the local and international stock market.

Only the drug cartel business is prospering here, producing a violent war for the control of the drug profits involving different sections of the ruling class and their corrupt politicians and cops.

PLP teachers, workers and students must redouble our efforts to bring our revolutionary communist politics to the masses of workers and their allies who are experiencing the violent dictatorship of the bourgeois "democratic" state over the working class. DESAFIO must become a key ideological tool in this important task of turning the anger of workers and their allies into a mass revolutionary storm to destroy capitalism.

Teachers, students and workers in the U.S. should stand in solidarity with Mexico's striking teachers, raising support in their unions and mass organizations.✊

Anti-Racist Unity Key to Stella D'Oro Strike

City Univ. Staff Backs Bakery Workers

BRONX, NY — Chants of "No Contract, No Cookies!" and "Stella, Stella, Stella, we are Stella!" rang out from 135 members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union (BCTWGM) Local 50. These workers have been on strike since August 13 in reaction to the drastic, concessionary demands of their bosses. Brynwood Partners, the new owners of Stella D'Oro, are demanding the elimination of holidays, vacation and sick pay, requiring large healthcare premiums and calling for wage reductions in each year of the new contract.

Members of the Professional Staff Congress-CUNY (PSC) in the Bronx were well received when we joined the picket lines and offered our support. The president of BCTWGM Local 50 addressed a packed chapter meeting of PSC members. She reported that the strikers were 100% solid on the line and that they were committed to continue the fight, despite scabs in the plant and threatening letters from management. We passed the hat and made plans to support the bakers.

A week later, the citywide Delegate Assembly of PSC discussed and passed a resolution in support of the bakers. A delegate pointed out that while the Stella strike was different than the Boeing strike where tens of thousands were out, the struggles contained similar elements. One of the issues at Boeing is the loss of jobs due to the contracting out of work to non-union shops where mostly immigrant workers are paid a fraction of the pay unionized workers receive. At Stella, the Brynwood managers sent letters to workers telling them to quit their union and return to work at poverty wages. In both cases the owners are trying to drastically decrease wages.

While most PSC activists are sympathetic to the Stella strikers, there is disagreement as to how much of an effort our union can and should make to support the strike. Many feel overwhelmed by the financial crisis and upcoming budget cuts and feel that we should focus on our own problems.

PLP has always said that when workers fight their bosses we must support them vigorously, no matter how big or small the struggle. Helping these workers is not simply "charity." The bosses use racism to prevent other workers from joining these mostly black and Latin workers in their fight, allowing for their super-exploitation. We must fight this by creating multi-racial unity in this and every fight against the bosses.

Only by uniting with other members of the working class can we build the fight for workers to fight back to end exploitation and the capitalist system. Workers and students from around the New York area should join the Stella workers on the line. Bring your friends and signs of support. Donate money and canned goods. Let us build solidarity and fight to win! ✊

Strikers Defy Cops, Stand Fast

BRONX, NY, October 9 — Bronx, NY, October 9 — "This is a great article," said a Stella D'Oro striker (Local 50, Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union) as he and others read the CHALLENGE article supporting their strike.

"Scabs. That's who they have working in there. There is only one supervisor in there now who knows anything about the job. All the workers who know how to make cookies, including the guy who runs the computer, are out here with us," another striker told PLP members and friends when we joined them on the picket line today. The scabs not only don't know how to make cookies, but more importantly, they don't realize that they are helping their own enemies. They simply see this as a chance to earn a few dollars. They don't understand that the Stella D'Oro strike can give all workers an example of how we can unite to fight back against our bosses.

One striker explained, "they [Stella D'Oro and other bosses] just want to bust the unions and stop people from fighting back. The cops have harassed us off and on. At times they have tried to shut down our picket line." They removed the shelter used to protect the strikers from the weather and ordered the removal of all chairs from their strike site.

"But we are still here," added another. Counting on fear, the bosses had expected strikers to run scared, give up and accept their fascist contract which cuts sick days, vacation days and wages (see October 15 CHALLENGE for more details). Instead, after nearly two months the strikers are still united, angry and determined to keep fighting.

PLP'ers asked some strikers to come to the October 15 UFT (United Federation of Teachers) Delegate Assembly where we will try to raise strike support. We also invited strikers to speak at the October 18 PLP forum on the elections.

All workers have a lot to learn from the Stella D'Oro strikers, including how they are sticking together, black, white, Latino, Asian, native-born and immigrant to fight back. This anti-racist unity terrifies the bosses who depend on racism to divide workers. All of us must carry this fight to the point of uniting the entire working class to get rid of all the bosses and their capitalist system and build a system run by the working class for the working class. ✊

Sellout Unions Battle for ‘Right’ to Screw Rebellious Hospital Workers

CHICAGO, IL October 9 – Cook County health care workers are in open rebellion against the SEIU union leadership. Class hatred has been brewing since SEIU defended County President Todd Stroger and his racist hatchet man Dr. Simon, as they closed half the health clinics that served more than one million uninsured workers in 2007. It cost us over 2,000 jobs and 100,000 fewer patient visits. This was a blatantly racist attack as 82% of our patients, and most of the workers, are black, Latin and Asian.

