



Oppose All the Anti-Immigration Bills!

Millions March for Immigrant Rights



Los Angeles, March 25: Protests forced retreat on HR 4437.

The most massive outpouring of workers in decades is unfolding in the United States. Giant demonstrations this spring protested vicious anti-immigrant legislation in Congress and demanded the legalization of all immigrants. The marches drew over a million in Los Angeles on March 25, close to half a million in Chicago and Dallas, plus hundreds of thousands each in several other cities. On April 10 alone there were two million marchers nationwide.

The protesters were mainly Mexican and other Latin American and Caribbean immigrants. This is no coincidence: they feel the strength of their enormous numbers and essential roles in the economy. They were also influenced by the great traditions of working-class and anti-imperialist struggles in Latin America.

The huge immigrant protest was aimed directly at the outrageously racist and anti-worker Sensenbrenner bill HR 4437, passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in December, which would label as felons the country's estimated 12 million undocumented immigrant workers, criminalize all who assist them and erect 700 miles of walls along the Mexican border. The marches were decisive in forcing Congress to back off that nightmare legislation.

This partial victory has already begun to affect the consciousness of oppressed immigrant workers. They are learning a crucial lesson: their own power. Like the recent upheavals of workers and students in France, the marches in the U.S. show that it is possible to set back the ruling-class attacks.

In some cities, where tens of thousands of workers left their jobs to attend the marches, the effect was to shut down hundreds of businesses that rely on undocumented workers. For the next round of protests on May 1, a number of immigrant organizations are calling for a "Great American Boycott" – a day of "no work,

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COFI/LRP Report

The previous *Proletarian Revolution* was a supplementary issue centered on work relating to the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Since it included no LRP/COFI report, this report on our main organizational activities covers some events dating back to last fall.

SEPTEMBER 24 ANTI-WAR DEMONSTRATION IN D.C.

This event was jointly sponsored by the competing anti-war coalitions, ANSWER and UFPJ. Anti-war sentiment had built up strongly over the summer, as reflected in Cindy Sheehan's campaign. After the Bush administration's fiasco over Hurricane Katrina in early September, we and many others expected that the Washington rally would draw out a lot of anti-Bush anger and make it even larger than previous anti-war demos.

The rally turned out to be big but not huge, probably about 100,000 people. Politically, the tone was overwhelmingly anti-Bush, but it was also pacifist and did not capture the anger over New Orleans, especially among Black people. Our contingent marched under the banner: "From Baghdad to New Orleans, Capitalism Means Racist Mass Murder!, Socialist Revolution Is the Only Solution!" The highlight of our participation was the chants we led along the march, stressing that the Iraq war (like the other crimes of capitalism) was a bipartisan affair, the responsibility of the Democrats as much as Bush.

For a time our contingent was in the same section of the march as the Young Communist League, the Communist Party youth group, which was awash in American flags, chanting against "Bush's war" and thereby spreading illusions in the pro-imperialist Democrats. We countered their chants with "Republicans and Democrats, One Attack; Clinton Also Bombed Iraq!" and "Support for the Democrats No Solution, Workers Need A Revolution!" The CPers tried to drown us out with "Peace Now," a rotten slogan during an imperialist war, since it takes no sides and was meant as a clear alternative to our placards and our "Defeat Imperialism" chant.

At this point members of the pacifism-promoting crew came over to "helpfully" inform us that "some people" were saying we were FBI agents, and that we should stop being "divisive." Their intent was to keep the anti-war struggle safe for pro-war Democratic politicians; accusing anti-war protesters of being gov-

ernment agents is in fact about as *divisive* as you can get. Stalinism may have collapsed, but Stalinist slander methods survive.

MILLIONS MORE MOVEMENT RALLY

On October 15, 15,000 to 20,000 people, overwhelmingly Black, converged on Washington, DC to mark the 10th anniversary of the Million Man March and launch the Millions More Movement. The event was billed as a rally to counter poverty and racial inequality, and in particular to denounce the government's handling of Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath.

An LRP contingent attended. Many people we met were receptive to our magazine and interested in our analysis of the aftermath of Katrina. The content of the rally was as much religious and spiritual "uplift" as political, with long speeches by Louis Farrakhan, Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson. In contrast to the largely white anti-war march a few weeks before, there was far more genuine outrage. But the nature of the event, a day-long rally, gave little for the majority to do other than watch passively. The real problem was that the thousands who showed up in search of an answer to racism and war were offered only the Democrats, one of the two bourgeois parties of racism and war.

NEW ORLEANS ON MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY

Several LRPers traveled to New Orleans for the protest march on the Martin Luther King holiday, January 16 – our second visit to that city since Hurricane Katrina. The march was called primarily to protest the Federal, state, and local governments' open attempts to keep much of New Orleans' Black population out of the city through "rebuilding" plans. The main organizers of the march were local New Orleans community activist groups who had long been fighting against local government and real estate interests' attacks on public housing, public education, and the like.

The event itself was small, no more than 300 people at its peak. At the beginning, maybe half the crowd consisted of out-of-town mostly white activists; the other half was mostly Black New Orleanians. As the march went on, the proportion of out-of-town activists got higher. But the protest had a significance far beyond its numbers.

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Proletarian Revolution

Published by the Socialist Voice Publishing Co. for the League for the Revolutionary Party (Communist Organization for the Fourth International). ISSN: 0894-0754.

Editorial Board: Walter Daum, Sy Landy, editors; Dave Franklin, Evelyn Kaye, Matthew Richardson.

Production: Jim Morgan

Subscriptions: \$7.00 for 8 issues; \$15.00 overseas airmail, supporting subscriptions and institutions. Striking, unemployed and workfare workers may subscribe for \$1.00. Complete set of back issues: \$50.00.

Send to: **SV Publishing**

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Iraq War Debacle:

U.S. Imperial Authority Cracking

The U.S. occupation of Iraq has long been a disaster for the majority of Iraqis. But now, three years after the invasion, it has become a debacle for the imperialist occupiers. And since Iraq has been the main priority of the world's sole superpower for the entire period, at great expense of manpower and money, the crisis is sinking the prestige of the United States lower than ever.

With the U.S.'s authority weakened, along with its ability to send troops into other "trouble spots," the level of mass struggle has been rising in country after country against the noose of U.S.-led imperialism. Not surprisingly, capitalist leaders, at home and abroad, are expressing extraordinary concern about the danger that U.S. policy has created for imperialist exploitation of the world.

Bourgeois leaders in the U.S. and abroad have been openly expressing deep concern over the crisis of imperialism. Their solutions amount to trying to restore competence to the leadership of the "free world," pressuring the U.S. ruling class to act as responsible imperialists. That is, they see the problem as the Bush cabal, not U.S. imperialism as a whole. There are elements styling themselves as left and even socialist who are pushing a bit farther, for a kinder and gentler imperial world.

But the only force that can create a real alternative to the rule of the imperialists is the working-class masses, who are gaining confidence in their struggles in many countries. The overriding problem is that they are not conscious of the power and potential of class war and are most often following pro-capitalist populist leaders who abhor working-class independence, if not outright reactionaries.

IMPERIALISM'S IRAQ CRISIS

The ruling class's worst fears over Iraq have come to fruition. Even Secretary of State Rice has admitted that the U.S. committed "thousands of tactical mistakes" – an immense admission for this data-proof administration. And even that was hotly disputed by Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, the perpetrator of the



Workers and students in Chile protest U.S. imperialism. Anti-capitalist struggles are on the rise in much of Latin America.



Victim carried from bombing of Shiite mosque in Iraq in early April 2005. U.S. occupation: disaster for the Iraqis, debacle for the imperialists.

accused mistakes. But of course, Rice vastly understates the case.

The war was initially favored by most sections of the American ruling class as an attempt to seize the opportunity presented by the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Conquering a major oil-producing country would cement U.S. military power, and thereby its economic domination, in the Middle East. The invasion was also an implicit warning to leaders of other oppressed countries who, like Saddam Hussein, might think of standing in imperialism's way. Further, it was a move against the interests of the U.S.'s imperial rivals, France, Germany and Russia, as well as the rising power, China. Bush & Co. understood that the U.S. ruling class had to use its advantage as the world's only military superpower to bolster its diminishing economic edge over its competitors.

The invasion, however, raised the risk of destabilizing Iraq. Saddam's strongman rule, after a decade of U.S. bombings and U.N. sanctions, was what kept the country's internal tensions from breaking it apart. Saddam had been backed by the U.S. during his war with Iran in the 1980's. Even after he was beaten in the Gulf War of 1991, he was further propped up by George Bush I so that he could defeat internal resistance from Kurds and Shi'ites.

This year, the crisis for the occupiers has grown worse by the day. The disaster is clear to almost all imperialist leaders except for diehard Bush fanatics. For example, a leading bourgeois journal in Bush's major ally in the war, Britain, published a withering comment about the "serial bungling" that threatens to destabilize not only Iraq but the whole Middle East:

When Zalmay Khalilzad, U.S. ambassador to Baghdad, said earlier this week that America had "opened ... Pandora's box" by invading Iraq, he was making almost the only realistic statement any senior U.S. official has made about the Iraqi situation for a very long time. (*Financial Times*, March 11.)

To spell out the Pandora's boxful of contradictions, the occupation still cannot provide water and electricity to the people it

supposedly liberated. Even oil production is down, regularly looted by U.S. contractors and their local allies as well as by insurgent forces. This would be hellish enough, but conditions are made infinitely worse by the total collapse of physical security. The U.S. can no longer pretend to be in control of the country it conquered with great fanfare in 2003.

Iraq is already in the throes of a low-scale civil war. There is an increasingly effective armed resistance from Sunni Arab forces, including Baathists, former military officers and religious and tribal leaders. As well, attacks by the Shi'ite militias on Sunnis have become increasingly numerous and bloody, and in recent weeks there have even been clashes between them and U.S. forces. The crisis has reached the point that the majority of U.S. troops, faced with daily losses of life and limb, think the U.S. should withdraw.

On the political front, the U.S., after two years of open colonial rule, tried to install a secular, pluralist regime that would be accepted by all Iraqi factions and openly supportive of imperialist interests. But popular demand forced it to concede elections, which led to a government dominated by Shi'ite clerics. (Their Islamist parties already control major Iraqi cities as well as police and other security forces.) The U.S. wants to broaden this coalition, but the Shi'ites offered few concessions to the minority Sunni Arabs who had been favored under Saddam and his Baath Party. The corrupt politicians remain at each others' throats.

Since the Shi'ite leaders have strong ties to the Iranian mullahs, the U.S. sought discussions with Iran, hoping the mullahs would bring their co-religionists into line. Iran, of course, is a charter member of Bush's "axis of evil" – so the U.S. now finds itself looking for help from a country it has long condemned and which now faces growing American threats.

Iraq can't be maintained as a united country without accommodating the Sunnis, so the U.S. is also trying to deal with

Baathist insurgents. At the same time it is bringing Saddam Hussein to trial, although solely for one of the few major crimes of his regime that the U.S. did not endorse at the time. Thus the U.S. has managed to antagonize both Shi'ite and Sunni leaders whom it wants as part of a united government. (In late March it was reported that Bush has vetoed the renewal of Ibrahim Jaafari's prime ministership, thereby shredding the last pretense that the government could be independent of the occupation.)

The U.S. also supports the Kurdish bourgeois leaders as a check on the Shi'ites. The Kurdish masses, however, want national independence, a basic democratic right. But Kurdish independence would antagonize Turkey and Iran, whose rulers fear Kurdish ambitions because of their oppression of their own large Kurdish population. So the U.S. refuses to allow an independent Kurdish state. The reliance on the Shi'ites also conflicts with the U.S.'s strong ties to the Sunni rulers in Saudi Arabia, who suppress their own Shi'ites.

BEYOND IRAQ

An escalating Iraqi civil war would almost inevitably bring Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia into the conflict. Even a relatively peaceful break-up of the country into separate states would threaten the interests of Iraq's neighbors and therefore the stability of the entire Middle East. And that would be a outcome that even the U.S. military would be unable to handle.

Although the U.S. is of course still the world's strongest military power and its biggest economy, it no longer can claim undisputed global leadership. It has lost the international trust that would enable it to lead by persuasion, and it has proved itself unable to impose its will militarily. On top of which, its economic leverage has been weakened by its enormous international debts.

To illustrate the extent that Iraq has undermined the U.S.'s imperial leadership, we refer to a recent article by Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter's National Security Adviser in the 1970's and a leading ruling-class theorist on foreign policy questions. He is one of a number of bourgeois commentators who perceive the calamitous situation the imperialist-run world is facing in the Iraq failure:

Internationally, the effect was the surfacing of historically unprecedented hostility toward America and a monumental loss of American (and especially presidential) credibility. Contributing to the decline of America's stature were the demagoguery surrounding alleged weapons of mass destruction, the disgrace of America's honor (and of its top officials) in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo, the dangerous over-stretching of U.S. military capabilities, and the concomitant decline in America's ability to prevent North Korea from acquiring nuclear weapons. ("The Dilemma of the Last Sovereign," in *The American Interest*, Fall 2005.)

