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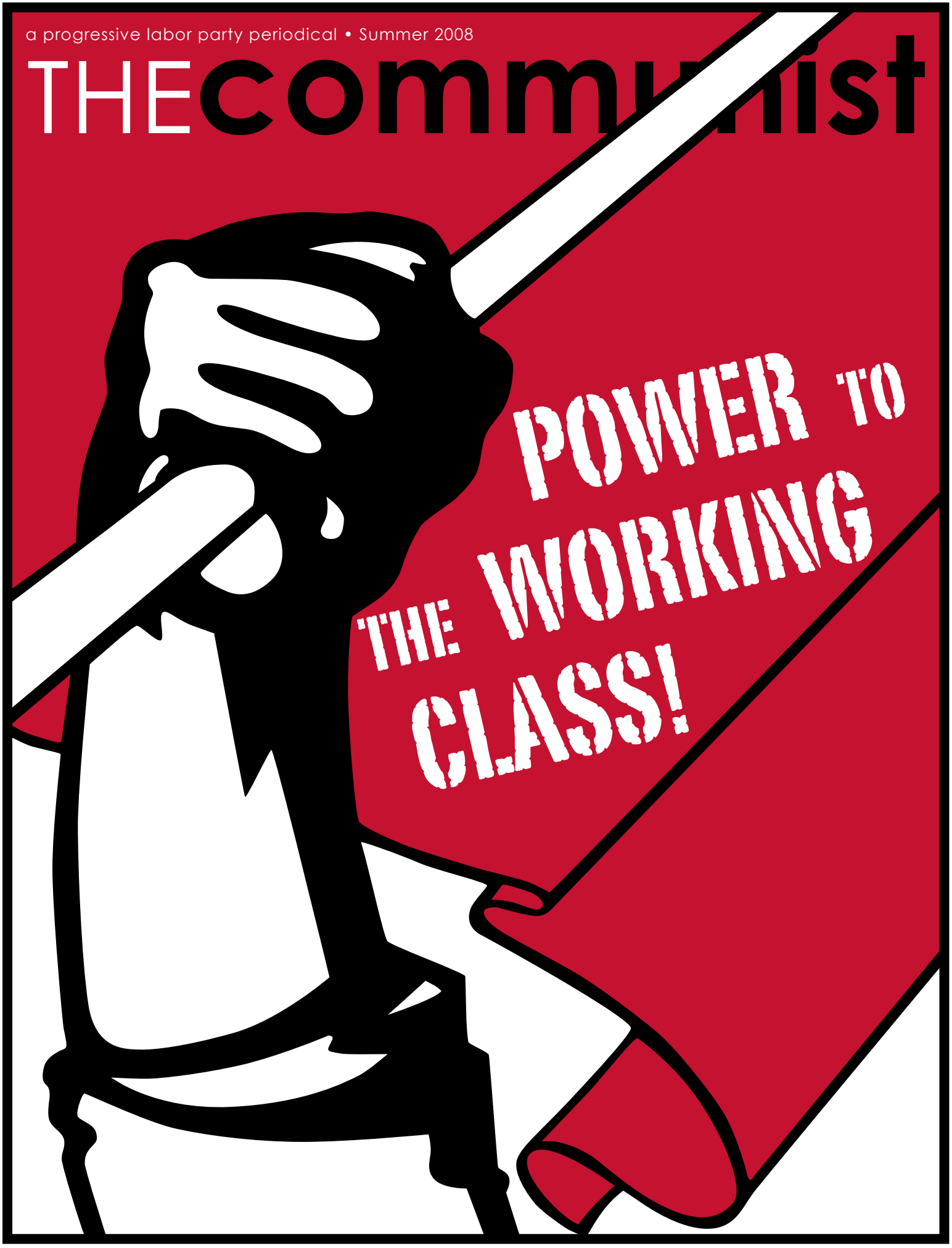
THE communist



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what we fight for

- PLP fights to smash capitalism–wage slavery. While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim"communism is dead,' capitalism is the real failure for billions all over the world. The Soviet Union and China returned to capitalism because socialism maintained too many aspects of the profit system, like wages and divisions of labor.
- Capitalism inevitably leads to wars. PLP organizes workers, students and soldiers to turn these wars into a revolution for communism. This fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat requires a mass Red Army led by the communist PLP.
- Communism means working collectively to build a society where sharing is based on need. We will abolish work for wages, money and profit. Everyone will share society's benefits and burdens.
- Communism means the party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers – eventually everyone – must become communist organizers.
- Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of race.
- Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women workers.
- Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one party.

JOIN US!

PLP

Work In Basic Industry Key to Fight for Communism

Recently, young PLP members began work in non-union subcontracting factories. Being new to the industry and these particular factories, they had to learn their jobs and make friends among their coworkers. As they gained confidence and valuable experience, mainly from the insights and help of their coworkers, they were in a better position to begin to think more seriously about building the Party in their shops.

What does it mean to do revolutionary communist work in the factories? For one thing, it means building a secure network for CHALLENGE, Progressive Labor Party's revolutionary communist paper. These CHALLENGE networks of readers and distributors, particularly among young black, Latin, immigrant and women workers, can lay the basis for recruiting new members and developing new communist leaders in basic industry. These networks can also have a profound influence on the future direction of the class struggle. Revolutionary yardsticks, like expanded CHALLENGE networks and recruitment of young leaders in industry, will tell the tale.

We are in a difficult period. The collapse of the old communist movement has left our class without the revolutionary leadership needed to steer the class struggle toward revolution. Recruiting and training new communist workers to organize their shop mates to respond to every attack, will prepare our class to break the chains that bind us to this murderous racist system.

A difficult period does not mean we can't do useful political work, even work that will eventually be decisive. The young comrades, with help from their coworkers and Party collectives, modestly increased their networks of CHALLENGE readers and sellers in the plants. At the same time, thousands of CHALLENGES were sold and distributed outside the plants and in working class neighborhoods.

They began to engage their fellow workers in more frequent political discussion around local and global issues. They wrote up some of these discussions for the paper. Social events with coworkers became more frequent. Study groups were started and class struggle initiated. They collected money to support striking union workers and built anti-racist support for the Jena 6.

There are two trends among the workers. One was seen in the major U.S. auto contracts last September. The UAW staged a series of short "Hollywood" strikes, as in "just for show." Contracts passed that cut starting wages by two-thirds and more than 100,000 jobs and dozens of factories were sacrificed. At the same time, in the past year workers struck a Northrop Grumman ship yard that supplies the U.S. Navy, Navistar workers struck who build engines for the armored Humvees in Iraq, and 3,600 American Axle workers struck for three months against wage cuts that halved their wages and eliminated 1,000 jobs. In all three strikes, workers were open to PLP's revolutionary communist outlook.

In no small part, the fate of revolution relies on our ability to understand these seemingly contradictory trends. Revolution is impossible if PLP is not anchored in industries like these. The U.S. industrial working class is more non-union than at any time in recent history, plagued by cynicism and passivity, but where PLP is able to have an effect there are workers who are receptive.

The General Climate In Which We Must Forge A Winning Strategy

We must prepare for a long struggle with escalating attacks caused by sharpening inter-imperialist rivalry. More and larger wars loom on the horizon. The demise of the old communist movement and the relative decline in U.S. political, military and economic strength adds fuel to the fire. Millions of lives depend on building the Party, its press and our revolutionary communist movement.