Now “safety-net” hospitals, like Michael Reese are closing. And with the current Wall Street meltdown, things are going to get a lot worse. Workers are under attack from the racist profit system that is expanding its trillion-dollar oil war in Iraq-Afghanistan-Pakistan, carrying out racist terror immigration raids, eliminating the second shift at the Chicago Ford Assembly Plant next month and having made one-out-of-every-four CTA bus drivers unable to support their families on new part-time schedules.

Just as politicians and preachers try to misdirect rebellions against police terror, and the IAM union leaders try to control the 5-week strike of 27,000 Boeing workers, misleaders are channeling this rebellion into a campaign to replace SEIU with the

Caregivers Healthcare Employees Union (CHEU), led by the California Nurses’ Association (CNA). The struggle between the two unions has been growing around the country and has led to hundreds of SEIU members crashing a banquet at the Labor Notes

No matter who wins the White House, the racist rulers will need trillions more to expand their oil wars and rescue Wall Street

conference in Detroit last spring. One SEIU member died of a heart attack in the melee.

In part, this is AFL-CIO President John Sweeney’s revenge after his protégé Andy Stern led SEIU and a dozen other unions out of the labor federation two years ago. They smell weakness at Cook County and are spending lots of money to defeat SEIU, including nightly catered dinners for the workers at a nearby hotel.

Petitions have been filed with the Illinois Labor Board (ILB) for elections in all four bargaining units.

In response, County bosses are trying to buy SEIU some votes by finally paying the upgrade we “won” in the last contract, almost four years ago. It’s unlikely the \$14 “upgrade” will put down the rebellion.

While the mutiny of workers at Stroger Hospital and other County facilities is good, trading one set of pro-capitalist union leaders for another will only lead to disappointment, especially in the midst of widening war and deepening economic crises. The real lasting victory will be increasing the readership of CHALLENGE and recruiting new members to PLP who will help build a revolution to replace this exploitative system.

No matter who wins the White House, the racist rulers will need trillions more to expand their oil wars and rescue Wall Street. A struggle against racist unemployment guided by communist politics, that unites County, CTA and Ford workers with immigrant workers and unemployed youth can build the revolutionary communist PLP and open the door to revolution! ☸

Boeing Strike

continued from front page

tractor workers who have supported our strike. Building on the Party’s success distributing CHALLENGE, he organized a small group of strikers to “hit” the strike-check distribution centers to publicly get signatures on it. The hacks backed off as friends and strangers alike signed.

It inspired us all to see our friends — who had never done anything like this before — develop convincing arguments to win their fellow strikers to this modest show of anti-racist working-class unity. Eventually we hope to personally present this “thank you” to subcontractor workers.

Last week, these CHALLENGE readers collectively prepared an answer to McNerney’s vision of corporate fascism — which really proved the validity of PLP’s politics — to be posted on the internet. This week we are discussing how to expand our modest attempts at class solidarity to industrial factories nation-wide. The situation calls for mass picketing, which could really up the ante. There is talk of going to other local unions and student groups, not only for support resolutions but for other workers and students to join the picket lines, as well as to force the union to organize such mass action.

Modest as these efforts are, they represent the only way forward. The company and the union misleaders are thinking about the long haul, not just the life of this three-year contract. So, too, do those of us more dedicated to the revolutionary potential of our class, with the communist vision of eliminating this profit system.

GLOBAL CRISIS WEIGHS ON STRIKERS’ MINDS, LEADS TO DISCUSSION OF REVOLUTION

“My family says the government is lying to us,” said a shop steward at the last strike-check distribution. His extended family lives in Detroit. “They say we’re already in a depression. I honestly didn’t see this global depression/recession coming. Look



how big this has become!”

“So what comes after a global depression?” asked our comrade.

“I hate to think about it,” said this new CHALLENGE reader, “but the last time world war followed.”

The conversation then turned back to McNerney’s memo and how the CEO seems to be setting us up for just such a scenario. After this introduction, our subsequent discussion about the necessity for communist revolution seemed to fit right in.

McNerney’s fascist memo ends, “Our Company is strongest when all of us — union and non-union alike — are lined up together, working...against our competitors.” He got the middle right, but the beginning and end set us up for the kill. Instead, we should say, “Our class, the working class, is strongest when all of us — union and non-union alike — are lined up together working against our common enemies: the union sellouts, the international bosses and their racist, imperialist capitalist system.”☸

Expose Obama/ Spike Lee Drive to Win Youth to Fight Bosses’ Oil Wars

About 35 people, mostly high school students, came to a dinner-forum about the election, the economic crisis and the Boeing strike. After a clear presentation showing that Obama and McCain were both financed by big bankers and both support wider war, there was a very lively discussion. A student who went to support Boeing workers told about the militancy of the strikers and their openness to CHALLENGE. He invited the rest to help distribute it at factories and demonstrate in support of Boeing strikers.

The discussion emphasized how, while both McCain and Obama are capitalist politicians, Obama appeals to our friends who are angry about racism and attacks on education, health care and jobs. U.S. imperialism is in crisis. Preparations are being made for wider war. The bosses need to win young people to fight in this war, and an important goal of Obama’s candidacy is winning young people to support this system.