The U.S.'s "decline in stature" is not just a matter of losing face. Imperialism has been genuinely weakened because of Iraq, and the world's ruling classes have every right to be worried. The U.S. has to lead the imperial powers in maintaining superexploitative relations over the working classes globally. Its central problem is that it remains a superpower militarily but not economically, so it needs a carefully maintained international network of allies and subordinates to keep the world in balance.

Faced with a record number of international brushfires, the administration has pulled back a bit in rhetoric from its go-it-alone imperial posture, especially in Secretary of State Rice's declarations of the need to build partnerships for stabilization with regional powers like Russia, China and India, as well as the traditional blocs with Western Europe and Japan. But the Defense Department still maintains its unipolar perspective. Bush at the

U.S. Hands Off Iran!

The desperate situation the Bush Administration has created for itself is shown by its mounting threats against Iran. As we write, reports have emerged of a projected U.S. campaign against Iran, using "tactical" Hiroshima-sized nuclear bombs to destroy Iran's underground nuclear facilities. Such an attack would nominally be aimed at "regime change" and at preventing Iran from building nuclear weapons. In fact, it would be a criminal effort by the faltering superpower to regain authority by instigating another slaughter. It would also be a maneuver by the increasingly beleaguered White House to mobilize patriotic sentiment, in the hope of restoring the faltering Republican Party's electoral chances.

A military attack at this stage would justifiably increase opposition at home and trigger massive protests around the world. Even if Iran did not cut off production and sales, it would also undoubtedly lead to an escalation of oil prices, with incalculable consequences for the economies of many countries, especially but not only the very poor ones.

The Bush Administration denies the reports of a planned attack, yet keeps making threats of "meaningful consequences" (Vice President Cheney) and "tangible and painful consequences" (U.N. Ambassador Bolton) if Iran kept up its nuclear program, which it claims is for peaceful purposes alone. But by now Bushites' denials are not even believed by their friends.

moment is balancing between them, talking out of both sides of his mouth.

With the imperialist lion wounded, the lesser predators are acting more independently, and even some of the prey is asserting itself. In a previous article on the eve of the Iraq war (see *PR* 66), we quoted Brzezinski earlier describing the imperialist goal of American “global supremacy” – the establishment of the U.S. as “the first and only truly global power” whose “imperial geostrategy” would “prevent collusion and maintain security dependence among the vassals, ... keep tributaries pliant and protected and ... keep the barbarians from coming together.” Today, the catalog of international contradictions that the U.S. has awakened has turned the well-crafted network of control that Brzezinski once advocated into an almost unbelievably tangled web.

THE TANGLED WEB

To start with the obvious: Bush’s proclaimed dedication to democracy is belied by his tight alliances with the likes of Pakistan, Jordan and Saudi Arabia (just to cite the war theater) – two monarchies and one military dictatorship. That is a contradiction between rhetoric and reality, but the rest are material contradictions that illustrate the U.S.’s imperial decline.

In the Iraq war, Iran has been the main gainer, since its enemies in Afghanistan and Iraq have been ousted from power. (Al Qaeda and other Islamist forces have also profited from the war.) The U.S. is working to isolate Iran because of its drive to obtain nuclear weapons, but at the same time is reaching out to it to help stabilize Iraq. The U.S. is forced to rely on Russia and China to contain Iran, which both are tied to economically. At the same time, it tries to move into the vacuum in Central Asia left by the collapse of the Soviet empire. This threatens Moscow (and Beijing), as does the expansion of U.S. power in the form of NATO to Russia’s border.

Along with Iran, the Islamist forces across the Middle East have gained status. Not only have secular parties lost badly in Iraq; in Palestine, Hamas swept the legislative elections; in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood advanced significantly in parliamentary elections; even the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as president of Iran last year signified a swing in that already Islamist-run country. The reason is not any growing devotion to clerical rule but the fury of the Muslim world at the West’s imperial crimes: the occupation of Palestine and the support of dictatorial regimes, in addition to the war, tortures and other horrors in Iraq.

Beyond the Middle East, in March, Bush made a big show of allowing India to accelerate its nuclear weapon advances – while he seeks to prevent North Korea and Iran from doing the same. His aim was to butter up India as an ally designed to offset China. But he thereby disrespected India’s arch-enemy, Pakistan, which must be bolstered to contain Muslim fundamentalism and to help prop up Afghanistan. Meanwhile, Pakistan has ties to China and North Korea.

According to geostrategists of both U.S. bourgeois parties – Rumsfeld’s former deputy, Paul Wolfowitz (the theorist behind the neo-conservatives’ National Security Strategy), as well as Brzezinski – the Middle East/Central Asian region has become the main battleground for global domination, because of its energy resources. That means that despite its strategic defeat in Iraq, the U.S. cannot give up. The tangled policies it is carrying out towards Russia, China, Iran and India are not just accidents but necessary components of the imperialist plan.

Elsewhere, while the U.S. tries to cajole the Western European imperialists to line up with it in the Middle East and in the Balkans, it is still trying to tighten its chokehold on their

*Imperialist
commentator
Zbigniew
Brezinski
ponders the
obstacles to
American
“global
supremacy.”*



source of oil supplies. It must also move stealthily to prevent Germany from expanding its power in East Europe.

In Palestine, it supports Israel versus the Palestinians, while it supports favorite Arab governments which must at least pretend to hate Israel. Bush, to cover his last alleged reason for invading Iraq, insisted on free elections in Palestine, and that Hamas be allowed to participate. But when Hamas won, Bush joined Israel in cutting off funds for the Palestinian Authority. This clever move showed the world what “democracy” really means in U.S. eyes – subordination to U.S. interests.

In East Asia, the U.S. must hold Taiwan in check lest it go too far in offending China with claims for independence. And it is strengthening its ties to an increasingly militarizing Japanese nationalism, which the Chinese also fear for good historical reasons. China itself has the largest and most super-exploited working class in history, with a record of social explosions amounting to almost a hundred thousand upheavals per year. Still, U.S. mega-corporations have massive investments there, and China owns a huge portion of the enormous and growing American debt.

In Latin America, several countries have chosen leftist governments that make a show of challenging the policies of privatization of the public sector and of austerity, which the U.S. has pushed for two decades through the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Hugo Chavez, the populist (and now pseudo-socialist) president of Venezuela embarrassed Bush in the midst of 2005’s skyrocketing fuel prices by delivering cheap oil to the Bronx and other U.S. sites – at a time when the American administration was renegeing on its pledges to aid victims of Hurricane Katrina.

Economically, the U.S. has run up a huge international debt because of its perennial budgetary and trade deficits. Much of the debt is owed to Chinese and Japanese investors, who are propping up the U.S. economy (and therefore its military adventures) because an American collapse would trigger a collapse worldwide. No one wants to end this close embrace, but it is an ever-accelerating dance of death among hostile partners.

THE THREAT OF MASS REVOLT

All of these challenges to imperialism are exacerbated by the developing mass upsurge against the reign of capital, from the Iraqi resistance bogging down the U.S. military, to the broad protest movements that have rocked several Latin American

countries, to the enormous wave of strikes and protests in China against all the horrors of widening capitalist superexploitation. The real worry for the capitalist rulers of the world is that the combination of imperialism's continuing exactions along with the U.S.'s declining leadership opens up the possibility of successful – and united – revolts. Brzezinski put it this way in his *American Interest* article:

It is no overstatement to assert that now in the 21st century the population of much of the developing world is politically stirring and in many places seething with unrest. It is a population acutely conscious of social injustice to an unprecedented degree, and often resentful of its perceived lack of political dignity. The nearly universal access to radio, television and increasingly the Internet is creating a community of shared perceptions and envy that can be galvanized and channeled by demagogic political or religious passions. These energies transcend sovereign borders and pose a challenge both to existing states as well as to the existing global hierarchy, on top of which America still perches.

Brzezinski is clearly worried about more than the blunders of the Bush White House. He sees that the real problem is not just small bands of terrorists but masses of oppressed and increasingly conscious people. He is concerned above all about the youth of the Third World, who “are particularly restless and resentful”:

Their minds have been stirred by sounds and images that emanate from afar and which intensify their disaffection with what is at hand. ... Typically originating from the socially insecure lower middle class and inflamed by a sense of social outrage, ... millions of students are revolutionaries-in-waiting, already semi-mobilized in large congregations, connected by the Internet and pre-positioned for a replay on a larger scale of what transpired years earlier in Mexico City or in Tiananmen Square.

Brzezinski has certainly grasped the fragile nature of the imperialist-ruled world. Aside from the danger of civil wars in Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East, China and Latin America can burst apart in social explosions. He also observes the threats of nuclear proliferation and environmental degradation, above all the near-precipitous climate change (“global warming”) that the Bush Administration in particular, with its intimate ties to the oil monopolists, long pretended was a myth.

What Brzezinski does not recognize, of course, is that the problem is not just a particularly narrow-minded administration, nor is it the technical developments that allow instant communication worldwide. Administrations can change, and technical advances are not what mobilize “large congregations” of rebel-

lious youth. The problem for the inflamed masses is the gross misery and inequality that imperialist capitalism has subjected them to. And for that, capitalism has no ready solution, for it is the nature of the system.

THE UNDERLYING PROBLEMS

There are underlying political and economic reasons for the imperialist dilemma. For nearly half a century after the end of World War II, the international scene was dominated by the Cold War rivalry between the U.S. and the USSR, a relatively peaceful balance of power. The two military superpowers cemented their respective blocs by invoking the threat of the other. The lesser powers had to accept subordination to the greater, and the working classes were bound to their rulers by the prospect of defeat by the opposing “evil empire” should they demand too much and endanger the enormous military budgets.

Moreover, in the first part of the Cold War period, the U.S. economy was unchallenged, and the imperialist nations lived through a “golden age” of the post-war boom, when workers could win sometimes significant gains through class struggle. But the boom came to an end in the early 1970's, when rivals like Japan and Germany achieved fully competitive stature, and the rate of profit went into decline leaving less to share. Only a major depression (which wipes out weaker capitals and devastates the working class) could have restored profitability. But the capitalist rulers managed to use state intervention to put such a crisis off, understandably concerned that new hardships would provoke revolts from their strong working classes. A long period of stagnation ensued, characterized by the mounting attacks on working-class gains known as the “one-sided class war” in the U.S.

The Cold War came to a close when the Soviet Union imploded in 1991, under the impact of its more severe economic crisis; that ended the balance of power that held the world system together. For a decade the remaining imperialist powers jockeyed over the U.S.'s role: whether it would be first among equals in a “multipolar” world, honored among its fellow thieves for defending the rule of imperialism as a whole; or whether it could expand its former bloc leadership and become the arbiter of all important international conflicts. But in the absence of a powerful enemy like the USSR binding the powers together, little was resolved in the Bush I and first Clinton terms. After years of uncertainty, the U.S. under Clinton asserted its prerogatives in the 1999 war against Serbia, setting the precedent for Bush II's unilateral attack on Iraq.

The main imperialist economies continued their slowdown, except for a small uptick in the U.S. based on its financial privileges (the special international role of the dollar) and the successful attacks on working-class living standards. But fundamentally the stagnation that began in the 1970's was not overcome: overproduction became chronic, sending Japan and Europe into long-term doldrums. The attack on the workers continues, and it was given extra punch by the so-called “war on terrorism.” That fraud meant not only wars abroad but repression at home, above all of immigrant workers – along with class-biased demands for sacrifice, notably of workers' health-care and pension benefits. Internationally, the East Asian financial collapse in 1997, followed by the Indonesian revolution and several mass upsurges in Latin America against imperialist austerity campaigns, showed the ruling classes the precariousness of their power.

IRAQ: NO WAY OUT

The U.S.'s most pressing problem is Iraq. The occupation all along has searched for a balance of factions to run the country in the interests of the U.S. – such pluralism is the real meaning of the

Further Reading...

- “Stop U.S. Imperialist War on Iraq!” *Proletarian Revolution* 65, Fall 2002.
- “Behind Imperialist War Moves,” *PR* 66, Winter 2003.
- “U.S. Takeover of Iraq Threatens World,” *PR* 67, Spring 2003.
- “Imperialism Unmasked by Iraq Debacle,” *PR* 71, Summer 2004.