U.S. imperialism must insure this march to broader war regardless of who wins in November. Their world dominance is being challenged from all quarters. The Council of Foreign Relations (CFR) and the Brookings Institute, the main ruling class think tanks, "are undertaking an ambitious initiative to develop a nonpartisan blueprint for the next U.S. president, one which can be used as a foundation for the new

administration's Middle-East policy." (CFR web site) The CFR team has representation from each of the three leading camps: Sandy Berger (Clinton), Zbigniew Brzezinski (Obama), and Brent Scowcroft (McCain). Both electoral parties and all the presidential candidates plan to win us to broader war—perhaps with Iran next.

These broader wars, and eventually world war, require sharpening racist attacks on the working class even as we build their weapons and staff their army. No candidate opposes these attacks. U.S. bosses are forced to move towards fascist oppression—even as they bray about fighting for "democracy."

Limits, dangers and opportunities present themselves. Cynicism and passivity, though far from absolute, still dominate the workers' outlook. Dead-end voting has replaced class struggle for all the union mis-leaders, spreading to many of the rank-and-file. At the same time, sharpening conditions have pushed big sections of the industrial working class to reconsider their options. The reaction of union strikers to our revolutionary line and the recruitment and expansion of CHALLENGE networks in the non-union aerospace shops show revolutionary leadership can be built in this period. Progressive Labor Party's valuable experience building a revolutionary communist base in industry, sharpening class struggle and recruiting new communists over the last 30 years can continue during this period of low class struggle.

Racist Attacks: Non-Union Subcontractors, Assembly Plants Trigger Harsher Working Conditions

"Toyota has only one unionized assembly plant in the United States. All the same Toyota is going to set the pattern for the entire industry—wages, benefits pensions—you name it."—David Sedgwick, editor of *Automotive News*.

Until recently, ruling class strategists pointed to the financial assets of U.S. banks and investment houses to predict economic dominance for the foreseeable future. Indeed, "profits from the financial sector now account for 31 percent of total corporate earnings—up from 20 percent in 1990 and 8 percent in 1950. Profits from financial engineers now far exceed those generated by mechanical engineers." (*New York Times*, 11/11/2007)

Today, more of these financial profits come from hedge fund speculation. The recent credit crisis makes it painfully clear this speculation can't be sustained without creation of large amounts of surplus value. Workers create all value, not speculators.

The value of an automobile or airplane is greater than the sum of the parts that make it up. The amount of labor in production determines the increase in value. The boss can't appropriate this extra value until he sells the product. Marx called this, "Exchange." Exchange itself doesn't create any value.

As exchange becomes less connected to value creation, it turns into speculation. One boss can make money at the expense of another, but no value is created in the exchange. That's what hedge funds are all about. Eventually the house of cards collapses if no extra value is created to back up these financial "tools."

Compare this to China—an emerging imperialist competitor. Until recently, U.S. "experts" questioned China's economic viability. They warned Chinese banks carried too many "non-performing" loans. China Investment Corporation, the state-run investment fund, will spend two thirds of its $200 billion assisting Chinese banks. The percentage of "bad" loans has already dropped by half.

Chinese imperialists got this capital from exploiting workers in their vast, rapidly expanding manufacturing sector. They can get away with it because capitalist leaders long ago hijacked the communist revolution, turning it into another exploitative capitalist nightmare.

U.S. bosses have responded by trying to rebuild their industrial might on the backs of super-exploited black, Latin, immigrant and women workers. They've shifted production from union plants to non-union subcontractors, which employ disproportionately large numbers of these super-exploited workers. Today, the overwhelming majority of industrial workers slave under harsh conditions in non-union plants.

Moving up the "food chain," corporations set up non-union assembly plants. While union auto plants in the Mid-West are being scrapped, non-union foreign-owned transplants are opening throughout the South and Southwest. The much-discussed Air Force tanker contract paves the way for the first non-union aerospace assembly factory—the Northrop Grumman plant in low-wage Mobile, Ala. If approved the average Alabaman machinist makes about half that of senior Boeing machinists in the Northwest. Northrop will subcontract to 40 plants in southern California representing 7,500 jobs at lower wages still (see chart). To add insult to injury, the bosses are proposing a low-wage, non-union southern aerospace corridor through Florida, Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi. Lowering the cost of weapons by attacking industrial workers has been a long-held goal of the Pentagon.

The southern U.S., all the way from the Southeast to the West Coast, has become a vast region of super-exploitation. The long history of racism dating back to slavery led to a non-union, lower-wage Southeast. Add to this, the expansion of immigrant labor all the way to Southern California. We'd be fools if we allowed the bosses' to divide us—black from Latin, from immigrant, from white.

Racist super-exploitation is the wedge the bosses have

used to drive down the wages and working conditions of all industrial workers. Chrysler just announced it will "replace [10.000 additional] workers with new hires earning about half the salary of their predecessors." (*New York Times*, 1/29) General Motors is following suit. New hires at Boeing's union plants average $12.72 per hour, less than half that of their more senior coworkers.

Rather than mounting an anti-racist fight-back, union mis-leaders have helped the bosses drive unionized workers conditions down to the level of non-union workers, all in the name of "beating the competition." Last year, Ford eliminated 32,000 higher paying jobs. Now the company is pushing "buyouts" on its remaining 54,000 hourly workers to "pave the way for new hires at $14 an hour—roughly half that of current pay." (*New York Times*, 2/26) The UAW VP for Ford, former "radical" Bob King wrote the introduction to Ford's brochure, "Fresh Opportunities," pushing the buyouts saying, "There just aren't enough jobs for everyone."

The 8-week Navistar strike last winter further exposed these social-fascist union leaders. Unionized workers no longer make up the majority of Navistar's workforce. The UAW contract ended on October 1. The union leadership waited until the 23rd to call a strike, giving the company time to shift crucial war production to non-union plants in Texas, Mississippi, and Mexico. Without unity between union and non-union workers, the strike was doomed from the get go.

Industrial unions are more closely tied to the imperialists' interests than ever. The IAM and the United Steel Workers brought the biggest bosses, their strategists and union leaders together in "Surge Roundtables" to map out plans for a war economy.

The nationalist, patriotic pro-capitalist union leadership is trying to save their masters and stay in business. Mainly they are trying to secure industrial workers' loyalty. The IAM organizing logo features an American flag and an armed soldier declaring "Machinists: Defending Our Freedoms – Defending Our Jobs." Every shop steward's jacket features a flag shoulder patch.

Not that bowing before the altar of capitalism has worked all that successfully to date. The industrial unions are but a shadow of their former selves. Even as the absolute number of industrial workers has remained relatively stable, union membership has plummeted. United Auto Workers union (UAW) membership has slipped below 500,000. The IAM is trying to railroad through a dues increase because it has only 420,000 dues-paying members. The United Steelworkers union (USWA) is smaller still. Each of these unions had well over a million—some approaching 2 million—members at one time. In 1976, truckers were 60 percent unionized. In 2005, the figure stood at 25 percent. Overall, only 7.5% of the private sector is now unionized. These numbers could get worse as recession takes hold.

The attacks on the U.S. working class are brutally racist, severe and mounting. Even so, these attacks cannot alone maintain the U.S. imperialist's top-dog status. Toyota is now the number 1 auto producer, not GM. U.S. industry is being challenged and often beaten in one category after another. Russia has rebuilt its war industry, while becoming an energy juggernaut. Most agree China is now the biggest manufacturer, while Germany holds the title of biggest exporter of machine goods.

The U.S. bosses have reached the point were they must reign in their international competitors. Bigger, bloodier oil wars are in the cards. U.S. bosses must secure Mid East oil if they hope to blunt the advance of emerging imperialists like Russia and China.