A comrade mentioned the new Spike Lee movie, “Miracle at St. Anna” as an example of this. In an interview in the 9/25/08 Los Angeles Times, Lee says, “It [the election of Obama as the first African American president] is going to happen,(and) I think that that is a sign of the greatness of this country” and uses a scene from the movie to make his point. Bishop [a black soldier in the movie] asks, ‘Why are we here? This is not our war.’ And Stamps [another black soldier] answers, ‘I am doing this for the future. I am doing this for my children.’” Both the movie and the Obama campaign are all about trying to win youth and workers to see the coming inter-imperialist war for profits as “our war.”

Many students at the forum pledged to expose the election as the bosses’ campaign to sucker young people into fighting against their class brothers and sisters in the Middle East. Many also pledged to help support the Boeing strike. They also took extra CHALLENGES, and asked when the next meeting was. The only war which is, in reality, “OUR WAR” is the revolutionary war which will put the working class in power and enable us to build a communist society. And we’re not waiting for a miracle — we’re taking steps now to make this a reality. ☸

Belgian General Strike Blasts Bailout Assault on Workers

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM, October 6 — The financial meltdown of world capitalism is prompting workers to fight back, refusing to pay for the bosses' crisis. Today's general strike here was "a warning to the government and the bosses." Workers paid no heed to rulers' pleas "not to aggravate" the shaky economic situation. Instead, workers here set an example for workers internationally by taking the offensive.

Workers are demanding no wage-cuts, a higher minimum wage, equal benefits for young workers, government action to reduce the cost of trips between home and the workplace, higher welfare benefits, and lower taxes on workers and higher taxes on the rich and the corporations.

The strike shut the country's major factories, such as Audi (auto) and Sonaca (aeronautics) in the Brussels area and the Charleroi steel mills. Work stoppages and workers' on-the-job mass assemblies hit banks and superstores. Teachers struck nation-wide, as did postal workers and workers in national and local governments. Some cities (like Sambreville) decided to close "in a show of solidarity" rather than be shut by municipal workers.

Antwerp and Bruges, in Flemish-speaking regions, ground to a halt, as did Charleroi and Liège in French-speaking areas. The subway, trams and buses in Brussels — Belgium's capital and the seat

of the major European Union institutions — were all at a standstill. Practically no trains were running, disrupting both domestic traffic and travel to Amsterdam, Cologne and Paris.

On June 6, 100,000 workers had demonstrated in Brussels demanding the government take emergency measures to defend their purchasing power. Since then only prices have risen: food up 7.9%; electricity up 20%; natural gas up 50%; and heating oil up 59%.

The Belgian bosses' answer to that demonstration was a new round of downsizing, repeated attacks on such public services as education, transport and health care, an attempt to impose a wage freeze and to make any improvement in welfare benefits dependent on a reduction in the corporate tax rate.

However, the power of the workers is being derailed by the leadership of the three major unions, the socialist FGTB, the Christian CSC, and the liberal CGSLB, which only want to influence the government's proposed budget, scheduled for



October 14.

In this period of global crisis and endless wars, the bosses — even if they give workers some crumbs — will try to take them away as soon as possible. The best victory workers can gain from these struggles is to turn them into schools for communism, forging the revolutionary leadership needed to fight for real workers' power: communism. ☸

Anti-Immigrant Raids Attack on All Workers

GREENVILLE, S.C., October 7 — The Gestapo-like immigration police (Immigration and Customs Enforcement — ICE) has struck terror again, raiding the Columbia Farms poultry plant today and arresting 330 immigrant workers. Some 450 ICE agents started the raid at the 9:00 AM shift-change, breaking up families and leaving children without their parents.

They burst in like Nazi storm troopers, terrorizing workers. Similar to previous mass raids in a Laurel, Miss. electronics plant and an Iowa meat-processing plant, the agents blocked the gates to prevent workers from escaping. They then separated workers, giving blue wristbands to U.S. citizens and immigrants with resident cards, enabling them to leave.

Today we see the biggest anti-immigrant attacks "since the dragnet-style sweeps of the 1950s known as 'Operation Wetback.' On any given day, more than 30,000 'illegal' immigrants are crowded into jail cells awaiting deportation. Annual deportations now exceed a quarter million, the highest level in U.S. history... This year there have been nearly 5,000 arrests, 10 times the level of just five years ago." (Edward Alden, NY Post, 10/12). The claimed aim of the raids is to catch people guilty of I.D. thefts and those working without "proper documents." But as Alden says, "the raids are conducted in headline-grabbing fashion designed to incite fear among other undocumented workers."

The real aim is to terrorize immigrant and all workers to work for less and under rotten conditions, in order to produce super-profits for the bosses. So this is basically a terror attack against the entire working class. The same methods ICE is using today will be directed against any workers fighting for their jobs or for decent conditions, particularly in this age of economic meltdown.

The rulers are already preparing for any major fight-back against their economic crisis. The 3rd Infantry's 1st Brigade Combat Team is returning from Iraq to be used as "an on-call federal response force for...emergencies." (Army Times, 9/8)

Workers who support such raids, thinking they "will preserve jobs for Americans," are not only fooling themselves but betraying their interests and those of the entire working class. ☸

Public Health Workers Can't Count on Obama

Over 10,000 public health workers will meet in San Diego for this year's American Public Health Association (APHA) convention. The theme is "Health Care Without Borders." The meeting occurs amid a global capitalist crisis and a growing trend towards fascism and world war.