Order from SV Publishing, P.O. Box 1936,
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“democracy” Bush promotes. To this end, the occupiers first produced Ahmed Chalabi, who was quickly exposed as a charlatan and financial swindler – but whose name is now coming up again, even though he couldn’t even get elected to parliament. Then it appointed a puppet government under Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, a former CIA agent who could never get even 10 percent of the vote in the elections the U.S. was forced to concede. We pointed out from the start that this scheme was doomed: the U.S. would need to find a substitute Saddam, a strongman ruler who could keep Iraq from falling apart and remain a loyal subordinate. Today the chances of achieving a strong centralized regime are even more remote than before.

Many of the contradictions could have been settled if it were just a matter of dealing with the various bourgeois leaderships. But the occupation was based not on creating a bourgeois-democratic Iraq but on looting the country: Iraq was subjected to the most extreme “neo-liberal” privatization scheme that destroyed what had been a heavily statified economy. In the hands of the occupying regime and the U.S.-based international corporations it favored, restoring the basic services the masses need has been at best a secondary priority. On top of that, the U.S. military carried out its mission with savage brutality: gunning down and torturing Iraqis who simply got in their way. Thus the U.S. squandered whatever popular support it might have gained for ousting Saddam and instead generated mass support for the armed resistance.

That resistance, plus the unwillingness of the population at home to sacrifice more for an unneeded and fraudulently justified war, leaves the occupation overstretched and undermanned. We noted at the beginning of the war that Bush’s plan for Iraq was inherently risky: an invasion aimed at stabilizing the region could easily produce the opposite result. That has proved to be the case.

The dilemma is fundamentally insoluble. The U.S. cannot withdraw without seriously endangering its role as the leader of world imperialism. There would also be material costs: it would lose its massive military bases in Iraq and its grip on oil production. On the other hand, the U.S. cannot stay in Iraq without escalating its attacks on the insurgents, which always mean great loss of civilian life. All of this counters the invasion’s central goals of pacifying and stabilizing the country. Conceivably a much larger U.S. military force could have run a successful occupation. But that would have required a military draft, which is politically dif-

How the U.S. “Nourishes” the World



Another bourgeois liberal foreign policy “realist” expert, Michael Mandelbaum, is fond of analogies in describing what he sees as the U.S.’s decisive central role. He likens the U.S. to Goliath as the champion of weaker breeds (the title of his recent book is *The Case for Goliath: How America Acts as the World’s Government in the 21st Century*); he compares the U.S. to the sun around which all others revolve; but his most colorful analogy is to the animal kingdom:

The twenty-first-century United States ... is not the lion of the international system, terrorizing and preying on smaller, weaker animals in order to survive itself. It is, rather, the elephant, which supports a wide variety of other creatures – smaller mammals, birds, and insects – by generating nourishment for them as it goes about the business of feeding itself.

This comparison is first of all false and apologist: the United States does indeed terrorize smaller and weaker countries. But the image is unintentionally appropriate when spelled out. The U.S. elephant generates leftovers for the small and weak not precisely “as it goes about feeding itself” but a bit later, at the other end of its digestive tract. It shits all over the world, and leaves the droppings for the rest to forage among. A great picture of imperialist leadership.



ficult at any time in the U.S. without an upsurge of patriotism or a genuine threat from the likes of Saddam. Support for such a move is inconceivable now, when the public sees through the lies about the war.

A BOURGEOIS SOLUTION?

This background helps explain Bush II’s adventure in Iraq as an effort to reclaim imperialist prerogatives as well as the U.S.’s hegemony among the imperial powers. These are all goals that the U.S. ruling class broadly wants, and are even accepted by many ruling-class members elsewhere. The failure in Iraq leaves the world bourgeoisie in the quandary that Brzezinski has spelled out.

For the moment, the ruling classes internationally have little alternative to U.S. leadership. No other imperialist country, or even a bloc, can fill the military role of the U.S. In Brzezinski’s scheme of things, the imperialist world can only hope for a more flexible, multilateral but still tough-minded U.S. role.

That is the aim of Brzezinski’s article: convincing the U.S. ruling class to recognize that “the central challenge of our time is posed not by global terrorism, but rather by the intensifying turbulence caused by the phenomenon of global political awakening.” The U.S. will have to lead an international capitalist consortium, dominated by the imperialist powers but incorporating as well the most powerful of the rest like China, India, South Africa and Brazil. It is the working-class masses, not just a handful of terrorists, that have to be kept down.

That means first of all a major shift in U.S. foreign policy. Bush and his coterie cannot be trusted with this task, so for multilateralists it means trying to teach Bush a lesson in the 2006 congressional elections and finding a suitable presidential candidate for 2008. The same “solution” is hoped for by imperialist allies of the U.S.

Toward this end, a number of U.S. politicians (including, off the record, some in the Bush Administration) have begun to talk about solving their Iraq problem by “redeploying” U.S. forces. Congressman John Murtha, the Pennsylvania Democrat, ex-marine and long-time warhawk who is well tuned-in to Pentagon officers, changed his mind last fall and now calls on Bush to “get our troops out of there.” As a loyal imperialist, he proposes that “you redeploy to the periphery so that we, if we have to, we can

Letters Welcome!

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go back in.” (NBC’s “Meet the Press,” March 19.)

Murtha’s scheme has private backers in the Pentagon who fear the military will crumble, but his main open supporters are “realist” leftists who see him as a beacon despite the clear pro-imperialist character of his position. (Columnist Alexander Cockburn lauded his “manly credibility” and excoriated “many on the left, who whined that somehow Murtha’s withdrawal plan wasn’t quite radical enough.”) Nevertheless, his plan is fundamentally the same as the mainstream Democrats’ “strategic redeployment” scheme, which would leave U.S. forces in permanent bases, training Iraqi troops, providing logistical and air support to Iraqi forces fighting insurgents, serving as advisors to Iraqi units; as well, Special Forces teams would operate jointly with Iraqi units. And the larger U.S. forces in neighboring countries (Kuwait for one) would be called in when needed.

The upshot of redeployment would be fewer American casualties, but the insurgents would still win popular support because the Iraqi “government” and army would remain totally dependent on the U.S.’s barely hidden occupation. Moreover, the Democrats’ mid-term “real security” plan, announced at the end of March, implies a larger military overall – it undertakes to “eliminate Osama bin Laden” and the Taliban, for example, and to “stop nuclear development in Iran and North Korea.” On the one hand, these are paper promises designed to get Democrats elected in the face of an unpopular war; on the other hand, they show that the Democrats’ answer to Bush’s failures is to “stay the course,” only with a bigger military and allegedly competent leadership. In any case the likely result will be a Balkanized Iraq built around increased power and prestige for reactionary Islamic forces, both Sunni and Shi’ite – exactly the outcome the war was supposed to prevent.

Parallels are constantly being raised between the Iraq debacle and the U.S.’s previous lost military cause: the Vietnam war of the 1960’s and ’70’s. There are also many differences, and one that is critical for our argument here is that then, when the U.S. pulled out of Vietnam, they did not leave the country in chaos. The victor was the Stalinist Communist Party, which had a cadre, army and ideology to keep all factions under control. No such force exists in Iraq. (The Iraqi Communist Party, which has a base in the working class and in pre-Saddam times had led significant struggles, chose to participate in the occupation’s hand-picked governments and has lost all claim to independence from imperialism.)

The foreseeable solutions cannot rebuild the authority of U.S. imperialism worldwide. The reason the Democrats don’t follow Brzezinski’s proposals is that an imperialist consortium is not as realistic as he believes, in a period when the competing powers are scrambling and competing for resources and for greater surplus value. The “war of all against all” that was suspended during the Cold War and extended for a time under the aegis of the sole superpower will have to resume. The divisions that opened up when the Iraq war began have not healed, although they were papered over a bit as Germany, France and Russia sought to gain

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THE LIFE AND DEATH OF STALINISM

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– Al Richardson, *Revolutionary History*

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what they could from a prostrate Iraq. But with the U.S. politically weakened and unable to protect the interests of imperialism as a whole, rivalries will revive and intensify. The continuing economic stagnation will only deepen the coming conflicts. The imperialist world will increasingly look more like contention than consortium.

WORKING-CLASS ALTERNATIVE

The crisis of bourgeois leadership has been recently exposed, but the crisis of working-class leadership is long-lasting. Today, as Brzezinski observes, more and more masses are in motion. But few are headed in the right direction.

In Iraq there have been some signs of independent working-class activity, but overall the masses are following religious leaders and Baathist and other bourgeois guerrillas, who are now engaged in waging inter-ethnic and religious wars against people of different groupings – not uniting the working class.

In Latin America, the mass struggles are torn between independent working-class activity and following populist bourgeois leaderships – left populist for the moment. In China the level of mass struggle is extraordinary (and fully justified given the degree of exploitation), but class-conscious leadership is hindered by the degree of repression. A promising scene right now is in France, where yet another neo-liberal scheme to increase job insecurity triggered nationwide protest marches of millions and one-day strikes by workers and students that won a partial victory. (See page 9.)

In all these actions it is the task of authentic communist revolutionaries to bring to the fore the connection between the workers’ current struggles and their potential for replacing the bourgeois state with one run by the workers’ themselves. The working class is international; its unity across borders and between races is the key to dethroning the imperialist cabals and building a genuinely human society free of vassals, tributaries and rulers who think of other peoples as barbarians. ●

France: Mass Protests Set Back Anti-Worker Law



Students in Marseilles, France protested on March 18 along with teachers, workers, retirees and opposition groups

Two months of mass protests in France, culminating in mass actions of nearly 3 million striking students and workers March 28 and April 4, forced the French government to make an embarrassing retreat: President Chirac and Prime Minister de Villepin had to withdraw the CPE law which would have allowed employers to fire any worker under age 26 within the first two years of employment. The dramatic success of this struggle is inspiring to workers, youth and oppressed people around the world, and it has put the class struggle in Europe at the center of the world's political attention.

But it was only a partial victory. The CPE was only one article of a bigger law, the so-called "Law of Equality of Opportunities." This law contains many other racist attacks that will especially target the most oppressed Arab and Black youth of France, such as getting rid of compulsory education for youth age 14-16 and legalizing night work for 15-year-olds. Also, last year the government enacted the CNE law, which allowed all companies with 20 employees or less to fire workers of any age in the first two years. After the government backed down on the CPE, continued struggle to force the withdrawal of the entire "Law of Equality of Opportunities," as well as the CNE, was called for.

Many of the protesting students and workers, especially the youth, wanted to continue the struggle for those demands. The

meeting of the students' National Coordinating Committee April 2 called for "an indefinite strike of workers and students beginning April 4" and "building up of the general strike until the withdrawal of the so-called Law of Equality of Opportunities, the CPE and the CNE."

But the bureaucrats at the head of the labor unions and student groups abandoned the struggle. On the planned day of action April 11, just one day after Chirac announced the withdrawal of the CPE, the union and student leaders mobilized only a tiny fraction of the number of people who had marched the previous two weeks.

This was what the union and student bureaucrats had wanted all along. They only mobilized in the first place because they feared the mass movement of youth would get out of their control. Gérard Aschieri, the chairman of the teachers' union FSU, told the newspaper *Le Figaro* "We can no longer afford to wait because the student movement will continue and that could become dangerous. We therefore need a strike next week" (Cited by the *World Socialist Web Site*, March 21.) After millions marched in the streets, they wanted to demobilize the workers and youth as soon as they could get away with it. The most prominent student leader Bruno Julliard openly stated, "What we want is to see an end to this mobilization, we want a discussion." (*Bloomberg.com*,

March 27.) The withdrawal of the CPE alone gave them the excuse to do just that.

The divide between the aspirations of the masses of youth and workers on the one hand and the misleaders of the unions and student groups on the other is no accident. It reflects a deeper class division. The bureaucratic leaders represent the middle class and the relatively privileged layer of the working class, the labor aristocracy. The bureaucrats' social position and the material benefits that come with it are based on their status as brokers between the workers and the capitalists. Because they have this material stake in the capitalist system, they are reformists who are committed to preserving the system, the exploitation of the working class, and the racist oppression of people of color.

The political allies of the reformist student and labor bureaucrats in France are the Socialist Party and the Communist Party. Their goal in the mass struggles is only to maneuver to put themselves in better position for the 2007 elections. If they win, they themselves will carry out the capitalist attacks on the working class and racist attacks on Arab and Black people, just as the previous Socialist Party government did from 1997 to 2002. Workers, youth and oppressed people fighting against the racist capitalist attacks should oppose the Socialist Party and its allies in the elections just as much as they oppose Chirac, Villepin and Sarkozy!

RACISM DIVIDES WORKING CLASS

An essential part of the reformist strategy for controlling and demobilizing the working class is to use racism. Capitalism relies on racism to divide and conquer the working class, and the Socialist Party, Communist Party, and union bureaucrats are full partners in capitalism's racist attacks. They share responsibility for all the crimes of French imperialism against Algeria and all the other nations subjected to French colonial occupation. Socialist Party and Communist Party governments have carried out anti-immigrant attacks for decades. Last November the union leaders did nothing to support or defend the rebellion of oppressed youth who rose up against the deadly racist brutality of the French police. Even when their own unions went on strike at the same time, the bureaucrats kept their struggles completely separate from the rebellion of the oppressed youth. (See statement below.) These are crimes against the working class.