Imperialism's contradictions cannot be resolved peacefully. The illusion that we can elect someone who can peacefully resolve imperialism's contradictions disarms us. War, eventually world war, will determine which imperialist rules the roost.

Fight Racism, To Build A Communist Base Among Industrial Workers

The collapse of the old communist movement was a terrible blow to the working class, but not a fatal one. The greater attacks and inter-imperialist conflict is not only creating many casualties, but also the possibility of winning larger numbers of workers to the conclusion that this system must be smashed with communist revolution. With the critical ingredient of revolutionary leadership, Russian workers seized power during WWI and the Chinese working class did the same after WWII.

Inter-imperialist rivalry has accelerated the emergence of a largely non-union industrial workforce. Many Latin immigrants in these shops come from a left-wing tradition, while black workers there have historically led some of the most militant fights against the bosses.

We can't advance without rejecting the bosses' racist propaganda that blames immigrant workers in non-union subcontractors for the lowering of wages. It is the bosses' racist system of wage slavery that must be destroyed. We have to bring our revolutionary communist politics to both union and non-union settings.

The Russian revolution and the resulting international communist movement inspired mass class-consciousness among workers that advanced anti-racist unity and class struggle. However, the fight for socialism and its many concessions to capitalism undermined this international movement.

Rebuilding a revolutionary movement based on fighting directly for communism requires anti-racist unity between union and non-union workers to rebuild this class-consciousness. Fighting racism is key to building a serious revolutionary force among industrial workers.

CHALLENGE networks expand the potential for leading class struggle as our political and personal relations with the workers deepen. Anti-imperialist activity at the point of [war] production will up the ante. Super-exploited union and non-union workers can sharpen the struggle in the mass organizations that claim to fight racism and the war. The millions of immigrant workers in industrial sweatshops can help expand our international revolutionary work. The effect of Red-led workers on everything from shop fight-backs to political marches, from anti-immigrant racism to racist police terror, can help put revolution on the agenda.

Tactics may differ somewhat in union shops, but success should be measured in a similar way. Communists must ask themselves how many more readers and sellers of CHALLENGE came out of strike activity? Did the union election bring more workers closer to our revolutionary communist line or into the Party? How much time do we spend with workers off the job—particularly with younger black and Latin workers whose working conditions resemble those of their non-union brethren? Did solidarity resolutions and anti-racist Jena 6 proposals spread anti-racist class consciousness and communist ideas among our fellow workers?

Communists should fully expect the bosses to attack even modest efforts to bring revolutionary communist politics to industrial workers. In large part, U.S. imperialisms' survival depends on hoodwinking the industrial working class and our sons and daughters in the armed forces. On the other hand, red-led industrial workers and soldiers mark the beginning of the end for the bosses.

We can't rely on spontaneity to defeat these inevitable attacks on our Party. We will need workers to step up in the face of these assaults. Where will these new revolutionary forces come from?

Those workers involved in our CHALLENGE networks will be the most likely to see the political stakes and follow the Party's lead. Selling CHALLENGE regularly in our plants, building unbreakable personal ties and being involved in the class struggle, will prepare new workers to step up. These networks are central to the long-term approach necessary to make a revolution.

Steeling the Working Class For The Future

PLP can't predict exactly what U. S. industry will look like in 10-20 years. The trend to non-union facilities may continue, or the big bosses may again promote unions to better control class struggle. Either way, we have to invigorate our political work now in both union and non-union factories, mines and mills. The present day weakness of unions is not the determining factor for our revolutionary work.

Union or non-union, conditions will worsen because of the increasing challenges to US imperialism. Traditional union plants will look more like non-union subcontractors as younger workers in both kinds of factories make similar wages and face similar conditions.

PLP's industrial work has shown that we can initiate class struggle, start study groups, find new readers, sellers and members among this super-exploited workforce. Building on the Party's experience organizing in the garment industry and with migrant farm workers, these young comrades have shown that they can turn the bosses' racist super-exploitation into an opportunity to build a mass communist movement.

But the working class is still in a difficult period. Hard work yields modest results. Not much can be accomplished anywhere without close personal and political friendships built over time. Sharp struggle against racism, imperialism and, bringing the fight of non-union workers to the shop floor and union hall at the heritage plants will expose the social fascist union mis-leaders. A persistent focus on base building, CHALLENGE networks and recruitment are the order of the day in both union and non-union plants. The same yardsticks mark the path to revolution in both kinds of factories.

It is no exaggeration to say that the fate of our class depends on recruiting and training new young industrial workers in the art of revolutionary communist organizing. We must anchor our Party in these industrial plants—particularly among the young super-exploited black, Latin, immigrants and women that make up an increasingly large number of these workers. With our feet on the ground and our eyes on the prize – build a base among the working class, sharpen class struggle, recruit to the Party -- the working class can produce the leaders necessary to win a communist future.

China Bashing Simply a Smokescreen for US Bosses' Weakness

In the summer of 2007, as the current election cycle began, politicians and trade union sellouts began pointing fingers at China. Bush accused China of illegally subsidizing its exports to the US. The AFL-CIO demanded even more action against China to undo the loss of unionized manufacturing jobs in the United States. And Democratic politicians at the August 2007 AFL-CIO candidate forum repeatedly denounced China for manipulating ("undervaluing") its currency and its holdings of US debt in order to hurt the US economy and thus American workers. Joe Biden denounced China as holding "the mortgage to our house," a clear allusion to the foreclosure crisis that was hitting many American workers.

But the problems of American workers are not the fault of China. Rather they are caused by the US bosses obeying the general laws of capitalism as a whole. The attacks on China must be seen for what they really are—part of the current competition between inter-imperialist rivals and an attempt to win US workers to support their bosses in a future war with China.

Myth 1: The loss of jobs to China and elsewhere is the result of a Bush agenda.

Much of current anti-China rhetoric implies that the loss of unionized jobs and the rise of China as a rival is a product of the Bush administration and its links to "corporate interests." Certainly Bush is tied to US corporate interests, but so are the Democrats. The growth of imports from China and elsewhere is the joint product of Democratic and Republican programs over the last forty years, including the tariff reductions and the Border Industrialization Program of the Kennedy administration, NAFTA and the granting of permanent normal trade relations to China under Clinton, and China's admission to the WTO under Bush. Politicians fromboth parties are the tools of the capitalist class. Just look at their cabinets. Financiers from the investment bank Goldman Sachs, which is a key proponent of the free trade agenda, have played important roles in both the Clinton and Bush administrations. Robert Rubin, Clinton's Treasury secretary, Stephen Friedman, chairman of Bush's National Economic Council, and Henry Paulson, Bush's current Treasury Secretary, all came into government from Goldman Sachs. Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, the

Democratic frontrunner, and Republican John McCain are supported by Goldman Sachs, and other large banks.

To evaluate the loss of unionized jobs, one must go back to the 1950s. The loss of jobs is part of the on-going effort of capitalists to increase their profits by lowering wages and by speeding up and intensifying work. This includes moving within the United States as well as overseas, pitting native-born, immigrant, and overseas workers against each other, always with the aid of Democratic and Republican politicians and pro-business laws promoted by both parties.

In the immediate post-World War II era, auto bosses and others began to move outside of the cities that had been unionized in the struggles of the 1930s. By moving into more isolated suburbs they hoped to contain struggle, and even to build allegiance to US capitalism by providing for home "ownership." In the 1970s and 1980s, meatpacking companies which were confronted by militant, unionized black workers in Chicago, began shutting down production there to reopen in places like rural Iowa that had been hit by agricultural crisis. There they got tax breaks for creating "new jobs" and hired native-born American workers at minimum wage. As the meatpackers expanded production in these rural areas, they eventually faced labor shortages that they solved by recruiting immigrants, including refugees from US imperialist wars in Southeast Asia and Central America.