APHA leaders will try to convince us to work quietly in our clinics and labs and not challenge the vicious out-of-control capitalist system. Last fall, the reality of anti-immigrant racism was dramatized when wildfires in the San Diego area burned undocumented immigrant workers to death as they made their way from the Mexican border, hiding from racist immigration agents in a wooded area.

APHA's theory differs sharply from its practice. Its Governing Council has adopted resolutions against the Afghanistan and Iraq wars but every year military recruiters and billion-dollar defense contractors have lavish exhibits at the meeting. Attempts to exclude them were squashed by Executive Director Dr. Georges Benjamin, the former Director of Emergency Medicine at Walter Reed Army Hospital.

After 9/11, APHA leaders tried to tighten federal control over public health, coordinating with the Department of Homeland Security. Benjamin's Washington-based APHA staff has consistently supported federal efforts to bring the public health workforce into line with the "national security" agenda but rank-and-file workers and students resisted.

This year, despite the pro-immigrant theme and the meeting's location adjacent to Mexico, no anti-racist action is planned. Meanwhile U.S. government anti-immigrant racism gives the green light to gutter racists like the Minutemen, APHA could fight this. Imagine 10,000 public health workers picketing the racist border fence in San Diego!

The convention meets just days before the presidential election. Most public health workers deplore the terrible toll racism takes on the health of black, Latino and immigrant workers. The vast majority of APHA members support Obama for president. They view an election of a black president as striking a blow against racism. But just as selection of Dr. Benjamin, a prominent black health figure as APHA's Executive Director did not stop

ELECTIONS
UNDER THE SHADOW OF
IMPERIALIST WARS
PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY ON THE 2008 U.S. ELECTIONS



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racist cutbacks and hospital closings nation-wide, electing Obama will not lessen the systemic racist attacks against exploited and uninsured workers. He promises to expand the Iraq war into Pakistan and carry out the bankers' orders to resolve the financial crisis.

A better world for the people and communities we serve will require more than a different defender of capitalism. It requires a different SYSTEM, communism, led by the international working class that produces everything.

On Obama's Chicago South Side, 13 health clinics were closed in 2007, affecting more than one million uninsured workers in Cook County. More than 80% of County patients are black and Latino. In Washington, D.C., the White House is surrounded by a racist AIDS epidemic that rivals any super-exploited country. Either we will serve the people or the bankers. It will soon become clearer who Obama serves. It must become clearer who we serve as well. ☸

LETTERS



Boeing Striker on Bosses: ‘Hang ’em all!’

We went to Seattle to support the Boeing strike bringing communist politics to the picket line. All the workers we talked to wanted the CHALLENGE, except for a couple of union hacks. There was tremendous anger at Boeing, the bankers and the IAM leaders. Very few defended capitalism. “Hang ’em [the bosses] all,” was a common refrain.

At one picket line, while a couple of union hacks made some anti-communist statements to CHALLENGE sellers, next to them a worker who had read the paper before was eager to talk. He said, “We’re all serfs.”

“Well, actually if we were serfs, we’d have a plot of land and grow food,” I replied. “We’d have to give most to the lord and have some to keep for ourselves. We’re workers with nothing to sell but our labor power.” He agreed and laughed at the point that, “If we were serfs then we’d grow food during this strike.” We talked about how capitalism created one international working class forced to work for a wage, how subcontractor workers in LA and in the south are also exploited by Boeing and how we need to unite as one class and get rid of the bosses. He gladly took the paper in front of the union hacks. He told us where other picket lines were and encouraged us to go there as well.

In a conversation at lunch the next day a CHALLENGE reader shop steward explained the hypocrisy of Boeing promising that in the face of contracting out work, the union has the “right” to bid on the jobs. “That’s impossible,” he said. “We don’t determine manpower. We can’t send a group of workers to do a job that’s slated to be contracted out.”

It’s time to build a mass PLP, to fight for workers to run society so that the vast potential of the international working class will be used to fight and produce for our own class’ needs. In a communist society, workers from all over will be welcomed to help meet the needs of our class, without wages, racist divisions or inequality. The growth of CHALLENGE among industrial workers is a step toward this life and death goal

Red Supporter on the Picket Lines

‘Service Nation’ Masks Obama-McCain War Draft

Along with fellow students and teachers from my PLP club, I recently participated in a demonstration at Columbia University against a National Service summit sponsored by “ServiceNation.” Both Obama and McCain presented their plans to launch a broad national post-election service campaign.

Our signs read, “Oppose McBama’s Imperialist Agenda”; “The election is a puppet show; cut the strings”; and, “ServiceNation is a Smokescreen for Military Recruitment.” Columbia students and others approached us with genuine interest in why we were opposing elections and calling Obama imperialist. We had in-depth conversations about changing society and addressed many systemic problems before us. We also distributed copies of the PLP election pamphlet and CHALLENGE. There were also several people who gave us cold stares, reminding us that liberal ideology can be viciously anti-communist and foreshadowing the climate under a possible Obama presidency.