The union leaders' betrayal of the rebellion of the oppressed youth last November was part of the reason the French ruling class felt it could get away with the CPE and the other attacks in the Law of Equality of Opportunities. But the rebellion also

inspired the broader layers of youth and workers who came out onto the streets in March and April. The two struggles were not as isolated from each other as the bourgeois media tried to portray. Oppressed youth in the Paris suburbs also shut down their high schools, and some reports stated that as much as one quarter of the youth marching in Paris March 28 were people of color. The students' National Coordinating Committee demanded the release of all youth arrested in the November rebellion.

But the movement needed to make further demands in this direction. Racist police attacks were a central part of the government's response to the mass protests: the police arrested thousands, and armed riot police with attack dogs stopped and searched Arab and Black youth coming to the Paris protests from the suburbs. The National Coordinating Committee should have raised demands such as "Stop racist police attacks!" and should have supported the organization of mass armed self-defense against police attacks. That would have been an effective counter to both the adventurist small-group violence at the protests, and to the union and student leaders who only organized stewards to defend the protests from petty violence, but did not organize defense for oppressed youth in the movement facing massive police violence.

The anti-worker attacks and the crisis of unemployment, especially for oppressed youth who racist employers refuse to hire, call for class-wide demands that speak to the needs of all employed and unemployed workers and youth. The National Coordinating Committee took steps in this direction: "We pledge to support all the demands formulated by workers in struggle, such as wage rises and the conversion of all insecure jobs into permanent jobs." But to address the needs of all workers and youth under attack, the workers' and youth movement must raise the just and necessary demand "Guaranteed Permanent Jobs For All at High Union Wages!"

As working-class socialist revolutionaries, we openly explain that the capitalist system cannot meet this demand. It will take a socialist revolution. The most politically conscious workers and youth need to build a revolutionary party, which will fight for revolution and socialism in struggles in the mass struggles of workers and oppressed people.

We print below two statements previously issued by our organization on closely related issues: the uprising of Arab and Black youth in France (issued in November 2005), and the protests against the racist cartoons published in a Danish newspaper (March 2006).

Solidarity with the Revolt of Oppressed Youth in France!

For nearly three weeks in October and November, the Arab and African working-class ghettos surrounding Paris and other urban areas in France were convulsed by riots by youth outraged at racist police harassment and the horrifying conditions they live under. Several thousand cars as well as dozens of stores and storage buildings went up in flames. The government invoked draconian emergency powers and extended them, using a 1955 law designed to repress the Algerian struggle for national independence; over two thousand were arrested by the particularly vicious CRS riot police. Hundreds of "foreigners" were summarily deported.

But the rebellion swept on. So amid their repression, govern-

ment figures had to speak of reforms to quiet the ghettos: the right proposing incentives for new factories, the "left" (that is, the reformist, counterrevolutionary Communist and Socialist parties) proposing better schools and more social workers.

The youth riots, the biggest upheaval to shake France since the student movement and massive workers' general strike of May 1968, were touched off by the deaths of two teenagers fleeing the police in the Paris suburb Clichy-sous-Bois, and by vile racist insults by Interior Minister Sarkozy, in effect declaring war on the ghettos. (He called the youth "scum" and "rabble" who have to be "power-washed" away.) A tear-gassing of a mosque in Clichy by the cops during Friday prayers contributed

to the outrage.

The rebellion found echoes in other European countries as well. There were car burnings in Berlin and Brussels, among other cities. “We cannot think that we are so different from Paris here, it’s only a question of time,” said Romano Prodi, an Italian “left” politician and former president of the European Commission.

The rebellion’s deeper causes are the thirty years of ruling-class attacks on the working class since the end of the post-war boom, and above all the special focus of these attacks on immigrant families of color, most of whom come from the former French colonies in Africa. It rips away the veneer of “liberté, égalité, fraternité,” which both right and “left” in France pretend is reality in this imperialist country. The conditions imposed on immigrant families, now about 10 percent of the population of France, are miserable in the “outer cities”: astronomical unemployment, poverty, decaying housing projects, discrimination, incessant racist ID checks and other forms of police terror.

The divide-and-conquer strategy of the French ruling class is part of a growing anti-immigrant chauvinism all over Europe. In the case of France in particular, it is a continuation of French colonialism, treating the descendants of their former colonial subjects not as part of the “French people” that color-blind Republicanism pretends they are, but as a subordinate caste, subjected to rank superexploitation. And since they are officially “French,” they get no special programs. There are few French colonies left, but the colonial mentality remains, and on the other side, it shapes (more accurately) the consciousness of the oppressed.

WORKERS’ STRIKES

It is important that the revolt comes at a time of stepped-up working class protest against the latest anti-worker assault, the neo-liberal privatization and austerity programs of the right-wing government of President Chirac and Prime Minister de Villepin, including the electoral defeat by French voters of the proposed European constitution last May. That is, the youth rebellion is taking place in a country where the working class as a whole has not forgotten the methods and lessons of militant union struggle, despite their leadership.

The riots made headlines in the U.S., but at the same time there were significant trade union strikes in France, including one by transport workers in Marseilles, the country’s second largest city. The government moved to break that strike at the same time that it was reinforcing the cops in the riotous ghettos. The need for class unity in response was palpable, yet not one union denounced the police terror.

On November 21-22, a few days after the rebellion had simmered down, a nationwide rail strike shut down the majority of trains in France as well as the Paris Metro. The strike was called in opposition to the government’s plans to privatize parts of the state-run railroads, a clear attack on workers’ gains. But even though the strike took advantage of Chirac’s weakness after his inability to quell the youth riots, the unions leading the walkout did not think to protest the government’s simultaneous assaults on this other section of the working class.

Revolutionary workers and youth have to find ways to extend the militant struggles of the youth of the oppressed to the rest of the working class. It is urgently necessary for the working class as a whole to take up the struggle of the racially oppressed youth as its own, for the superexploitation of the racially oppressed workers is not only unconscionable to any class-conscious fighter, but it also undermines the wages and conditions of all workers. Likewise police attacks on Arab and African youth are preparing the ground for similar assaults on



Youths torch vehicles during November riots.

all militant workers.

To take up this struggle workers will have to overcome the pro-capitalist misleadership of its unions and pseudo-socialist parties and advance the struggle through a general strike to stop all the attacks on working-class people. At the very least, revolutionaries in the unions must demand that the unions side with the rebels and champion their cause – not side with the government.

The obstacles are great. The reformist and bureaucratic leaders of the workers’ unions and the wretched working-class-based parties shame the names “socialist” and “communist.” They have failed to fight against racial and national chauvinist discrimination over the years – indeed, they participated in imposing some of the worst conditions when they were in power nationally and locally. Back further, they defended French colonialism in Vietnam and Algeria, in the face of national liberation struggles. Now they criticize the right-wing government from the right. “The government is showing itself incapable of reestablishing public order,” wrote the PCF leadership (November 4). “Above all it is imperative to reestablish order and security,” said the head of the PS (November 8), in effect demanding more repression, more arrests, more racist outrages.

This continuing stabbing in the back by the official organs of the working class has led the oppressed youth to lash out indiscriminately rather than in a class-conscious way. They targeted not only the police who brutalize them, the schools that humiliate them and the government that discards them. They also trashed cars of other workers and attacked workers trying to put out the fires in their neighborhoods. Some of the rioters are undoubtedly lumpen, low-level criminals compared to the capitalists and cops but a daily danger for those who live near them. Still, the great majority are workers employed in dead-end jobs or none at all. They are part of our class, their rebellion is part of the class struggle however misdirected, and it is a crime that the so-called left, and even the so-called “far left,” treats them as an alien force.

U.S. GHETTO UPRISINGS

In the United States, we have the experience of the “ghetto riots” – revolts by Black people in American cities from the 1960’s to Los Angeles in 1992 and Cincinnati in 2001. While racism is generated in all imperialist societies, the U.S. bears major responsibility through its history of slavery. And while



Paris, September 2005: African families being evicted by cops from unsafe apartments. Lack of decent housing for immigrants was one cause of the riots.

France's racism owes a great deal to its own history of colonialism, it is increasingly taking on American forms. In this light it is important to note that Black Americans have themselves exported the example of mass rebellion against racist oppression, along with cultural and political resistance. Arab and African youth in France are highly conscious of this. As in America, the French revolts signal an as yet inchoate cry from within the working class for revolutionary leadership to confront a brutal capitalist system and its state, as well as laying the basis for creating such a leadership.

The U.S. ghetto uprisings were directly responsible for winning important if limited gains for Black people, which are traditionally – but largely falsely – credited to the middle-class-led civil rights movement of the 1960's. Likewise the youth revolt in France has already brought talk of reforms from the government, along with its stepped-up repression. Moreover, the U.S. explosions in the 1960's, together with other such upheavals around the world in that decade, notably the French revolt and general strike of 1968, were the spark for re-creating the nucleus for authentic communism in this country.

Those youth who see the need for a class-wide struggle should not wait for the rest of the working class to move. They will need to find ways to reach out to other workers and their organizations. As we wrote in *Proletarian Revolution* No. 44 in regard to Los Angeles, "riots must be transcended, not repudiated. Mass action must become organized class action if it is to succeed." In situations like the Los Angeles and Cincinnati uprisings in the U.S., we called for mass community meetings to discuss how to fight for jobs and against racism.

The revolt of the oppressed youth in France – if revolutionaries can play their role – can be the spark to bring the whole working class into the struggle for their common interests: jobs for all at union wages, an end to police racism and governmental attacks on immigrants, and economic and political equality for all workers and oppressed.

ROLE OF THE FAR LEFT

A great responsibility for the failure of the mass working-class institutions to fight against racist oppression lies with the French far left. In France, unlike the U.S., organizations that style themselves revolutionary and even Trotskyist have considerable

weight within the working class. For example, taken together, three such groups (Lutte Ouvrière/L.O., the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire/LCR, and the Parti des Travailleurs/PT) won over 10 percent of the vote in the last presidential election in 2002, outpolling the Communists, the traditional electoral party of the workers. But they have also distinguished themselves by endorsing, directly or tacitly, the re-election of the reactionary bourgeois Chirac in the final round, because he was opposed by the even more reactionary Le Pen. Moreover, they also endorsed or vacillated over the reactionary law introduced by Chirac & Co. in 2003 to ban Muslim girls from wearing the veil in school. This capitulation to state-enforced secularism in fact put them on the side of the ruling class in restricting the rights of the oppressed – civilizing the ex-colonial natives.

In the present crisis, they have been no better. They never express solidarity with or defense of the revolts. L.O. has been worst. It asserted, for example, that "The violence of daily life in these neighborhoods may be the work of hoodlums or traffickers," reflecting a part of reality but ignoring the daily police harassment – and shoving aside the obvious fact that daily life consists of unemployment, poverty and racism, a permanent condition of violence against the ghetto. L.O. also writes that "With the general impoverishment of the laboring classes, these neighborhoods descend into ghettos," not even mentioning the rampant racism against people of Arab and African origin.

They also echo the "law and order" rhetoric of the CP and SP leaders whom they tail after. L.O. supported the protesters' demand that the riot police be removed from the ghetto neighborhoods, but it calls instead for the replacement of the CRS by "community police" under local authorities – as if any police authority subject to the racist and bourgeois state would be on the side of workers or immigrants. The LCR has also compromised on this demand, claiming to be for it but indicating its willingness to withdraw it in the face of opposition from the reformist Communist Party and union leaderships. (The LCR hopes to forge an electoral bloc with Socialists, Communists and some bourgeois parties – a reunited "Plural Left" popular front – in the elections upcoming in 2007.)

An authentic communist revolutionary party is needed in France. But it will have, among other things, to break with the monstrous tradition of enforcing racist oppression by denying the very possibility of its existence and put the race/colonial question on the front burner. Only then can the revolutionary possibilities of the revolt of the oppressed youth be realized.

The youth revolt, if it continues and if revolutionaries successfully intervene, could help ignite the big battalions of the French workers to dispense with their treacherous leaders and launch a massive struggle for the programs already mentioned. Such a struggle would greatly raise class consciousness and bring closer the day when the working class, under the leadership of its own vanguard party, can put an end to capitalist state power and create a workers' state on the road to socialism and communism.