1, At the same time RCA began to speed up and intensify production in Indiana. In 1956, the value added per worker per hour of work was $5.65, in 1967 it had risen to $8.61, and then it soared to $27.71 in 1977 (all figures in real terms). In 1977, wages accounted for only 6.4 percent of the price of an RCA television. Indiana RCA workers produced 4.83 TVs per worker per day in 1986, and 9.72 TVs per worker per day in 1992. The plant was closed in 1998. See Jefferson Cowie, Capital Moves.

2.The New York Times, July 26, 2007.

General Electric began moving production from the northeast in the 1960s, first to the US South and then to factories elsewhere. RCA, after facing strikes in the 1960s, moved some production to Tennessee and even more to Mexico where it could take advantage of Kennedy's Border Industrialization Program. In 1998, RCA (by then owned by GE) shut down all production in Indiana, despite the profitability of the line.[1] Makers of computer chips, of clothing, of toys and other products have all done the same, moving factories from the US to Mexico and then to China. In the 1970s, Mattel (which originally manufactured "Barbie" in Japan) opened factories in Mexico and Haiti and then became the frontrunner in the move to China. Now Mattel makes 65 percent of its toys in China, over half in factories that it owns and manages.[2]

Despite all this movement of factories, US manufacturing production increased in the 1990s, including growth in industries such as electronics, chemicals, steel, auto and textiles. The number of manufacturing workers remained relatively constant: In 2000, the number of manufacturing workers in the US (17.3 million) was somewhat higher than in 1965 (16.6 million) though lower than the peak year of 1979 (19.4 million).[3] US capitalists and their policy makers were determined to keep important manufacturing jobs at home to protect military production. But workers' lives suffered as bosses moved to increase profits by intensifying the exploitation of the working class. The location of jobs changed, which decimated working-class life in many Midwestern cities, and the nature of the jobs has changed, especially as unionized jobs have been replaced by non-union jobs in low-wage subcontracting shops.

Conditions for the working class have worsened since 2000 because of the laws of capitalist competition. Although in 2007 the US was still the world's largest manufacturer, US capitalists face increasing challenges from their rivals.[4] In auto, for example, as each company attempted to grab a larger share of the market, the capacity to produce cars soared. By 2003 world auto capacity hit 77 million cars and light trucks a year. But they could only sell 56 million vehicles.[5] In the face of this competition, US auto companies lost market share. As a result they have cut wages and increased layoffs. Wages are falling, unemployment is increasing, and those unemployed are without jobs for increasingly long periods. Despite the lies in the press about job creation, unemployment hovered near 14% and the official number of people employed in manufacturing declined to between 14.3 million and 15.3 million workers. [6] By February, 2008, the number working in manufacturing had fallen even further [7] as US bosses continue to lay off workers.

As unemployment and foreclosures continue, US bosses and their politicians will intensify the blame game—claiming that Bush or the Democrats or China created the distress workers are feeling—to distract workers from looking at the real enemy capitalism itself.

Myth 2: China is stealing jobs by unfairly manipulating its currency and the US debt

The argument that China is deliberately undervaluing its currency to keep up exports (and indirectly undercut American production) came from a 2003 paper by three Deutsche Bank economists. It has been picked up by the AFL-CIO and some in Congress, who have been calling for the imposition of tariffs on Chinese-made goods However, other banks and think tanks like the Institute for International Economics have rejected this argument as false. The values of modern currencies, including the dollar, have been set by governments and by the market since the 1970s when the US went off the gold standard. There is no clear way to determine the "fair" value of any currency. IMF economists, for example, have estimated that the undervaluation of the yuan could range from 0 to 50% depending on whose method of calculation is chosen. The American bank Morgan Stanley uses 15 different models to value currency, 4 of them on the yuan, and finds that the yuan is at most 1% undervalued.[8] [for more on value of money see box below] In fact, China has been allowing its currency to increase in value over recent years, and has increased its exports to Europe more than to the United States, both facts that belie the claims of the China bashers.

The other part of this argument points to the growth of Chinese holdings of United States national and private debt and suggests that such holdings are a potential political threat to the US economy. From 1997 to 2006, China's holdings of US debt grew by $140 billion. In that same period, the US debt grew by $720 billion, and by far the largest holders of this debt are the oil producing states not China.[9] China, in fact, has little choice but to hold on to

3. Bureau of Economic Analysis, "Real Gross Domestic Product by Industry in Chained (1996) Dollars," http://www.bea.doc/bea/dn2/gpox.htm; Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Historical Employment: Employees on nonfarm payrolls by major industry section," ftp://ftp.bls.gov/pub/suppl/empsit.ceseeb1.txt. While the number of manufacturing workers has remained steady, the percentage of all US workers who work in manufacturing has fallen because of the soaring growth of the "service" sector. The growth of the service sector is not uniquely American, but is occurring in all advanced industrial/imperialist countries as every aspect of daily life is brought into the wage labor/profit system.

4. In 2007, the US produced $1,738 billion in manufactured goods. Japan was #2 with $952 billion and China was #3 with $760 billion. But the US was only the third largest exporter of goods, producing around 9% of all exported goods (down from 50% right after World War II). The Euro area and Germany took first and second places, with China and Japan coming in at fourth and fifth. The Economist, Pocket World in Figures, 2008 Edition

5. Bruce Stokes, "A Potholed Path for US Auto Industry," Council of Foreign Relations, 8 March 2003; "Extinction of the Predator," The Economist, 6 February 2005.

6. The larger figure includes estimates for the number of workers hired by temp agencies, and thus counted as "service" not manufacturing workers by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The use of temp workers in manufacturing increased from 34,000 in 1972 to 707,000 in 1997. The number of temps is even larger now, since many auto subcontractors (to use just one example) hire all workers initially as temps. CBO, "What accounts for the Decline in Manufacturing Employment" (February 2004), http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdoc.cfm?index=5078&type=0; "Measuring Temporary Labor Outsourcing in U.S. Manufacturing," at http://www.epionline.org/study_detail.cfm?sid=47. On unemployment statistics see http://www.shadow stats.com.

7. According to the BLS, current industrial employment is at 13.7 million, a figure that excludes those industrial workers employed through temp agencies. See http://www.bls.gov/iag/tgs/iag31-33.htm.

8. The Economist, May 19, 2007, p. 74; June 23, 2007, p.86.

9. "The New Titans," The Economist, 16 September 2006.

10. The Economist, 21 October 2006.

Who Determines the Value of Money?

As Marx pointed out in Capital, the value of a commodity comes in two forms, use value and exchange value. Exchange value, the value of a product in relationship to every other product, comes from the socially necessary labor time embodied in it. Yet the essential nature of the commodity as a social relationship often appears as if it were an objective characteristic of the commodity itself. Commodities seem to relate to each other in some fixed way, rather than each as the product of the labor of working people. This is especially true of money, the commodity chosen as the universal measure of value in any given society.

Money plays a special role in a capitalist economy. It serves both as a universally accepted measure of value and as a medium of circulation, a tool that allows the easier sale and movement of goods around the world. This creates a contradiction: To represent value, money must truly represent the socially necessary labor time embodied in commodities. But as a "lubricant" of the circulation of commodities, money is expanded to include fictitious forms such as credit and paper money, which may be manipulated and may become detached from the real value created by labor.