Only a small audience was allowed inside to hear the candidates. The school erected a giant video screen in the quadrangle and over 1,000 students listened and applauded enthusiastically.

Upon returning home, I watched interviews with the candidates on C-Span. When interviewer Leslie Stahl asked Obama if he would consider extending better quality, military-style benefits to civilians who went abroad into countries who were hostile to the U.S., he said that was part of his national service plan and that he would consider it.

Thus, U.S. rulers are planning to use unarmed civilians (in an expanded Peace Corps-style program) as propaganda tools for U.S. imperialism. Further, they’re planning to offer material incentives to convince them, and they expect casualties.

Workers and other PLP members need to struggle with friends and expose national service plans.

Even if Obama loses the election, he said he plans to build a mass, non-profit national service organization. This indicates that the bosses are dead serious about “enlisting” us as much more active co-conspirators in their inter-imperialist struggles with their rivals. We must struggle with workers inside these organizations to categorically reject patriotic allegiance to countries (actually to its bosses) and wholeheartedly embrace service to the international working class. That’s true service: communism.

Intent on Serving the Working Class

Talking Communism with Stella D’Oro Strikers

Our new PLP study-action group of young people and teachers visited striking Stella D’Oro workers (see page 3) who are showing amazing strength and resilience against bosses’ sharp attacks on their livelihoods. This was the first time several of our leafletters, put forward communist politics publicly. “It made me come out of my shell,” said one youth, whose mother had encouraged her to “be more independent” and “be a leader.”

When a scab exited the factory, we confronted him in a heated exchange and refused to back down when he physically threatened us. The workers rose up in one powerful chorus when he dismissively said, “I didn’t come here to take anyone’s job.”

Bosses try to convince scabs they’re just taking care of themselves, but scabbing is a vicious and divisive attack on a united working class fighting for its needs.

Our best conversations involved talking to workers about communism. When we first asked these friendly workers what they thought of our politics, a few said, “Oh, we don’t want communism.” But as we explored what a communist society really means, and showed how the old communist movement made fatal mistakes in building socialism instead of communism, we made progress, showing them that they’ve been lied to by the bosses’ educational system and media, and that PLP is a serious party offering a well-thought-out alternative.

These were important steps in building our local collective, struggling with young people to lead in the class struggle. The bosses’ schools offer these youth “public service” opportunities which are deceptive and insult their potential as leaders while ultimately propping up capitalism.

We are struggling with these young people to immerse themselves in the bosses’ mass organizations while simultaneously emphasizing that only a revolutionary communist movement can provide true leadership opportunities to build a mass movement for their class, for the interests of workers worldwide.

Red Students and Teachers

Ayers No Radical, Just ‘Establishment’ Liberal

The McCain-Palin campaign is attacking Obama for his relationship with Bill Ayers, a former leading member of the Weathermen and today an educator guru linked to the Chicago Democratic Party machine. Ayers went from one form of reformism to another, all the time serving the interests of today’s biggest terrorists: the U.S. bosses.

The following letter was sent to the NY Times by two former members of Students For a Democratic Society’s Worker-Student Alliance caucus, something the Times will probably never print.

Please stop calling Bill Ayers a radical. He deems the term. We are former members of the Students For A Democratic Society (SDS), U.S. history’s largest student movement (which Ayers helped to destroy) and are still radicals today. There was never anything radical about born-to-wealth Bill Ayers. He opposed the radical “going-to-the-root” of social problems. In 1969, Ayers’

“Weathermen” sought to replace a movement of people organizing for freedom, equality and peace with authoritarian mis-leadership and bombs. Then, he was a liberal with explosives.

Today, he’s a foundation-funded liberal as Mayor Richard Dailey’s endorsement demonstrates. His tiny sect was the Mussolini-like “action-faction,” celebrating irrationalism, drugs and exploitative sex, pandering to the nationalisms of the day. They held most people in the world in utter contempt. Before the biggest outpouring of student activism in the last century, the Weathermen destroyed the SDS mailing list, leaving the movement with no center.

Those of us in SDS who opposed the Weathermen and who did not abandon grassroots struggles for worldwide justice, know him for what he is. That Ayers supports liberal Obama, who promises wider wars and is poised to oversee “national socialism,” is no surprise.

Workers Need Class Analysis

With all the media hand-wringing over how investment houses, banks, insurance groups, real estate brokers and lawyers could sign off on the hundreds of billions in bogus housing loans which they knew could never be re-paid, I haven’t yet heard anyone suggest that Wall Street was just following the federal government’s policy of going \$11 trillion in debt (mostly spent on wars and military) for which they had no credit. Whether the rulers decide to use taxpayers’ money to buy up the worthless loans and allow the same crooks to continue business (robbery) as usual or if they make regulations and penalties to limit some of the biggest gougers, the fact remains that our capitalist system is structured so that it must continue to exploit and steal from workers to survive.