The program for the struggle should include the following demands, understanding that tactical and wording adjustments may have to be made:

***CRS out of the ghettos! Stop racist police attacks!
No support to any capitalist police!
For mass armed self-defense against police attacks!
Stop the deportations! Jobs for all at union wages!
Divide the necessary work among all available workers!
End racist discrimination against Arabs and Africans!
General strike to stop the assault on all workers!
Build the revolutionary party! Recreate the 4th International!***

On the Racist Anti-Muslim Cartoons

The twelve cartoons printed by the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*, and later reprinted by other papers across Europe, depicted the Muslim prophet Mohammed as a bomb-carrier and supporter of terrorists. The publication of these pictures was not an exercise in “free speech” any more than a Nazi or a Klan rally would be—it was another attack in a campaign designed to further whip up racist and religious antagonism against Middle Eastern immigrants in Western Europe, as well as to try to bolster faltering public support in the West for the imperialist wars against Iraq and Afghanistan.

By painting Mohammed as a terrorist, the cartoonists and the bourgeois reactionaries behind them labeled all his followers as killers. By insulting the prime symbol of Islam, the cartoons created a racist and chauvinist attack—that is, an attack on a whole people. Especially people of color around the world recognize that the cartoons were a sneering imperialist insult to all oppressed people. Such caricatures have always been a stock-in-trade for racist demagogues.

The wider context behind the cartoons is the U.S. and its allies’ brutal imperialist wars against Afghanistan and Iraq, Israel’s expanding outrages against the Palestinians, also backed by the U.S., and the mounting threats against Iran. Washington took the thoroughly hypocritical stance of criticizing the cartoons as offensive to Muslims—this from the ruling class that has perpetrated the wholesale slaughter and slander of Muslim people.

The Communist Organization for the Fourth International condemns these cartoons and calls for protests against them by working-class organizations across the world. We condemn the shameful silence – or worse – of the leaders of mass working-class organizations in Europe and the U.S. Their failure to show solidarity with their fellow Muslim workers and oppressed people aids the reactionary leaders in the Islamic world in their manipulation of the angry masses for their own rotten ends.

Mass protests have indeed erupted across the Middle East and in other Muslim countries. We identify with the movement of the oppressed toilers because of its implicit anti-imperialist content. We do so despite the fact that many of the actions have been organized or hijacked by reactionary rulers or clerics and used to settle political, ethnic and religious scores, or to induce Western governments to ban “blasphemy” against Islam. Our attitude toward any specific protest depends on concrete circumstances.

Over a hundred people have been killed in Nigeria, with dozens more in Pakistan, Libya and elsewhere. We condemn the regimes of Pakistan, Libya and others that used bloody force against anti-imperialist demonstrators, as well as reactionary leaders responsible for bloodshed against workers and oppressed people of rival religions and ethnicities in Nigeria.

As revolutionary communists, we oppose any effort by the bourgeois state to ban writings or drawings. We know that if the state wins the power to ban such material it will be used chiefly against the rights of the working class and oppressed peoples. In Western Europe, such power would inevitably target Middle Eastern people there.

Most of the international far left, with a few exceptions, has taken the position of denouncing the cartoons as a racist and chauvinist attack on Muslims, while opposing legal bans. This is a correct appraisal. But the left generally dodges the point that the mass of Muslim protestors also object to the cartoons on religious grounds.

For many Muslims, any depiction of Mohammed is blasphemous. As followers of Karl Marx we do not wish to insult the millions of people who consider Islam their only hope. It is especially horrendous to do so in a world where Western Christianity has come to symbolize imperialist domination and persecution.

We do not wish to be soft on Islam or any religion: we oppose any belief in the supernatural as a brake on working-class consciousness as to how the material and political world operates. The communist method is to state firmly what we believe and to work over time to undermine the ideological power of religions and the hierarchies that mislead the masses.

What is necessary is mass action by working-class organizations to denounce and even shut down the racist publications, and thereby show the power of the working class to champion the interests of the oppressed. Unity of the working class and the oppressed is the way to fight the imperialist attacks and prove the need for working-class leadership. The Communist Organization for the Fourth International is dedicated to the re-creation of the Fourth International, the world party of socialist revolution. International proletarian revolution is the only answer to the horrors perpetrated by capitalism and imperialism.

Down With Imperialism and Racism!

U.S. Out of Iraq and Afghanistan! Hands Off Iran and Syria!
Re-create the Fourth International!

Workers and Oppressed Peoples of the World, Unite!



Pakistani protesters burn Danish flags (left) and Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant (right) in anti-Western actions triggered by racist cartoons published in Danish and other European papers.

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Auto Workers' Resistance Grows

By Dave Franklin

A series of vicious blows over the past months has been inflicted on workers in the auto industry. Mass layoffs at Ford and General Motors have been coupled with union concessions on pay and benefits, centered on health care. Those concessions, taking place apart from the auto contract rounds, are expected to be a prelude to yet more management demands for greater givebacks during the next scheduled negotiations. Delphi, the big auto parts supplier, has demanded monumental wage and benefit cuts in addition to layoffs and factory closings. And a huge offer of job buyouts at both GM and Delphi amounts to an added wave of layoffs and cuts through different means.

While the capitalist offensive against workers has found expression in the auto industry for years and years, the latest assault contains important new features. The cuts in health care provisions, in what has been the crown jewel of health care plans for unionized blue-collar workers, is a clear indication that even the most privileged production workers cannot expect to secure a stable standard of living under capitalism.

The cuts did not go over well with GM and Ford workers, and there are real indications that a huge struggle is in store at Delphi. But the fight must be taken up by other workers, and the issues expanded beyond just those at Delphi alone. The latest attacks are another good reason why the proletariat must build its own vanguard party and create an alternative society under its own leadership – not only to build a far better world, but to protect against the still coming assaults on its living and working standards.

General Motors (and to a lesser extent Ford) have experienced deteriorating finances for some time. Both lost billions in their North American automotive operations last year. GM signaled in the middle of last year its intentions to counter its problems in large part by taking it out on its workforce. In November, GM secured an agreement with the leadership of the United Auto Workers that would force many UAW retirees for the first time to pay monthly contributions, annual deductibles and co-insurance. Active hourly workers would have to defer about \$1 an hour for pay increases due in 2006 into a fund to help pay for health care; the deferred amount would increase after 2006, as it would for workers on overtime. Ford quickly followed with its own similar agreement with the UAW tops.

ENTER THE HIT MAN

In this same period, the bosses at Delphi suffered their own gigantic losses and are now trying to use the situation to impose far stiffer cuts on its workers. This effort is headed up by recently arrived CEO, Robert Steve Miller, a specialist at employing the increasingly favored tactic by bosses of declaring bankruptcy to force harsh penalties on unionized workforces. Miller successfully used his hit-man approach as CEO at Bethlehem Steel and



Detroit, January 2006: Delphi workers demonstrate outside auto show protesting cuts. Even top-paid workers now face brutal capitalist attacks.

was on the Board of Directors at United Airlines when a similar club was used. It was thus predictable (even though its effects were shocking) that Delphi declared bankruptcy in October and, using that lever, declared its intention to slash wages from an average of \$27 an hour to about \$12, make workers pay more for health care and cut the workforce by 20,000. (In an increasingly familiar but nonetheless telling display of class privilege, the very day before bankruptcy was declared the company's board of directors approved lavish severance packages for top executives.)

The Delphi situation remained completely unsettled when in March, GM, Delphi and the UAW leadership reached an agreement on a vast program of buyouts for workers at GM and Delphi. When Delphi was spun off from GM in 1999, GM pledged to cover union pensions and health care benefits for Delphi employees who were subsequently terminated by its former subsidiary. As well, GM largely depends on Delphi for its parts, so a disruption of production there could cripple the auto giant's operations. Thus, any "solution" to Delphi's precarious position necessarily involves GM's active participation. About 100,000 hourly GM workers would be eligible for payouts of between \$35,000 and \$140,000 if they opt to retire.

Under this same agreement, up to 5,000 Delphi workers would be eligible to return to GM, while 13,000 hourly workers in the U.S. would be eligible for a lump sum payment of \$35,000. The Delphi portion of the agreement is subject to approval by the bankruptcy court.

The buyouts also offered GM a chance to further shore up its own operations at the expense of auto workers. The eligible workers were forced to decide whether to take buyouts while facing the threat of reduced pensions and benefits in the future if they refuse them. It is expected that the package of buyouts will in the end save money for GM by reducing existing levels of compensation for employees; otherwise it wouldn't be put forward. That the



Workers' caricature of Delphi's hit man Miller, who uses bankruptcy laws to slash workers' wages and benefits. The capitalist legal system is a bosses' tool.

UAW tops signed off on it is more evidence that they are committed to the bosses' interests at the expense of the workers.

But after the buyout agreement, Delphi put forward a new "offer" that would cut wages to \$22 an hour in July, and then to \$16.50 a hour in September of 2007, when union members would get a \$50,000 buyout payment. But this would just be for workers in plants that Delphi planned to keep open. For the remainder, expected to be the majority, the reduction to \$22 an hour would last only until their plants are shuttered. Meanwhile, new workers would be hired at as little as \$10 an hour. UAW leaders rejected the offer and threatened a strike of its 25,000 Delphi workers. The IUE-CWA, which also has members at Delphi, likewise rejected the offer and already has obtained strike authorization from its members. In turn, Delphi has filed court papers to cancel its labor contracts and impose the types of layoffs and cuts it had been demanding.

GOOD PAY CAME FROM MASS CLASS STRUGGLE

Auto workers have always worked hard for their money. But the good pay that came to be associated with building cars wasn't achieved because of corporate charity. It was a concession won through enormous struggle, above all by the stirring strike wave of the 1930's highlighted by mass factory sit-downs and occupations. Just after World War II, the still-militant UAW workers fought a major strike against GM demanding a sizeable wage gain coupled to no rise in auto prices.

That was the last attempt by the union to really counterpose working-class interests as a whole to the profit-grubbing of the bosses. In the post-World War II boom, the union leadership solidified itself as a broker for labor power, interested as much as management in securing labor stability. For three decades it was willing to sacrifice many of the shop-floor rights of the ranks while gaining the sizeable wage and benefit increases demanded by union members. This was a celebrated "labor relations" deal, made possible by good times and passing on costs to auto consumers, largely working-class themselves.

The pattern of surrender was sharply interrupted by a radical revolt of young Black auto workers in the late 1960's and early 1970's, which challenged the UAW bureaucracy head-on. The mid-70's recession enabled the tops to undermine that struggle and marked the beginning of a downward spiral for the American auto industry. Facing a shakier domestic market and increased competition from foreign companies (who began building lower-wage plants in the South in response to protectionist demands for

stateside jobs and production), the post-war arrangement began fraying. The ranks saw a bitterly familiar pattern develop: the auto bosses would demand layoffs and speed-up. The union leadership, concerned above all with preserving the system of labor brokerage for the bosses from which they drew their privileges, would squawk but refuse to mobilize the ranks in opposition. A pro-boss agreement would be crammed down the workers' throats. All this despite the fact that unionized auto workers remained a large, powerfully concentrated workforce easily capable of shutting down production. While those union members who were able to hold onto their positions remained among the best paid production workers in the country, hundreds of thousands of union jobs were lost over time.

Time was when a job on the assembly lines was not hard to come by for those willing and able to do the work. But by the end of the century, an auto job in GM, Ford or Chrysler was an increasingly rare find, often involving connections and lots of luck. And the large slice of the American working class that could once look to employment in auto as a means of making a half-decent income from manual labor increasingly had to look at inferior job alternatives. This process has been particularly devastating on Black workers. For decades, the American auto industry, largely because of demands made by the Black ghetto riots in Detroit and other cities across the country, had been a Mecca for unskilled Blacks looking to escape poverty. The racially disproportionate elimination of those jobs has not only saved the auto bosses' bottom line; it has also allowed them to rid themselves of much of the most militant sector of the workforce.

THE DECLINE OF AMERICAN AUTO

Despite their shedding of jobs and concessionary bargaining, the American companies' competitive positions continued to decline. Much of the problem, particularly for GM and Ford, has been in the area of quality, design and marketing. American models (particularly compared to those of Honda and Toyota) were perceived, with a good dose of accuracy, as combining lower quality with higher price tags. (Chrysler, now owned by the German auto giant Daimler, has partly offset this problem with a recent spate of marketing successes). The car companies have also been hampered by the ability of their dealerships, backed by local and state laws, to resist desired changes.

What kept the domestic companies afloat in profits for years was their successful, intensive marketing of Sport Utility Vehicles (SUV's), contraptions remarkable for their high gas consumption, safety hazards and high mark-up in sales prices. But the defects of these cash cows have become more obvious (particularly with rapidly rising gas prices), driving customers towards cars with smaller profit margins. As the SUV market itself faces stiffer competition from foreign companies, the losses have dramatically mounted for GM and Ford.