Until the 1940s, gold served as the basis of most monetary systems and of international trade. After World War II, the US dollar, which initially had a fixed value of $35 to an ounce of gold, replaced gold. During the economic crises of 1968-73, the US was forced off the gold standard. Detached from gold, the dollar became another commodity whose value is determined on the international market. But unlike gold, which is produced through the labor of mine workers, the paper dollar has no intrinsic value. And thus the separation from gold also allowed US bankers to create new forms of fictitious capital, i.e. credit forms, including derivatives that bore little or no relationship to the value of actual commodities in the world.

As with other monies, currency markets now set the value of the dollar (in relation to the Euro, the British pound, the yen, the yuan, the peso, etc) on a trade by trade basis. As such the value of money can fluctuate wildly. Thus from May 2007 to March 2008, the value of one US dollar fell from .75 Euros to .63 Euros, for a loss of 16%, as international banks dumped their dollars. Currency traders can amass (or lose) great wealth through gambling on minor swings in the price of any given currency. But they cannot generate value. Only productive labor can do that. All currency traders are doing is dividing and re-dividing surplus value already created by the working class.

Yet at some point the value of money, if it is to function as a universal measure, must return to the value of the socially necessary labor time embodied in real commodities. This may come through government or IMF actions, such as the forced devaluations of the peso in the 1980s or through stock market and banking collapses or other market actions. When such "corrections" occur, the wages of workers are being cut and savings held in that currency (whether by workers in their meager savings accounts or countries storing national wealth) are destroyed.

dollars and dollar denominated debt. For one reason, as long as there is a trade imbalance, China will receive dollars in payment for these goods. Yet only 25% (down from 34% in 1999) of China's exports are to the United States, a fact that sets some limits on its desire to hold dollars.[10] No matter, China, and all other countries, must hold dollars since the dollar serves as the world's reserve currency (see box). Many commodities, but most importantly oil, are denominated in dollars. Businesses and nations that want to buy oil on the international marked must have dollars with which to purchase it. In order to earn "interest" on these various holdings, China (as well as Saudi Arabia, and other oil producing countries) must in turn invest in the United States. This puts them in the ironic position of depending on investments in the United States to protect their own national treasuries. A fall in the value of US securities will hurt Chinese capitalists with money stored in the United States just as it does other investors. A falling currency decreases the purchasing power of all savings. It is, in real terms, an imperialist attack on rival capitalists who have been forced to store their wealth in dollars.

In fact, the primary manipulator of the value of US currency is not China but the US Federal Reserve, the main governmental organ through which finance capital tries to control the crises of capitalism. With the beginning of the 2007-08 credit crunch, the Fed hoped it could stop the collapse of financial markets by printing more money and lowering the interest rate. As a result of this flood of dollars and the decreasing faith in the value of American corporate securities, international investors are dumping dollars leading to a rapid decline in the value of the dollar in the first months of 2008.

The focus on the value of the yuan by the AFL-CIO and by Congress is not about fact but about ideology. The argument that China is the cause of low wages for American workers is a smokescreen hiding the actions of American capitalists who have applied divide and conquer tactics to attacks on workers of all nationalities. More importantly it is part of the effort to build US nationalism in preparation for continuing economic and future military conflict with China.

Myth 3: The current crisis in foreclosures is a product of Chinese or other foreign actors withdrawing funds from Americans.

In his comments, Joe Biden alluded to the current crisis in foreclosures. Many working class people who bought houses in the last few years were enticed by a variety of offers from mortgage brokers. They were able to borrow with no money down, were given adjustable rate mortgages with payments that are now going up, or sold mortgages set up so that the amount you owe increases even as you make payments. As the interest rates on these mortgages adjust up, many people

11. New York Times, September 2, 2007.

have fallen behind and have begun losing their houses. The New York Times recently reported on the Cleveland suburb of Maple Heights where 10% of homes have been seized by banks in the last 2 years and 30% of sub-prime borrowers are near foreclosure.[11]

These events are the consequences of efforts to increase the global power of US finance capital by deregulating banks. Deregulation began in the late 1970s during the Carter Administration, and produced the savings and loan crisis of the 1980s. The deregulation scheme was completed in 1999 with the repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act which had divided US banks into commercial bank, (which took deposits and gave out loans to businesses and workers) and investment banks (which operated on Wall Street and promoted business deals such as mergers and funding of new corporate stock offerings or IPOs). Since 1999, US finance capital has undergone a wave of mergers and reorganization to make US banks more competitive worldwide. And with these mergers and the influx of capital from countries holding dollars, US finance capital has been increasingly aggressive in seeking ways to loan that money for profit (from fees and interest).

Yet with many manufacturers facing overcapacity, finance capital has been less willing to invest in more productive capacity. At the same time, American politicians and capitalists rejected investment in infrastructure as unprofitable, a fact that resulted in the racist destruction of New Orleans and the recent death of commuters on a Minneapolis bridge.

Instead money was used in two ways. One was the development of an aggressive corporate merger movement, with banks assisting corporations to borrow money to buy out their rivals. Significantly this included a movement to take corporations "private." In this instance borrowed money was used by equity firms like Blackstone and Cerebus to buy up existing companies, for example Chrysler. Once taken private, companies like Chrysler are no longer beholden to public stockholders, but only to their bankers, and are free to increase attacks on their workers.

The other source of banking profits has been aggressive loans to the working class. For workers, whose real incomes have fallen over the last decade, borrowing, whether through credit cards student loans, second and sub-prime mortgages, and increasingly payday loans, has become an increasingly common technique to buy what they need or want. And banks at the center of finance capital have been behind the proliferation of high interest payday and mortgage companies lurking on every urban and suburban street corner these days.

The central internal contradiction of capitalism is that workers aren't paid the full value of the products they make. This difference is the source of surplus value for the capitalist. But given that workers cannot buy all of what they produce, capitalists must engage in a constant search for markets if they are going to realize this surplus value as profits. One of the techniques modern capitalists have used to create markets is debt. Since World War II, the US housing market has played a key role, with the federal government creating the modern housing market by insuring and subsidizing mortgages. The goal was both economic—to stimulate consumption—and ideological—to win workers

What is a Reserve Currency?

A reserve currency is simply a foreign currency held by nations' central banks for use in international trade and to pay international debts. In the first half of the twentieth century, gold served as the reserve currency. Since the Bretton Woods Agreement at the end of World War II, the dollar has played this role.

The decision to use the dollar as a reserve currency was part of a plan by the US ruling class to cement its power as the victor in World War II. Maintaining the role of the dollar as an international reserve currency is a fighting cause for the United States. Among the issues behind both the Clinton bombings and the Bush invasion of Iraq were Saddam Hussein's efforts to give oil contracts to US rivals and to begin selling Iraqi oil in Euros. If Hussein had succeeded, oil consumers would have needed to hold large quantities of Euros and to invest in Euro- not dollar-denominated securities. Such a move would have removed these foreign investments from the US economy and threatened the stock market and US banks. Instead, the fact that the dollar is a reserve currency has led to what one banker at JP Morgan Securities called "a wall of money" coming into the US credit markets (NYT, 31 August 2007). This flow of money has allowed the American government, corporations, and people to increase debt, spending some $857 billion more than they earned in 2006 (The Economist, 17 March 2007).