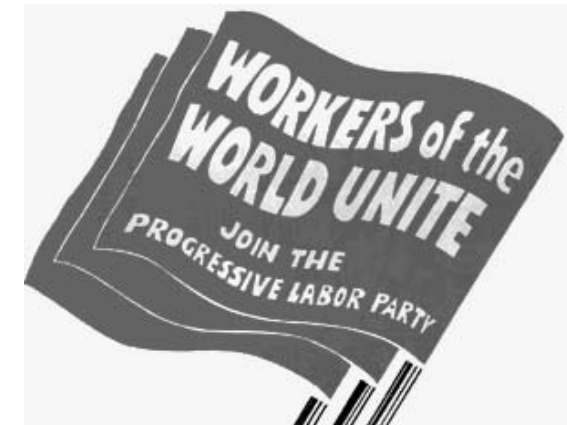
Crises, recessions and depressions have been regular periodic features of capitalism since its beginnings, resolved only through additional suffering and death for millions of workers here and worldwide to bail out capitalists for the economic failures of their system.

Another form of bailout to preserve the rulers’ power and wealth during severe crises is wars against other capitalist competitor nations to send potentially revolutionary workers at home onto foreign battlefields to fight for their rulers’ international hegemony.

The rulers’ biggest fear is that the working class has the power to turn the guns around and end these bosses’ wars, end the \$11 trillion debt and end capitalism itself, just at the Bolsheviks ended Russian involvement in World War I, renounced the Tsar’s debt to the capitalists and attacked capitalism. This is why the media is capitalist-owned and billions are spent yearly to convince workers that no matter how severe the crises or how corrupt the system, capitalism must be reserved at all costs.

Only our communist newspaper CHALLENGE can supply workers with a class analysis of why these crises and wars occur and why capitalism can never serve workers’ interests. Comrades must use every one of these rulers’ attacks to get CHALLENGE into workers’ hands and recruit them to PLP to build a revolution to destroy capitalism and create a system without profits, racism and wars, a system that provides for workers’ needs worldwide — communism.

Classy comrade



France-wide Protests Hit Bosses' Meltdown of Wages

PARIS, October 7 — Some 100,000 workers demonstrated in 90 protests across France demanding workers not pay for world capitalism's banking meltdown, the worst economic crisis since the 1930s. Over 13,000 trade unionists marched in Paris. Three hundred unionists from 14 European countries met for the World Day for Decent Work sponsored by the International Trade Union Confederation.

PSA Aulnay auto workers were among the loudest in the Paris march, chanting: "To get out of the crisis, it's not the banks that need to be helped, it's wages that have to be raised." This reflected the fear of millions of workers worldwide who are forced to pay to save the bankers and bosses with untold billions in bailouts.

A government worker in the Paris suburb of Stains defines himself first and foremost as a worker. His monthly salary, 1380 euros (\$2,000) is his household's only income, with unpaid bills piling up. He questioned why "banks that are up to their necks in debt are getting billions," whereas no one's bailing out his debts. "But," he sighed, "that's the way it always is for us workers."

Nearby, another worker retorted: "That's the way it is, but that's not the way it should be!"

To be sure, but workers must realize the nature of the crisis. The union leaders, whose goal is a few more crumbs from a "reformed capitalism," are part of the problem. They build illusions that a "lesser-evil" ruler can make things better for workers — "Dump Sarkozy, dump Bush and things can get better." But it doesn't matter who rules.

It's not just some greedy bankers in Paris, London or New York; it's not even the anti-working class, racist policies of Bush and Sarkozy — although they surely are at fault. It is capitalism itself. The nature of the system, social production but private profits for a tiny minority, creates the basis for these periodic crises.

With each successive crisis, workers pay more and more. Workers must learn from the lessons of the past. Global economic turmoil will sharpen all the inter-imperialist contradictions.

During the 1930s, the Nazis came to power and built a war economy to "solve" the Great Depression. Roosevelt's New Deal created government-sponsored job programs, but another recession followed in 1937. World War II's military draft "solved" the Depression's mass unemployment problem in the U.S.

Only the then communist-led Soviet Union was untouched by the Great Depression, in sharp contrast to Putin's Russia today. The USSR was also the only European country on the continent that didn't fold or surrender when the Nazis invaded, and then defeated Hitler's war machine.

Today, there's no Soviet Union to inspire the world's workers, but the threat of global imperialist war is now sharper. The world's working class has a gigantic task: break with all the agents of the ruling class, regain class consciousness and learn from the past achievements and errors of the revolutionaries who preceded us. Fight for the only real solution to this capitalist hellhole: communism. That's PLP's goal. Join us! ☺

'Religulous'

continued from p. 8

free from poverty, layoffs, unaffordable healthcare and so on. Workers must have faith in the working class's ability to understand this reality, not a misplaced faith in religion.

Communism may not bring heaven on earth right away, but it will certainly destroy this capitalist hell where workers are made homeless overnight. Lenin too saw religion as taking hold of workers "chronically menaced by the unforeseeable calamities of capitalism." He stated "the modern class-conscious worker...contemptuously casts aside religious prejudices, leaves heaven to the priests and bourgeois bigots, and tries to win a better life for himself here on earth."

To save the world, "Religulous" calls to battle all anti-religious people with 'better judgment' to rationally argue away the problem of religion. But it cannot simply be argued or rationalized away. Communist revolution is necessary to get at the core of the real problem. The solutions proposed by "Religulous" are in essence anti-materialist, mistaken, and superficial. Workers, through class struggle culminating in communist revolution, will triumph against an unjust world and religion.