Detroit bosses moan that their companies suffer because of labor costs, a convenient scapegoat for management blunders. This argument is also the rationale for management assaults on workers' job and living standards. Nonetheless, there is a real truth to the claim. Does this mean that the workers at domestic companies are actually living high on the hog, or getting an unfair share of company proceeds? Absolutely not. It is just that under capitalism, bosses generally earn more profits by compensating their workers less, and are better able to compete if they are more ruthless with their workforce than are their competitors. This condition could be moderated during the boom times, but no longer. We stress the word "compensation," because relatively high wages are only part of the equation. Benefits, and in particular health care, are costly, and the drive to reduce health coverage is

the cutting edge of the bosses' attacks. The UAW bureaucracy, like other union leaders, long ago sought to buy off the ranks with contracted health plans rather than fight politically for socialized and guaranteed health care for all, and the strategy has boomeranged on them.

Foreign companies who pay workers less overseas indeed have an advantage. So in fact do the foreign-owned plants set up in the Sunbelt. Workers there get substantially less compensation, principally in their benefits package. But they still get more than the prevailing area rates – enough, the bosses calculate, to keep the union out. The treachery of the UAW leadership in abandoning its promise to mount serious organizing drives in the South meant not only a failure to expand the union base but a dire threat to the existing membership. The company bosses are now more determined to slash into the areas of pay and benefits that have been largely maintained through past years of crisis.

AUTO MOGULS DEMAND THAT WORKERS PAY

The attack on the Delphi workers is a more concentrated version of what is happening at GM and Ford. Like the auto makers, Delphi management complains about how much it pays its workers, even though there are a variety of reasons for the financial losses at home: it is dependent on GM for sales, it invests overseas rather than in domestic plants, it is squeezed for lower prices by the auto makers. But clearly they face a steep disadvantage in labor costs in a world of parts suppliers that are either non-unionized or blessed with contracts far cheaper than those at Delphi. Once again, the UAW bureaucracy's failure to organize and fight for higher wages among the competitors is coming back to haunt the union, this time at its main union stronghold among parts suppliers. But Delphi is not simply looking for an American operation with a far less compensated workforce. It plans to come out of bankruptcy more as an importer of goods, largely from China, than a producer of parts. CEO Miller is exceptionally vicious, but that is exactly why he was recruited for the tasks that management and the capitalists behind it saw necessary.

But the rank and file workers in the cross-hairs of these attacks have not simply rolled over. Anger and resistance have been widespread. Yes, the workers at GM and Ford approved the health care concession – but only by 61 percent at GM and a bare majority at Ford (51 percent) of those who voted. And it must be remembered that the retirees who were most directly affected by the cuts in health care were not eligible to vote.

Meanwhile, rank and file anger has been mounting on Delphi's shop floors for months. This has been a reaction not only to the proposed cuts but to the raw display of arrogance and venality by management. Faced with this outrage, and the knowledge that accepting Miller's cuts would amount to the trashing of union power at Delphi, the union leadership made meaningful threats of strike action that would seriously damage not only Delphi but GM as well.

In the face of this opposition, Miller was obliged to soften his proposal. But he is still seeking major cuts, as was made evident by his last offer and the bid to cancel contracts. For its part, the union leadership was looking for a face-saving proposal that would at the same time help the bosses out. Coming to a three-way agreement with GM and Delphi on the buyouts would help by smoothing over the mass job losses that Miller would impose. But Miller did not yield enough, and the union leadership was forced by the ranks to reject his offer. A strike appears highly likely at this point, but the ranks are not waiting for that to take action.

Since December, much of the organized opposition to the attacks has centered on the Soldiers of Solidarity (SOS), a presently loose organization formed by leftists and other militants.

SOS has held meetings and demonstrations, some of them attended by hundreds of rank and file workers. At these events the workers' anger has been aimed at the top union leadership as well as the company bosses. However, it has not yet assumed the proportions of an active challenge to the UAW leadership. That would take a sustained mass effort and a conscious alternative leadership.

In a crisis-wracked industry like auto, there is a defensive psychology among the ranks, a desire to just hold on to what is still there – particularly when they still have more than many other workers. This relatively conservative consciousness has itself been encouraged, and the conditions for it created, by the union leadership and its past betrayals. But as events at Delphi are demonstrating, the ranks' conservatism is being undermined. This is happening as a result of the immediate attacks and the growing awareness of the system's hostility to the interests of those who make it work.

THE STRIKE WEAPON

The UAW leadership may yet arrive at some "compromise" that will serve up many of the sacrifices Miller & Co. wanted in the first place. But the chances for a strike are high. What is needed is a no-holds barred winning struggle. The old adage says that you have to dance with the partner that you brought with you. Mass strikes are what got auto workers the gains they made; it is the only way they can retain them. For that to happen, the fundamentals of strike action itself have to be re-learned, like keeping out scabs and making sure the plants are shut. The Delphi ranks can be easily mobilized for mass pickets, mass demonstrations, etc., but even a strong strike along traditional lines is not going to fully address even the immediate problems.

While the alternative of backing down is far worse, there is little doubt that management has duly considered the strike threat and will try not to let it set back its long range goals. It will even try to use a strike as a means of securing severe cuts from the courts. Some strikes over the past years were militant actions that maintained the ranks' loyalties and even succeeded in knocking firms out of business. But that was hardly a solution for the needs of the ranks, nor could it prevent further dents in union power.

There are rumblings among UAW workers to go out in support of a Delphi strike. This would be marvelous: aside from its obvious effect on Delphi, it would be a powerful statement to the auto bosses and capitalist class as a whole that there is going to be hell to pay for trying to take out union brothers and sisters.

If the auto workers as a whole were to shut down GM, Ford, Chrysler and Delphi, that would also be a powerful spur for a vast section of the American working class to join the struggle with their own job actions. Discontent, anger and frustration is rife just below the surface throughout the working class. It needs a powerful spark like one that auto could generate. Such a general strike would affect most directly the unions of the AFL-CIO and Change to Win federations, demanding their all-out support.

To be really successful, a general strike could be spread to the vast sections of the working class which are unorganized. This can be achieved by broadening the strike demands to reflect the interests of workers at large. Such a strike could shut down many industries, but of particular interest here are the unorganized auto parts plants and Southern assembly lines. We have also seen the combustibility of the growing and increasingly militant and energized immigrant workers. In the recent mass demonstrations against legislative attacks, they have shown that they will conduct work stoppages even without union organization.

Such a class-wide fight would inevitably be a political struggle. The demand for nationalization of the collapsing industry, without compensating its profit-grubbing owners, must be put on

the front burner. Even immediate issues of layoffs, health care and bankruptcy are ones that far transcend contracts between individual companies and unions. Revolutionary workers would fight for strike demands to include the smashing of the bankruptcy laws and the achievement of free, universal health care; guaranteed jobs through nationalization of losing industries and a massive program of public works that would provide jobs for all. We would fight to include demands opposing racism and supporting the rights of immigrant workers.

Workers have seen decades of the massive state subsidies for big business while our class is looted, a policy justified by lies that a free market and privatization are beneficial for all. Mass struggle will show the necessity of fighting for jobs through nationalizing industries and guaranteeing productive jobs at decent wages. In our view, this struggle cannot be completed under capitalism. But by threatening the capitalists it can repel the current attacks even under this system. Successful defensive struggles could build working-class self-confidence in its own power, thus pointing the way toward workers' revolution.

For this reason, we urge advanced workers to consider and champion the demand for a general strike, precisely the kind of broad, political weapon needed. We have argued for this demand for many years in a variety of struggles, and it is an absolutely fitting one for the automobile crisis. An auto-wide strike aimed at defending Delphi workers would be a wake-up call for all workers, a rallying point for action in defense of the working class in general.

When Delphi announced its package of attacks late last year, UAW President Ron Gettelfinger moaned that it "is designed to hasten the dismantling of America's middle class by importing Third World wages." There is a certain truth to this, insofar as it suggests the seriousness to the bosses' attacks. But the wages are not "imported" and the protectionist language should be rejected.

COFI-LRP

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The Lower Ninth Ward is the neighborhood where the march started, and where the official New Orleans MLK Day march had always begun. This Black community was devastated by the hurricane and has been allowed to rot for all the months since the flood. Speakers at the march noted that there are still dead bodies inside many houses. Officials do not want to call attention to the community they intend to destroy for good, so they cancelled the traditional march, scheduled a separate event closer to downtown, and, with the exception of a couple of two-faced local politicians, refused to attend the protest march that stuck to the traditional route.

Clearly under pressure from the unofficial march, Mayor Ray Nagin promised in a speech later that day that New Orleans would remain a "chocolate city." Nagin, whose role is to provide Black cover for the whitening of New Orleans, demagogically pretended to solidarize with the former Black majority who want to return home. But his comment was a scandalous outrage to the ruling class he serves. The next day he was forced to make a groveling apology for his remarks.

The LRP played a major role throughout the march. Our three double-sided placards held high on poles were the most visible signs in the march: "From New Orleans to Baghdad, Capitalism Means Racist Mass Murder"; "Build the Revolutionary Party of the Working Class"; "Socialist Revolution is the Only Solution"; "Democrats and Republicans: Two Parties of Racism,

Protectionism does nothing to stop the lowering of wages in the U.S., which reflects decisions the bosses make based above all on the strength of the class struggle. It also serves the bosses, since it divides workers along national lines and diverts American workers from fighting their real enemy, American capitalists.

Note also that both bureaucrats and bourgeois academics employ the term "middle class" to denote workers, as if to suggest a non-contentious role for the working class. In fact, any semblance of a stable and comfortable existence even for the bulk of better-paid workers in this society was an illusion fostered by the temporary conditions of the post-war boom. That illusion has been punctured in a thousand places, with no better example than the privileged bastion of auto.

SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

The gains of the past must be defended now. But the best way to do this is by understanding that unless the capitalist system itself is overthrown, those past gains and any temporary victories will be reversed by the needs and drives of the bosses who own and control it. Automobile workers, long the battle leaders of the American class struggle, can be expected to supply a major portion of the politically advanced workers for the revolutionary vanguard party.

The building of that party is the most vital necessity our class has. Its leadership is indispensable for the overthrow of the capitalist state, the creation of a workers' state and the beginnings of a truly just society. By brutal means, capitalism has brought technology and the organization of production to a point where the potential to adequately feed, clothe and house the entire world population is reachable. But the creation of abundance would end exploitation and destroy profits, so the capitalists themselves stand as a barrier to a society fit for human beings. Socialist revolution is the only solution! ●

Imperialism and War." On the New Orleans local TV news, we and our placards were clearly visible in each station's coverage of the march. The headline in *Proletarian Revolution* No. 76, "Katrina Survivors Still Under Attack," helped us distribute well over 100 copies.

One young comrade got to address the march when it stopped in front of the Iberville public housing development, where he spoke to both marchers and residents. He pointed to the need for working-class people to take control and develop our own plans for reconstruction. He highlighted the need for mass action to enforce working-class demands, rather than relying on the courts or the Democratic or Republican Parties. He said, "If someone asks what capitalism is, they can look around the destroyed Ninth Ward: this system has nothing for us." He led the crowd several times in chanting our slogan, "From New Orleans to Baghdad, Capitalism Means Racist Mass Murder," and followed this with a call to build the revolutionary party of the working class.

IMMIGRANT RIGHTS DEMONSTRATIONS

In March and April, LRP comrades participated in the mass demonstrations for immigrant rights in Chicago and New York. (See page 1 for our political analysis.)

The Chicago action on March 10 was huge, with hundreds of thousands of participants. An aura of electoralism was evident, and it was especially maddening to see Mayor Daley and Governor Blagojevich on the podium, pretending to be friends of working people. The predominance of American flags testified to the organizers' efforts to make sure that these dominated over

Mexican symbols. In the same spirit was the chanting of the Pledge of Allegiance by the crowd, led from the podium.

In New York, the march over the Brooklyn Bridge on April 1 was not as large as could be hoped for (50,000), given both the urgency of stopping House Bill 4437, which would designate every undocumented worker in the United States a felon – as well as reports of massive militant protests in other cities.

The slogans sanctioned by the business and church leaders who called the protest were consciously moderate: “*Si, se puede*” (“Yes, we can”), “*El pueblo unido jamás será vencido*” (“The people united will never be defeated), “We’re not illegal, we’re workers,” “We pay taxes,” “We are America.” In contrast, two slogans started by the crowd were very popular, even though they were not liked by the leaders: “*¡Bush, escucha: El pueblo está en lucha!*” (“Bush, listen! The people are fighting!”) and “*¡Aquí estamos, y no nos vamos, y si nos echan, nos regresamos!*” (“We are here, we won’t leave, and if you make us, we’ll come back!”)