Yet even with this money flowing in, US finance capital is worried about its loss of economic power. In 2006, US officials began to fret that despite the size of the US capital markets, "they were no longer competitive compared with the leading financial centers of Europe and Asia." Mayor Bloomberg and Senator Schumer of New York published a paper about the need for New York to "learn from London," which has risen to rival New York as a financial capital. Last year, European stock markets, in total, exceeded the capital value of New York for the first time since World War I, and the value of initial public offerings in both London and Hong Kong exceeded those of New York (The Economist, 26 Nov. 2006; Business Week 3 Sept. 2007). Likewise, for the first time since World War I, the capitalization of Europe's 24 stock markets exceeded that of the US markets (Financial Times 3 April 2007). In addition, economists reported that Asian consumers had replaced Americans as the growth engine of the global economy, even Goldman Sachs predicts that if China follows current growth policies it will be the world' largest economy in market exchange rates in 2040 (The Economist, 16 September 2006; 21 October 2006).

12. Financial Times, June 19, 2007;

away from the radicalism of the thirties. In the last decade as the housing market repeatedly seem to dry up, finance capital invented new, more exotic products to continue to stimulate demand and increase sales, often to those who had never before qualified because of low or unstable incomes. This latter group of "sub-prime" borrowers was an increasingly dominant segment of the mortgage-market over the last five years.

As a result of these developments, the debts of US families grew from 92% of household income in 1994 to 135% in 2005. The indebtedness of the bosses and their government increased even more dramatically. Globally, the ratio of financial assets to gross domestic product (GDP) grew from 180% in 1980 to 316% in 2005. In the United States this ratio jumped from 303% in 1995 to 405% in 2005.[12] Here was the seeming magic of capitalism: the fictional world of money soared well above the value of real goods and labor in the world.

The emergence of these fantastical levels of debt came from the invention of a banking technique called "securitization" which took off in 1999. Securitization allowed bankers to perform an "alchemist's trick" of turning leaden debts into derivatives which could be marketed as if they were gold. Banks employing these techniques sold strands of the long-term debts owed them (on mortgages, credit cards, and student loans) for cash on the open market. Then they loaned this cash out again on new long-term debts and sold these again, and again, churning their deposits ever more frequently. Often these strands of debt were marketed by "hedge funds," which used complex mathematical formulas to balance the assets they held, which might include stocks and commodities (such as oil or wheat) along with sub-prime mortgages and oddly defined strands of debt such as the interest or principle streams of credit card or student loans. These hedge funds, whose numbers have grown from 610 in 1990 to 9,575 in 2007, claimed that their complex blend of "assets" made them virtually risk free. Yet they themselves operated on lines of credit (borrowed money) provided generally by the most important investment banks in the United States, including Lehman Brothers, Bear Stearns, Merrill Lynch, and Goldman Sachs.[13]

But these magical, pyramid schemes eventually ran into the real world. No amount of borrowing can solve the problem of workers' low wages and of rising inequality in the United States and the rest of the world.[14] Debt can only create markets for a finite time as the laws of capitalism grind on. When sub-prime borrowers began to default on their mortgages in late 2006, mortgage brokers who could no longer collect payments began to go broke. Shares in hedge funds that had marketed the debts of these brokers no longer found buyers, and the banks that had given lines of credit to the hedge funds demanded more collateral or payments. Unable to sell their mortgage-backed securities, the hedge funds had to sell stock or commodities, including oil futures, which forced down both the price of oil and the prices on the New York Stock exchange. Banks in France, Germany, Great Britain, and Asia were forced to shut down hedge funds, and the national banks of Europe, Asia, and the United States (the Federal Reserve) stepped in to provide extra money to buy up the failing securities.

And both unemployment and inflation are increasing. As some bankers fretted to reporters that they didn't understand what was going on, Business Week noted that these events were the equivalent of the situation in the 1930s.15

Even with these efforts from capitalist governments the value of the stock market fell by $2.2 trillion or 10.5% during in August 2007. By March, 2008, an old-fashioned run on Bear Sterns, the fifth-largest US investment bank and a leader in mortgage-based securities, threatened to take down the whole US banking system. JPMorganChase, after demanding a guarantee from the Federal Reserve, agreed to pay $234 million for a bank that only two days before had been worth nearly $4billion. Some $750 billion in adjustable rate mortgages are set to have their rates increased through June 2008, which suggests that more foreclosures and more hedge fund failures are in the offing. And both unemployment and inflation are increasing. As some bankers fretted to reporters that they didn't understand what was going on, Business Week noted that these events were the equivalent of the situation in the 1930s.[15]

Workers need to remember this history. In the 1920s, US bankers had invented credit and investment schemes similar

13. Financial Times, June 19, 2007;Business Week, September 3, 2007; Risk and Reward, The Economist, May 19, 2007.
14. Working people in the United States have lived under worsening conditions for most of the last 40 years. Though the press repeatedly cites statistics describing the average economic growth in the United States, these very averages are used hide growing inequality. A banker at UBS, for example, has noted that from 1997 to 2001, the top .1 percent of Americans saw their incomes increase almost as much as the total for the bottom 50%. (Financial Times, March 17, 2007). In a recent report on inequality in the Economist, only three countries experienced higher levels of inequality than the United States (The Economist, August 11, 2007). In fact since the start of US economic recovery in 2001, real weekly wages for average American workers fell by 4% (as labor productivity increased by 15%). Top 1% of wage earners earn 16% of all income versus 8% in 1980, and median wages of college graduates have declined 6% since 2000 ("The Titans," The Economist, September 16, 2006).
15. Business Week, September 3, 2007.

to those described above, and when they failed in 1929, they revealed the shifting foundation of overproduction and triggered a worldwide depression. No matter how many financial gimmicks bankers invent, capitalism produces more than it can sell even as it impoverishes the world's working class. Under capitalism this crisis can only be solved through world war between the leading imperialist states. The economic crisis of the 1930's would eventually lead to World War II just as world economic crises at the turn of the century led to World War I.

Imperialist competition and economic crises lead to war. By 1900, the world's imperialist powers had divided the world between themselves, and ever since they have been fighting to re-divide it over and over again. War is the ultimate tool to capture the markets imperialists need if they are to sell their goods, and it is a tool to destroy the capital and wealth of their rivals before they are destroyed themselves. The US has been fighting in Iraq since 1990-91 to keep Iraq's oil resources out of the hands of its rivals, at the cost of millions of Iraqi lives. Similar battles are taking place in Africa, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Colombia. Through all of these battles, desperate US imperialists see themselves pitted against a rising China. This competition with China is the key to understanding the China-bashing that dominates the rhetoric of politicians talking about job loss. The goal of China bashing is to win workers to a "defend-America" patriotism that will justify imperialist war.

The source of workers' misery—whether in the United States where layoffs and low wages are on the rise at both US and foreign owned plants or in China, Mexico, and El Salvador where workers suffer even lower wages and worse working conditions at the hands of local and international bosses— is capitalism. The only solution to these problems is to smash racist divisions, international borders and the capitalist system that created them. The only solution to capitalist crisis and imperialist war is revolution, and the building of communism, a society with no wages, no money, organized by the international working class. Workers of the world unite! We have nothing to lose but our chains!

A History Of The Work At DC Metro

The Metro club is black and white, women and men, and ranges from almost retired to brand new. Our Party club may be small, but it is no small achievement. It is the result of many struggles on and off the job and within the union. It is the result of many study group meetings and much ideological struggle to make fighting for communist revolution the main aspect of our work, and to make PLP the main thing in our lives. We don't always succeed and we have many weaknesses, but we also have the ability to overcome them. Most of all, our club reflects that the torch will be passed to a new generation of revolutionary communist transit workers who can carry the struggle forward at Metro and beyond.

The party's work in transit began in 1974. Nixon was president, although beleaguered by the Watergate Affair, and the Vietnam War was still raging. As part of building for May Day that year we began selling Challenge at various bus garages in Washington.