Offering a clear path for revolution, Lenin states, "No number of pamphlets and no amount of preaching can enlighten the proletariat, if it is not enlightened by its own struggle against the dark forces of capitalism." Religion is one among many of these dark forces, and the struggle continues. Maher is not as clever as he seems... ☺



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

Rich/poor gap hits 1928 record

NYT, 10/29 — ...the vast majority of Americans will be condemned to a lower standard of living for themselves and their children. The top 1 percent now takes home about 20 percent of total national income.... The last time the top 1 percent took home 20 percent of national income, not incidentally, was 1928.

Nervous Brits in a gold rush

GW, 10/10 — British... national calm — whatever you do, don't panic — has dissolved somewhat... Last week the discreet London premises of ATS Bullion had a [line] outside, waiting to buy gold coins and bars.... The world's smelters are casting the things 24/7 but stocks still dwindle. Don't all rush at once; it's a very small shop.

Read Lenin, fight capitalism

GW, 10/3—The notion that there might be alternatives to rapacious capitalism have been all but banished from the public square. That limited discourse leaves us with limited options.... Good sense demands a thoroughgoing reappraisal of a system that's in a state of collapse.... "Capitalists can buy themselves out of any crisis, so long as they make the workers pay," said Lenin. It is rarely regarded as common sense to quote him in polite company. Yet... it is the most sense I've heard in a long time.

Russia's poor: Capitalism = death

NYT, 10/12 — There they were: the demonstrators.... They wore cheap, polyester suits in the blues, grays and browns that clothed generations of Soviets. Elderly women wore bows in their

hair and black socks under their pumps. Their aging leaders rode on a truck, shouting through tinny megaphones.

Their faces registered grief: They had lost Russia. They were dying off themselves. On the sidewalk, Valentina Ivanova, 56, was wiping away tears. "We once were a great country," she said. "Now we are divided into the rich and poor."

They were poor, the people marching in front of us. The posters read, "No more increase in the price of food!" and "Revolution will return!" and "Capitalism = Death." Igor Mishenev, marching at the end of the procession, described Russia's post-Soviet history as a long heartbreak: The life expectancy for men is 59; the birth rate is half what it was in the late 1980s.

A small portion may have become wealthy, he said, but millions suffer. "All our slogans," he said. "They all came true."

Though he did not mention it, Russia's new capitalism was experiencing its worst week in 10 years. Stocks were down 53.2 percent since Jan. 1.

Old quotes suggest new trouble

NYT, 10/12 — In the summer of 1929.... Here's what some leading politicians, economists and business leaders had to say in the months before and after the crash. Sound familiar?

Bernard Baruch, financier and presidential adviser, in The American Magazine, June 1929:

"The economic condition of the world seems on the verge of a great forward movement."

The Wall Street Journal, Aug. 23, 1929:

"The outlook for the fall months seems bright-



er than at any time."

The Harvard Economic Society, November 1929:

"A severe depression like that of 1920-21 is outside the range of probability. We are not facing protracted liquidation."

Bernard Baruch, cablegram to Winston Churchill, Nov. 15, 1929:

"Financial storm definitely passed."

Smile, and keep on overspending

NYT, 10/7 — For advertising agencies, the challenge is how to write ads that soothe consumers who are alarmed by billion-dollar losses at their banks.

ERs don't solve workers' health

NYT, 8/29 — An influential figure... explained that we shouldn't worry about the growing number of Americans without health insurance, because there's no such thing as being uninsured. After all, you can always get treatment at an emergency room.... The truth, of course, is that visiting the emergency room in a medical crisis is no substitute for regular care. Furthermore, while a hospital will treat you whether or not you can pay, it will also bill you—and the bill won't be waived unless you're destitute. As a result, uninsured working Americans avoid visiting emergency rooms if at all possible, because they're terrified by the potential cost: ...personal bankruptcy.

Obama Healthcare Plan Hazardous to Your Health

Barack Obama is calling for affordable health-care for all. While appearing progressive, a closer look reveals that his plan is barely a bandaid. Obama is not calling for universal healthcare. Even if he were, universal healthcare never means equal healthcare under capitalism. The following just touches the surface of his “reform.”

In 2007, PBS compared U.S. healthcare statistics to Japan, the UK, Germany and Switzerland.(1) The U.S. spends more on healthcare (15.8% of its Gross Domestic Product) than any of the above. But the increased costs don’t produce better care. The report shows that, in comparison, people here have a shorter life expectancy and higher infant mortality rate. The extra costs go into the profit coffers of insurance and drug companies. The other countries boast a “socialized medicine,” “national health insurance” or “social insurance” model. In these countries, everyone has healthcare (although it’s not free for everyone). However, as of 2006, 47 million people in the U.S. had no health coverage.(2)

The U.S. actually ranks 41st in life-expectancy statistics compared to other countries. Mainstream media often cites obesity and racial disparities as the main cause.(3) But without a class analysis, this seems to blame the problem on individuals, for being fat or black, instead of the system.

WILL OBAMA FIX THIS PROBLEM?

Myth #1: Under Obama’s plan everyone will receive free healthcare.