On April 10, an LRP contingent also took part in a protest at City Hall in New York, part of a national day of protest for immigrant rights in 150 cities. This rally drew over 100,000 people and unlike the April 1 march, it was built heavily by the labor unions, especially SEIU-Local 32BJ (the porters and janitors union) which has a largely immigrant membership. The union leaders too were pushing the sentiment that the purpose of these protests is not to fight racism or exploitation but rather to prove how “American” immigrants are. This time the platform was dominated by union leaders promoting Democratic politicians like New York Senators Clinton and Schumer. A few years back, Hillary Clinton was singing a different tune: “People have to stop employing illegal immigrants.” She has also called for entry-and-exit IDs for immigrants. The impact of the wave of immigrants’ rallies has certainly upped the level of bourgeois politicians’ hypocrisy.

CHICAGO LRP

In Chicago’s very quiet political scene, the main focus of the LRP has been work against the imperialist war and occupation of Iraq, solidarity with survivors of Hurricane Katrina facing continued racist outrages, and participation in the struggle for immigrant rights. We have actively distributed LRP literature at three

working-class college campuses: Northeastern Illinois, Malcolm X and Truman.

In relation to Katrina, we attended a New Orleans report-back meeting in February called by Solidarity, which was notable for the fact that this “socialist” organization defended the city’s decision to proceed with Mardi Gras celebrations while refusing to rebuild Black neighborhoods! We also participated in a small march for justice for Katrina survivors.

The long-dormant anti-war struggle in Chicago was revived somewhat by demonstrations on March 18. However, the liberal leaders of that movement chose to hold two separate events, which culminated in 5,000 to 10,000 protesters parading through an upscale shopping area under social-patriotic slogans like “Bring the Troops Home Now.” This protest was much smaller and more middle-class than what is needed. Nevertheless, the immigrant rights march of the previous week may have awakened activists, and the political scene in Chicago may get considerably livelier soon.

NEW YORK LRP

The main work of the New York LRP for several months has been around the transit workers strike in December and the subsequent battles within TWU Local 100 and against the transit bosses over the union contract. (See the article on page 24 for our analysis of this continuing struggle.) We have distributed thousands of copies of our *Revolutionary Transit Worker* bulletin. Readers are invited to write to us for copies or to check our website for them.

The anti-war rally on March 18, in contrast to those in Chicago and several other cities, was a pathetic event. Despite the significance of the third anniversary of the Iraq invasion, which New York had protested then with rallies of hundreds of thousands, this time fewer than 1500 people showed up. Likely reasons were the unprincipled split among anti-war organizations (with United for Peace and Justice belying its name by boycotting events sponsored by its rivals), as well as the leaderships’ subordination to Democratic politicians.

The New York LRP continues its activity at City College, where we held forums on Bill Cosby’s denigration of Black workers and youth, and on Islam and imperialism. At our headquarters we held forums on topics including the growing international role of China, the French class struggles (see page 9), and the U.S. labor scene. ●

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Immigrant Rights

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no school, no selling and no buying.” Some, including the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA), are even calling it a “general strike.” Against this, other sponsors of the protests like Los Angeles Cardinal Roger Mahony and unions like SEIU oppose this move as too militant: they prefer to rely on electoralism and tame appeals to the ruling class. We say that it is bold mass action that has powered the struggle so far and only even more defiant mass actions can win future victories.

Nevertheless, there are real problems with the boycott and strike calls. Sales boycotts can have only momentary success, whereas mass strikes cripple the profits of the capitalists who run this society. But a strike or “work boycott” without the backing of mass workers’ organizations, in particular the unions, asks the most vulnerable workers to risk retaliation from their bosses. Immigrant workers have to pressure their leaders to demand that the unions defend them with mass action on the job as well as in the streets; all union militants should fight for such solidarity. Immigrant workers will also have to turn to building new organizations, both on the job and in their communities, to effectively take forward their struggle.

IMPERIALISM AND FORCED MIGRATION

Despite the wishes of racist patriots who would like to exclude all non-white immigrants, the immigrant workers – documented and undocumented – are here to stay and will play a big role in the coming class struggles. The Minuteman types can scream about “the browning of America” but they can’t stop it. At the beginning of the 20th Century, their political ancestors foamed at the mouth over the millions of immigrant workers who poured into the expanding industrial cities, bitterly complaining about “rum, Romanism and revolution” taking over the country. Now they hope that racism will work better than the threats of Catholicism and communism.

The size of the protests was unexpected, but the anger they expressed should have come as no surprise. Most immigrants are driven to the U.S. by desperate poverty in their homelands, even



New York, April 1. Business and church sponsors pushed for patriotic appeals at rallies. But only mass power, not flag-waving, will win immigrant rights.

though they face here endless toil at miserable jobs and inhumanly low wages. Worldwide capitalism, American imperialism above all, has so thoroughly exploited, starved and devastated the masses at home that even the hardships and bigotry of life in the U.S. could not keep them away.

Imperialism has bled dry the poorest countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America with “free trade” policies like NAFTA, “structural readjustment” policies of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund and the privatization of nationalized industries. It has left millions of workers unemployed and wiped out millions of small farmers, turning them into landless refugees. Those forced to leave their homelands and families have every right to seek refuge and jobs wherever they can, especially in imperialist countries like the United States.

Capitalists here are happy to import workers from those lands, since without proper papers they are forced to work for rotten wages and no benefits and do not dare to file complaints. In turn, the capitalists use these low wages to undercut the living standards of the rest of the working class. The bosses also invest in factories in the former colonial and semi-colonial countries because they can pay rock-bottom wages, further undermining wages at home.

The capitalists try to turn groups of workers against each other, competing ever more fiercely for dwindling jobs and falling wages in a war of all against all; whites against Blacks, Latinos and foreign-born workers – and the latter against each other. Workers of each country are forced to compete with each other in order to force down wages everywhere. Working people have only two choices: either let the bosses play us off each other until we hit bottom, or to unite and fight for decent wages and benefits *for all*. Such a struggle threatens the capitalists’ profits and can ultimately succeed only by overthrowing their system.

THE PROTESTS’ MISLEADERSHIP

While the protesters overwhelmingly opposed the Sensenbrenner bill, the bulk of the leaders and a majority of the demonstrators endorsed the rival McCain-Kennedy bill. This bill was favored because it opens a limited path to legal status for undocumented immigrants, provided they pay big fines and behave obediently; it would allow hundreds of thousands to work in the U.S. temporarily as “guest workers.” But these immigrants would be on probation, tied to a boss and facing the permanent threat of firing and deportation. They would be in effect indentured servants, fearing to risk strikes, protests or even militant statements. Moreover, McCain-Kennedy, like Sensenbrenner, would also mean expanding the hated immigration police (“La Migra”) and tightening the border patrol operations of Federal, state, and local agents.

The leadership of the protests has been in the hands of the Catholic Church, evangelists and other clergy, various Democratic Party politicians, middle-class-led immigrant defense and social service groups, and some trade unions. The Church seeks to cement its base among Latinos, who make up forty percent of its followers. As an institution, it is intimately tied to the exploitive capitalist class and its desire for cheap labor. The trade unions were split. The AFL-CIO opposed both bills but has played little role in the movement. The SEIU, a union with many immigrant members

and the founder of the rival Change to Win federation, is playing a major role and has joined the bandwagon for McCain-Kennedy.

One wing of the bourgeoisie calls for vicious repression and whips up racism; the other, including its allies within the movement, appeals to the oppressed with promises of citizenship for good behavior. The Democratic as well as Republican representatives of the ruling class all seek to build a reservoir of poor and desperate workers subject to superexploitation. Both wings want threats over immigrant workers' heads to keep them down and to undermine the wages and working conditions of all workers. They also seek to drive wedges between sectors of the working class, telling lower-paid workers that immigrants threaten their jobs.

THE WORKING-CLASS ANSWER

The working class solution is totally different. It includes full, equal rights for all workers (whether or not they choose to become U.S. citizens), the end of racist and chauvinist discrimination, the democratic right of people to live and work freely in the country of their choice, free quality education, health care and pensions, and a vast program of public works to create jobs for all. The immense need for reconstruction after Hurricane Katrina is only the harshest example of decaying conditions everywhere; it demonstrates that there is no shortage of jobs that need to be done. But when economic decisions are made on the basis of profit, human needs are disregarded. Only a revolutionary society run by the working class can solve the crisis.

The mass of protestors do not yet see an alternative to their present leaders and their programs. The widespread display of American flags by immigrants was an attempt to send the message that they are not threatening and deserve good treatment. But it was the protests' defiance and not flag-waving or begging that caused Washington to pause. The many Latin American and Caribbean flags that were also displayed had a different character. They were a show of pride and a challenge to bigotry and chauvinism. Middle-class leaders accustomed to appealing for sops from bourgeois politicians urged that only U.S. flags be carried in the future, but many protesters ignored this cowardly "tactical" request.

The power of the mass eruption of struggle has already added to the confidence of the workers. As the struggle becomes more intense, they will need to radicalize and see through their mis-



Huge turnout in Los Angeles should inspire all workers and show the power of massive action.

leaders. Immigrant workers as well as American Black workers, because of their experience of oppression, have fewer illusions in the capitalist system and will therefore undoubtedly be represented disproportionately among the most politically advanced sections of the working class.

The consciousness of American-born workers in general is very mixed as of now. The working class, long enchained at the hands of the labor bureaucracy, is beginning to stir once again. Auto workers, transit workers and others have fought back against the attacks on their jobs, wages, health care and pensions. It is crucial that the newly awakened sense of power among immigrant workers show the way for all workers to join the fight against the capitalist attacks.

Revolutionary workers enthusiastically support and join the growing struggle of immigrant workers. We participate in order to promote the greatest united action for the needs of the working class. We warn our fellow workers, however, that the main leaders are tied to the capitalist system. They will cautiously support the struggle as long as it strengthens their political power within the system. But they will betray it as soon as the system is threatened.

To meet that crisis of leadership, the most class-conscious workers must come together to build a political party with the only program that offers a solution: an international revolutionary socialist party. In the course of the struggle, more and more workers will become convinced that the workers of the world will be able to secure a decent life, free of poverty and discrimination, through the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the building of a classless, communist society.

— April 21, 2006

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***Workers and Oppressed Peoples of the World, Unite!
Equal Rights for Immigrant Workers!
End All Restrictions on Immigrants and Refugees!
Down With Racism and National Chauvinism!
Jobs for All! For a Massive Public Works Program!***

***International Socialist Revolution is the Only Solution!
Build the Revolutionary Party of the Working Class!
Re-Crete the Fourth International!***

Transit

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Toussaint's grip and bring them to power. Likewise, other opponents of the deal who were in a strong position to lead a fight, like the leaders of the Local's track division who had recently broken with Toussaint, confined themselves to verbal opposition, biding their time until they could challenge him in the next election at the end of the year. (See *RTW* 34 for more information on the opposition.)

We in the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) have a long history of work inside Local 100. Through our supporters both in and outside of Local 100, and in particular with our newsletter *Revolutionary Transit Worker*, we played an important role in building support for a strike and enthusiastically participated in its picket lines. All along we warned our fellow workers to be on guard against the union's pro-capitalist leadership and be prepared to fight to take the struggle forward if they betrayed. Subscriptions to *RTW* have increased substantially. (All recent issues of *RTW* are available on our website at www.lrp-cofi.org/TWU100/RTW.)

Following Toussaint's sellout, we threw ourselves into campaigning against the proposed contract. Our literature was by far the most visible exposing the union leadership's lying sales-pitch for the deal. We joined with others inside the union, including the Transit Workers for a Just Contract group, some dissident union officers and other militants to form the Vote No Coalition to work with fellow workers in a united campaign against the deal. But we

were far from strong enough to lead the majority of workers in a fight against the bosses and Toussaint's betrayals.

FROM CONTRACT REJECTION TO THE RE-VOTE

The failure of the officials with power in the union to lead a fightback allowed Toussaint and his cronies to regain control of the situation. Toussaint & Co. claimed that the membership's rejection of the contract was based on misinformation spread by a conspiracy between management, the Republican Party, the bourgeois media and union "dissidents." With this big lie, Toussaint began to lay the basis for calling for a re-vote rather than a renewed struggle.

Toussaint's main weapon to push the ranks into accepting his deal was the bosses' new attacks. Following the January vote, the MTA withdrew its contract and raised outrageous demands for further givebacks by the workers. Toussaint's response was not to respect the ranks' vote and promise a renewed struggle. Instead, he threatened in effect to let the new attacks go through if the members didn't re-vote to approve the original deal.

This approach succeeded in pressuring the workers of two smaller transit unions, who had joined Local 100 on strike, to approve the proposed contract. Thus Amalgamated Transit Union Locals 726 and 1056 approved similar contracts by big margins.

As demoralization set in within Local 100, behind the scenes Toussaint engineered the circulation of a petition for workers to sign claiming that they "regretted" supposedly voting against the contract and wanted to vote on it again. Toussaint soon claimed that a "substantial" (though never disclosed) number of members had signed the petition. He then held a press conference at City

Republicans and Democrats Are Enemies of Workers

Hands off TWU Local 100!