Coincidently, the union contract was expiring on April 30, 1974. This was the first contract negotiated between the union and Metro since the transit system was converted from a private business to a public governmental agency the previous year. Hundreds of workers had been hired, mostly black, and many of them Vietnam veterans.

Metro was demanding a concessionary contract but the workers were in no mood. Negotiations went nowhere and the union walked out. The courts quickly ordered the union back to work. Many workers wanted to continue the strike, but the Davis-Richmond leadership caved in under the threat of fines and ordered the workers back to the job. However, the main point of contention, the full Cost Of Living Allowance (COLA) escalator clause, was preserved for two more years. This was important because it kept real wages up with inflation.

This set the stage for the 1976 contract struggle. Again management demanded a reduction in the COLA escalator clause. The union said no. This time, instead of striking on May 1, the union turned to an arbitrator to resolve the issue. As July 1 neared, Metro announced that they were not going to pay the COLA increase due on that date. The workers were angry, but the union wanted to let the arbitrator decide the issue, and the membership went along.

The union leadership said that with the Nixon's resignation, the end of the Vietnam War and the upcoming elections, the political climate was improving and we could expect a better contract. Jimmy Carter was elected President while the contract was still in arbitration. When the arbitration award was issued in December, it continued the COLA for another two years, but the increase due July 1, 1976 was eliminated.

Every worker felt betrayed by the union. The Party was developing a presence in the union, as well as regular CHALLENGE sales outside certain bus garages. We began a two-year organizing effort to strike in the July 1978 contract. We lead a fight in the union to support a coal miners' strike and we ousted an Assistant Business Agent who had scabbed during the 1974 strike.

In the spring of 1978, tensions mounted as the contract expiration date drew near. A wildcat strike started at Southeastern Division following the sexual assault on a woman driver. All the drivers in the system joined in. At Northern, Metro Board member Reverend Jerry Moore saw the rage of the drivers at a mass meeting and promised amnesty for the strikers and improved security for the drivers.

That night the drivers met at RFK Parking Lot. A safety committee was elected to follow up on the issues of the wildcat. A vote was taken and the drivers decided to return to work the next day. The one day strike gave workers the confidence that we could shut the system down when needed to accomplish our goals.

The stage was now set for July 1978. Preparations had been made for sharpening the class struggle in a mass way. A Metro CAR (Committee Against Racism) newsletter was circulated to hundreds of workers explaining why the fight to protect the COLA was important and the racist nature of the attack on us. The Party's line on revolution and the role of communists in the class struggle was not widely known. We were distributing a few Challenges and had some one on one meetings with individual workers.

Contract negotiations dragged past the deadline. Metro announced that they were not going to pay the COLA on July 1. Strike-talk was everywhere. We advocated a walkout on July 19 if the COLA was not on our checks that day.

On July 18, the regular union meeting drew over 500

workers. Local President George Davis told us to wait for an arbitrator to decide the issue. The workers were in no mood to wait. Davis walked out of the meeting. A PLP member took the podium and called for a motion to strike. The motion was made. Another comrade outlined the reasons that we had to strike and called for a vote. Hundreds of workers shouted, "Yea!" There were no "Nays." The strike was set for 10:00 a.m. the next morning.

The strike began the following morning when the COLA was not on our paychecks. Brentwood Yard and Bladensburg Shop, the two largest maintenance facilities for rail and bus, walked out at 10:00 a.m. The drivers hesitated because they did not want to get the riding public angry by leaving them at work.

Management fired every worker (hundreds of people) at Bladensburg Shop.

That night, 1,000 workers showed up at the RFK Parking Lot for a meeting. Plans were made to picket every bus and rail facility in the system. By Thursday morning the system was entirely shut down.

A strike leadership committee was established with representatives from every garage and work location. Metro went to Federal Court to have the strike declared illegal.

For four days the strike kept the system completely shut down. The few drivers who attempted to take buses out were persuaded not to. But the bosses and union leaders used racism, anti-communism and the threat of injunctions to weaken the strike.

The Washington Post called the strikers, "Saboteurs." Today it would be, "Terrorists." The union leadership blamed the strike on communists who had come to Metro for the sole purpose of shutting down the system. The courts threatened fines and jail terms for the strikers if we did not return to work.

The first break in the strikers' ranks occurred when Bill Scoggins, a driver from Arlington Division, resigned as elected leader of the strike steering committee and urged drivers to return to work. At a mass meeting of the strikers on Sunday evening, Scoggins was shouted down. The strikers voted to continue for one more day.

On Monday, the courts ordered Metro to hold an expedited arbitration hearing on the July COLA payment and to quickly process the grievance of anyone disciplined as a result of the strike. The workers felt we had accomplished all that we could hope for, and voted to end the strike at garage meetings Tuesday morning. At a hearing held the next week, the arbitrator ordered Metro to pay the July 1 COLA.

After the strike, management fired all of the wildcat strike leaders except for Bill Scoggins, who led the back-to-work movement. The fired workers eventually won their jobs back. By this time the role of communists in the union had become a mass issue. Challenge was sold outside the garage gates and we started building networks of Challenge readers.

The following year, we ran a Metro CAR slate for union office. A dozen or so workers actively participated in the campaign. Although many workers respected our leadership in the strike, we did not have a mass base for communist leadership in the union. An Executive Board member resigned shortly afterwards, and a PLP member was elected to fill the vacancy in a special election. He was an open communist, but he got elected because of his work in the reform movement.

...management fired every worker (hundreds of people) at bladensburg shop...

For the next five years, we were involved in many struggles affecting every aspect of the job at Metro. These were some of our most active years. We had several study groups, a Metro CAR caucus and a monthly newsletter. Several workers joined the Party. At the end of this period, the comrade on the Executive Board quit Metro and left the area. He felt that many workers would follow us in the reform struggle, but did not believe that we could win a significant number of them to communist revolution.

After he left, the intensity of the reform activity declined. We continued to run in union elections, fight over contract issues, and wage struggles in the garages against the bosses but it did not have the same mass character.

The decline in struggle was not solely due to the Party member leaving. It was also a time of major defeats for organized labor. The PATCO strike in 1981, where the union was smashed and thousands of Air Traffic Controllers were fired, sent a chill up the spine of many workers. The defeat of the Greyhound strike was the beginning of a steady decline and set back the struggle of all transit workers.

During this period, a worker who had joined the Party began to develop into a mass leader. Another veteran comrade got a job at Metro. The new member had an unrealistic view of how the work would progress. He was more won to militant reform work than to the long-term political struggle for communist revolution. Unless you are increasing the distribution of CHALLENGE and

recruiting new members, the reform work will eventually wear you down. Before long, he quit Metro and left the area.

In the 1990's, Metro became more insistent in demanding contract concessions. The union's response was to negotiate contracts which protected the wage and benefit package of the senior workers, but reduced them for new employees. To counter this, we initiated the fight against the racist wage progression system which continues today.

In 1993, we changed the tactics of our work in the union. Instead of running an agitation campaign for president as we had done for the previous 15 years, we concentrated our efforts on two shop steward elections. In the election of December 1994, we won the election (i.e. got the most votes) for shop steward at Northern Division. We defeated a long term incumbent who was backed by the union leadership. His campaign was based on anti-communism and nationalism. Our comrade ran as an open communist, but most workers voted for him because of his personal and political ties to them and his leadership in the class struggle over the previous 15 years.