Reality: Those who don’t qualify for Medicaid or State Children Health Insurance Plan (an income of \$20,614 for a family of four in 2006), will be expected to buy into the new plan, or purchase private healthcare coverage, with an income-related federal subsidy, if their employer does not offer health insurance.(4) This implies universal access to a health plan, but not government-mandated universal coverage (compared to other countries).

Myth #2: Catastrophic illness medical bills will

be covered.

Reality: Catastrophic illnesses are those that incur major expenses such as lengthy hospital stays and financial losses, including loss of work. Heart attacks and cancer are examples of catastrophic illness. A high percentage of U.S. workers, 40% for example in California, hold jobs that do not offer sick days, and therefore lose a day’s pay for each day they’re out sick. Obama’s plan would reimburse employer health plans for a portion of the catastrophic costs they incur above a threshold.(5) The only people able to go to top hospitals for cancer or surgery would be those who could afford it, the way it is now.

Myth #3: Obama’s plan will cover long-term care for the elderly.

Reality: People over 80 are the fastest growing segment of the population. Most need some kind of assistant care. Currently, in a nursing home, Medicare pays only for short-term rehabilitation immediately following a hospitalization. After that, people must pay out of their pockets until all their money is gone and they’re eligible for Medicaid. Obama says he’ll “work to” improve the choices, the quality of care and to reform the financing of long-term care. Beyond that, nothing more specific.

Myth #4: The Obama campaign says he would finance his health plan costs by allowing expiration of tax cuts adopted in 2001 and 2003 for families making over \$250,000. (New England Journal of Medicine, (8/21/2008)

Reality: In its projections, the Congressional Budget Office has already assumed this extra money coming from the ending of the tax cuts.

Myth #5: Taken from his website: “Obama will tackle the root causes of health disparities by addressing differences in access to health coverage.”(6)

Reality: This is impossible for Obama, or anyone else, to fix under capitalism. In its drive for profit, capitalism creates poverty and racism, which causes these disparities in healthcare. “Blacks with

diabetes or vascular disease are nearly five times more likely than whites to have a leg amputated” and “women in Mississippi are far less likely to have mammograms than those in Maine.”(7)

Worldwide, a woman in Sweden or Japan will typically live past 80 years, while the average woman in Swaziland does not live to see her 30th birthday. Without noting that disparities in U.S. healthcare (and healthcare worldwide) stem from poverty and racism — inherent under capitalism — these problems won’t disappear.

While many workers believe Obama’s healthcare reform is in their interest, the truth is Obama only represents the interests of the capitalist class. But Obama and McCain and the bosses they serve face a major contradiction: On the one hand, they need more physically-fit soldiers to fight in their endless wars against their imperialist rivals, but on the other hand they need to cut the costs of all social services including healthcare, to pay for that very military and for their current fiscal meltdown. No doubt they will try to solve this contradiction on the backs of the working class.

1. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/sick-aroundtheworld/countries/>
2. <http://public.cq.com/docs/cqt/news110-000002575515.html>
3. <http://www.cnn.com/2007/HEALTH/08/13/life.expectancy.ap/index.html>
4. <http://www.barackobama.com/issues/health-care/>
5. ibid.
6. ibid
7. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/05/health/research/05disparities.html>

‘Religulous’: Methadone for the Masses



Amid an escalating crisis, the difficulties of life under capitalism enter conversations quickly. “I lost my home, but si dios quiere (god willing) we’ll get another one soon...as long as I don’t get laid off,” said a friend, a worker and single mother of two. She is not alone, as the California East Bay Area where she used to live has the fourth highest number of foreclosures in the nation. Today more than ever, workers’ lives are directly under attack, so why such faith?

“Religulous,” a documentary featuring comedian Bill Maher, outlines various reasons why people shouldn’t adhere to religion. He interviews creationists, a Christian congregation, Muslims, Jews, Catholics, ex-Mormons, and others. The film debunks religious claims to morality and history, concluding that believing in religion is like believing in fairy tales. “Religulous” links war, politics, and foreign policy to religion — interviewing a senator and using clips of Bush spouting blurbs of god, country, and freedom in relation to the Iraq War.

The combination of facts and comedic ridicule proves entertaining, but Maher’s elitist cynicism

(he’s a libertarian apatheist [apathy + atheist] who is pro-Obama and pro-Israel) solves nothing. “Religulous” illustrates the antiscientific nature of religion, but falls short of an adequate analysis of its function under capitalism. Maher tells us why many religions are absurd, and how believers are manipulated, but he does not tell us why they have a grip on a large section of the workers of the world.

Marx and Engels analyzed the material (real-world) conditions that gave rise to primitive religion. These include fear of death, fear of life, material uncertainty and so on. Under capitalism, as workers’ lives fall under more vicious attacks during crises, these insecurities intensify. In tough times, workers often turn to religion, and as Marx said, “this society produces religion, [which is] an inverted world-consciousness.”

“Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and also the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the opium of the people.” My California friend’s religious faith then stems directly from the attacks of capitalism and the uncertainty of our lives. Instead of fighting back, workers withstand abuse. Religion deprives workers of class-conscious fight-back.

Marx concluded that religion can only be uprooted through a complete reorganization of society and the material conditions which give rise to religion. A world free from religion entails a world

continued on page 7

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