In response to the December strike, the Republican mayor and governor screamed threats and abuse. But it has been left up to Democratic Attorney General Eliot Spitzer and Judge Theodore Jones of the State Supreme Court in Brooklyn to join with the MTA in seeking to harshly punish the union and its individual members.

As a reward for his handling of the transit strike case, Judge Jones was appointed an Administrative Judge. He had been elected to office as the joint candidate of the Democratic, Republican, Conservative and Working Families Parties. The latter pretends to be a pro-worker party but is in reality the left arm of the Democrats. Its supporters, among whom are prominent union leaders and "socialists," can be proud of the new eminence of their candidate in serving the ruling class so devotedly.

Jones recently handed down his decisions on charges initiated against the union and its leaders by Spitzer and the MTA. Most significantly, he hit the local with \$2.5 million in fines (half a million less than Spitzer was demanding) under the Taylor Law, and decided in favor of suspending indefinitely the union's right to automatic dues checkoff. Jones also fined Toussaint \$1,000 and sentenced him to ten days in jail.

The union should refuse to pay a cent of

these fines and rally the entire New York area union movement in a struggle to defeat them. The right to strike is a basic democratic right that is essential for workers to have, to combat the capitalists' monopoly of economic power. (Automatic dues checkoff is a method the union bureaucracy uses to collect dues without having to face the ranks and be accountable to them. Revolutionaries prefer that union officials collect dues directly from the members. But we also oppose the state's attempts to dictate union affairs and to cripple the union's finances.)

The Toussaint leadership of Local 100 and the rest of the trade union bureaucracy have offered no serious opposition to these judicial attacks. When he called the strike, Toussaint explicitly told workers that they would have to pay Taylor Law penalties. He never demanded amnesty from the state's anti-strike legislation – as Local 100's leader Mike Quill had done in the 1966 strike, and won!

Many of the city's union leaders have condemned the Taylor Law penalties, but none are calling for abolishing the law. At best they favor reforms that would also punish governments for "bad faith bargaining" with municipal unions. This is because the labor bureaucrats themselves use the Taylor Law as a way of preventing strikes and keeping rank-

and-file militancy in check; they just want a little more leverage in negotiations with management. Indeed, Toussaint has accepted the fines in principle and only complained that they are "excessive" and that management wasn't also fined for provoking the strike. He has also announced that he will not challenge his jail sentence: this is almost certainly because he hopes a little martyrdom will revive his reputation and help him get re-elected.

The city's Central Labor Council, which scandalously refused to mobilize workers in support of the transit strike when it was happening, called an official labor rally to protest Toussaint's imprisonment. But their intent was to provide a publicity stunt for Toussaint on the day he goes to jail rather than an act of struggle.

Workers must not forget that it is Democratic politicians and judges who are inflicting punishment on the transit workers for striking. These latest injustices are minor crimes compared to the Democrats' long history of anti-working class and racist attacks at home and imperialist war-mongering abroad. Like the Republicans, the Democrats are dedicated enemies of the working class. The decades of unions promoting Democrats as "friends of labor" and showering funds on their campaigns must come to an end.

Hall, flanked by 16 City Council members and other politicians, to call for a re-vote.

Toussaint finally went to the Local 100 Executive Board and had it approve the re-vote. This meeting featured an extraordinary appeal for a re-vote by James Little, the newly appointed president of the scabbing TWU International. (Former President Michael O'Brien had recently retired supposedly for health reasons, but more likely because as the public face of the call for scabbing his continued presence was too much of an embarrassment.)

The Board motion also demanded that everyone on the Local 100 payroll speak only for a "Yes" vote. Since the official position of the local at the time was still *against* the contract, based on the membership majority vote, this gag rule was arguably contrary to the union's constitution and was certainly a fitting addition to Toussaint's contempt for the membership's democratic rights. Twelve Board members voted against Toussaint's motion, over twice as many as usual, but it passed nonetheless.

TOUSSAINT'S SCARE TACTICS

At that meeting Toussaint set the tone for his re-vote campaign, arguing that if the contract was rejected again it would inevitably go to arbitration, where all of its gains (notably the pension refund and modest improvements to retiree health benefits) would be lost and even worse conditions would be enforced. Binding arbitration, in which a supposedly "independent" but in reality pro-capitalist official casts the deciding vote on contractual terms, would no doubt be a disaster for transit workers. But any arbitration decision was at least months away – plenty of time to mobilize for another struggle to win the local's demands.

Toussaint and his cronies also continued their claims that his opponents were lying to the ranks about the proposed contract. They focused on Ainsley Stewart's mistaken comments that the new paycheck deduction would add up to 4.5 percent by the end of the contract, whereas the escalation clause that Toussaint concealed would likely make the 1.5 percent grow to about 2 percent. Toussaint's scare campaign did more than anything else to circulate Stewart's otherwise little-heard comments.

Just days before re-voting ended on the deal, Toussaint's lies about the great gains in healthcare and other benefits in the contract were exposed by none other than his own appointed health benefits coordinator, Mike Jerome. The latter belatedly broke his silence on the contract, issuing an open letter to the membership explaining that the facts of the contract were being "intentionally hidden" from them. Among other things, he confirmed that the new retirement health care paycheck deduction was indeed going to steadily grow – for benefits all but a small fraction of members already received. But Jerome's exposure was too little and too late to affect the vote.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Like many transit workers, the LRP and *RTW* condemn Local 100 leadership's betrayal of the strike struggle and its contemptuous ignoring of the ranks' first contract vote. The re-vote was an outrageous travesty of union democracy – setting a precedent for other union leaders to tell workers who vote against their proposals to "keep voting until you get it right." However, given the results of the re-vote, we have no choice but to join with other workers in demanding that the MTA accept the decision.

But as we have said, the fight is not over. The MTA had already withdrawn its proposed deal, and the Toussaint leadership can do little more than beg it to accept the deal rather than send it to arbitration. It is possible that the TA will agree to the contract rather than risk provoking a fightback. But pressure from a ruling

class anxious to press ahead with their anti-working class attacks and teach rebellious workers a lesson, and in particular from ambitious politicians like Presidential-wannabe Governor George Pataki, may push the MTA to play hardball and reject the deal. If it does and presses ahead with arbitration, militant workers will have to demand that the local leadership withdraw all concessions and prepare another strike for the local's original contract demands.

REVOLUTIONARY LESSONS OF THE STRUGGLE

The December strike was an inspiring example of working-class power and courage. It had the potential to turn around the decades of relentless capitalist attacks and spark a fightback by all workers. That is also why it was betrayed so quickly by the union leadership.

Roger Toussaint, like the rest of the privileged bureaucracy that dominates the unions, didn't sell out the workers because of personal cowardice or corruption – though he and they are both cowardly and corrupt. Rather, it is because they have accepted the capitalist system and seek to keep workers' struggles within limits it can afford. This corresponds with their privileged position as brokers between the workers and the capitalists. The only leadership that workers can trust to lead their immediate struggles to victory is one that will not restrain them from threatening the system: a revolutionary socialist leadership.

The strike and initial rejection of the sellout was the culmination of years of rising militancy among transit workers. In 1999, a powerful pro-strike movement had grown among transit workers only to be betrayed by the "old guard" Local 100 bureaucracy. (See *PR* 60.) The ranks took their revenge in 2000, voting them out of office. In their place they elected Toussaint as president at the head of the New Directions (ND) ticket. ND was the long-time union opposition grouping initiated by socialists from the Solidarity organization and others.

ND followed the approach typical of most non-revolutionary socialists in the unions, sacrificing their purported anti-capitalist politics for a minimal program of trade union democracy and militancy. By the time they had built a movement that could challenge the bureaucracy, would-be bureaucrats faced no political opposition to using them as a vehicle to power. As Toussaint used ND, so Ron Carey used the Solidarity-backed Teamsters for a Democratic Union movement. These two reformist "rank and file" groups led to disaster. (Our next issue will include an examination of the left's role in the current TWU struggle.)

The reformists have learned nothing from these experiences, and have simply gone back to repeating them. But revolutionary-minded workers cannot afford to make the same mistake. There are no short-cuts to building an alternative leadership in the unions other than by consistently stressing the importance of anti-capitalist, revolutionary socialist politics, while at the same time offering practical leadership in workers' immediate struggles. Revolutionaries seek to unite the broadest possible number of workers in struggle against the bosses and the betrayals of the union bureaucracy.

The LRP is enormously proud of our work in Local 100 over many years, in particular in building support for the transit strike and opposition to its sellout. While transit workers have suffered significant setbacks, there has been no crushing defeat and there are greater struggles yet to come. Many workers are discussing the lessons to be learned. The LRP has won a broader audience and following among transit workers than ever before. We are confident that the example we have set and our continuing role in struggles will see our ranks grow both within Local 100 and beyond, as more workers see the need to join in building the vanguard revolutionary party our class so desperately needs. ●

— April 22, 2006

New York Transit Workers Get Raw Deal

The subway and bus workers of New York City's Transport Workers Union Local 100 re-voted in April on the contract they had rejected in January. This time the deal was accepted by 71 percent of the more than 20,000 voters out of 38,000 union members. The turnaround was no victory for the workers. It marked a serious setback.

Even though a majority have now voted for the proposed contract, most transit workers know it is a rotten deal, the result of their leadership's betrayal of their strike last December. They had shown their commitment to fighting for a better contract by rejecting it the first time around; even though the margin then was only seven votes, many who had voted for the contract hated it. But three months of attacks from management, politicians and the courts, as well as a fear campaign by the union tops that threatened an even worse deal if the workers rejected it again, led to the "Yes" vote.

Yet even this contract is not guaranteed. The Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) bosses had already withdrawn the contract offer following the workers' initial "No" vote. As we go to press, the TA is threatening to ignore the new results and send the deal to arbitration, where the workers are sure to get a worse deal.

At the same time, the courts have hit the union with millions of dollars in fines and are preparing to suspend its automatic dues checkoff. They also handed the local's president, Roger Toussaint, a ten-day jail sentence for calling the strike. And each individual striker has been hit with a penalty of two days' pay for every day out, in accordance with New York State's anti-union Taylor Law that bans strikes by public employees. All these attacks must be fought: the transit workers' struggle is not over yet.

A POWERFUL STRIKE BETRAYED

With their strike, Local 100's ranks had heroically stood up to the bosses' and politicians' threats to use the Taylor Law, and to the bourgeois newspapers' screaming for even harsher penalties against strikers. Faced with intransigent demands for cutbacks by the MTA, the workers chose to fight back and forced a reluctant Toussaint to call the union out. The majority Black, Latino and immigrant workforce showed the awesome power workers have when they unite in struggle. In December, during the pre-Christmas holiday shopping season, the capital of U.S. commerce and world imperialism was brought to a crawl.

But after slightly less than three days, with support for the strike growing in the city's working class despite the inconvenience it caused them, Toussaint sent the union back to work without a contract. While transit workers reacted with dismay and outrage, Toussaint held secret negotiations with management to resolve the dispute.

The deal that was finally announced eliminated the MTA's initial demands for huge concessions on pensions, but it gave back even more in other areas. A main feature was a new 1.5 percent paycheck deduction for retiree health benefits; Toussaint hid the fact that this seemingly small deduction is set to rise automatically with health care costs, the most inflation-prone sector of the economy. On wages, the 10.5 percent raise over three years would still leave workers' pay behind inflation – even before the new



Workers at December rally looking at placards laying out Revolutionary Transit Worker's strike demands.

paycheck deduction and Taylor Law fines hit. The deal also surrendered the union's December contract expiration date that had given it leverage over holiday shopping profits. As in every contract, there were sweeteners to help the leadership claim victory and get a "Yes" vote – notably a promise to reimburse the many transit workers who had overpaid into their pension fund, amounting to several thousand dollars each. This last feature was an attempt to bribe workers with their own money into accepting the deal.

Toussaint threw all the union's resources into a misinformation campaign designed to cover up the contract's worst features. The fact that he lost, even by a small margin, shows that the ranks weren't fooled and were fed up with a leadership that had followed them into battle and then chickened out.

OPPOSITION TO THE SELLOUT

Unfortunately, within the union there was no coherent opposition leadership that could lead a fight for a better contract or effectively challenge Toussaint to do so. The most prominent opponents of Toussaint's deal included two union vice presidents, John Mooney and Ainsley Stewart, who have not attempted to build an alternative leadership to Toussaint and have no political program that workers could be confident in. The remnants of the traditional "New Directions" opposition in the local, now calling themselves Transit Workers for a Just Contract, were weakened and demoralized by their previous uncritical support for Toussaint. (An exception was Marty Goodman, an Executive Board member who played a positive militant role throughout the struggle.) Worse, some opponents of the contract were aligned with the right-wing International TWU leadership which had openly scabbed on the strike. They were happy to see the bad contract in the hopes that it would weaken

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