Shortly after the election, we led a major campaign against service cuts and layoffs. Twenty people joined our caucus during this struggle. At this point, there was a Party-wide effort to combat reformism in the work (Road to Revolution 4.5), and we began to evaluate our role in the reform movement more closely. It became clear that we were winning workers more to trade union militancy than communist revolution.

We put the issue of reform or revolution at the top of the agenda for our caucus meetings. No one objected, but attendance began to decline. This probably would have happened anyway because the layoffs would last only 4-6 months and a new supplemental unemployment benefit was established to cushion the effect of the layoffs.

With everyone back to work, Metro was determined to reduce labor costs and working with the local governments, began planning to privatize some bus service. The union made some noise, but their main plan was to save Metro money. In 1999, a new contract was negotiated which extended the wage progression system by two years, lowered the starting pay for new operators and other unskilled workers and reduced our health insurance benefits

Once this cost saving contract was signed, all talk of privatization disappeared. As new drivers were hired, their anger mounted when they realized they were working for half the wages of senior operators and that it would take 23 years for them to reach top pay.

We engaged in several struggles against sexual harassment by management. These struggles led to several supervisors being disciplined and one being convicted of sexual assault and fired.

When the 2000 elections came around, we decided to run for a full time union position. We discussed whether this was useful or not. Would being a full time officer bog us down in reform work and conflict with building the Party among the workers? Aware of the dangers, we decided to give it a try.

We ran the campaign on fighting racism and anti-communism. The racist wage progression system was making new workers angry and dividing the union. Before 1974, when most drivers were white, it took one year to reach top pay. It had been that way since 1920. The racist nature of the wage progression system was not hard to understand.

The fight against anti-communism was more complex. Self-critically, we tried to show workers that as communists we would be better and more honest reform fighters than the current union leaders. Since they were not very good at fighting the bosses this was not very hard to do. We discussed the role of communists in the union organizing drives of the 1930's, the Scottsboro case, the civil rights movement and the fight against Nazism. But we failed to win workers to revolution and the need for a mass communist party. Challenge distribution increased, but there was not a great deal of struggle over the revolutionary essence of the paper.

In the end we won the election because we were viewed as more honest and harder workers than the opposition. A new president was also elected who had also promised to fight wage progression.

Contract negotiations began shortly after the election. We managed to negotiate improvements in wages, pensions, and health benefits. Then we came to the issue of wage progression. The PLP member took the position that we could not agree to a new contract unless there was some improvement in the wage progression system. This anti-racist demand had been a central point of our election campaign and it could not be ignored. He was removed from the negotiating committee.

The contract that was eventually ratified by the membership contained no changes in the wage progression system, although starting pay for new drivers was raised. But this was done while lowering their pay in the later years of the progression.

We decided to run for local President in the 2003 election. From our experience with the previous contract it was clear that only anti-racist forces would not buckle on the issues of wage progression.

This campaign was much more intense than the last one. The incumbent president spent thousands of dollars out of the union treasury to finance his campaign. This coupled with the fact that our reform work made him look pretty good in the eyes of many workers, he won re-election.

We challenged the election because of his use of the

union treasury. The International union, fearful of the Department of Labor getting involved in the local's business, ordered a new election after six months of deliberations. During these six months, all of his weaknesses which we had covered up by being good reformers were exposed. To the Executive Board, we became the lesser of two evils, and most of them supported us in the re-run of the election. This gave us enough votes to win.

Over the next two and one half years we negotiated a new contract that took a year off the wage progression system, participated in the anti-war movement, supported the Philadelphia transit strike, held demonstrations at Metro headquarters for a new contract and for worker safety and organized a group of drivers from the DC Connector into the union. At the same time, we maintained a PLP study group that ultimately produced our current club.

The issue of worker safety was the most difficult to deal with. Capitalism in general is unsafe for workers. This is particularly true in mass transit. Working on the track bed of a rail system or driving a bus are particularly dangerous jobs. Historically the union has used this fact to negotiate higher wages for these jobs, but of course this does not make the jobs less dangerous. Over the last few years, four workers have been killed on the track bed. Although we protested these conditions both in meetings with management and demonstrations, Metro initiated few changes. We were not willing to take the chance of organizing an illegal strike, knowing that this would probably lead to mass firings. Looking back on it, this was most likely a mistake. We should have had more confidence in the workers.

We ran for re-election in 2006. This time we were not strong enough to overcome the forces of nationalism and anti-communism, and we lost the election. The story so far has been a narrative of the Party's work over the last 30 years. In the course of the narrative, we have pointed out some of the strengths and weaknesses of the work. We will now try to develop some of these points.

Over 20 years ago, there was a breakfast meeting with several workers to discuss the Party. At the end of the meeting one of the workers asked why we were so small. He liked our ideas. He appreciated the role we had played in fighting the bosses during our time at Metro. This was the first time he had met with us. He was wondering why workers who had known us for some time did not join.

Twenty years later, the answer to this question is still not clear. Our ability to recruit new members is determined by three main factors: our line, our relationships and the past practice of our movement.

Fighting for communist revolution is a difficult position to maintain. The collapse of the old communist movement is no help. In the minds of many workers, communism is a system that was tried and failed. We have not won them to an understanding of the long historical process that accompanies the transition from a class society to a classless one.

Many Metro workers, particularly black workers, have serious concerns about the racist imperialist system they are subjected to. They know the effects of racism in their daily lives. On the other hand, they view their situation relative to workers in other countries and in their own communities. In this context they enjoy a relative prosperity. The political struggle is to convince workers that this situation is temporary, and that regardless of our position relative to other workers, we are part of an international working class with certain duties and responsibilities.

Racism is of strategic value to the capitalists. They cannot rule without it. It is at the same time the Achilles' heal of capitalism. It is the one aspect of capitalist ideology which has created a sub-set of the working class that is politically unreliable and whose practice all workers know is unjust. Maintaining our strategy of fighting racism will help us overcome many of our past mistakes.

Religion has a hold on many workers. They see many of the contradictions in a religious world outlook, but they are not yet ready to accept a materialist world view. The next generation of Party members at Metro will need to get more involved in the church based activities of the workers.

Over the years at Metro we have created a large base for social and reform activities. We have never been able to transform this base into a vehicle for recruiting significant numbers of workers into the Party. When we were union officers, either shop steward or President, many workers' lives were dramatically affected by some of the struggles we engaged with management. Jobs were saved, pensions were granted, health benefits achieved, and promotions received which would never have happened except for our leadership of the reform struggle. This did not lead to any dramatic recruitment to the Party.

Challenge sales, both outside garages and hand to hand distribution have varied. Some workers have read the paper for years. They are often our strongest defenders in the union, but they have not joined the Party.

When a movement that has led billions of people collapses, workers want to know why before they commit themselves to rebuilding that movement. Why will the Progressive Labor Party be more successful than Lenin, Stalin, or Mao in building the communist movement? The answer is as simple as it is complex. We have the benefit of seeing the mistakes of the past and being able to correct them.

In Road to Revolution III and IV, we analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of the old communist movement. Winning workers to this understanding is crucial for their recruitment.

Our strategy for doing this must include:

1. A fuller political education of our base. Most of our base only has a superficial knowledge of the scientific ideas that underlie our politics or the accomplishments of the communist movement. The world as we know it today is the product of tremendous struggles over the last 150 years. Most of those struggles were led by the international communist movement.
2. Greater concentration on industrial work. We give lip service to the importance of industrial workers, particularly black workers, but our practice is much different. Every Party collective should have a plan to help with the recruitment of industrial workers. Teachers can teach at schools and community colleges with industrial arts programs, doctors can work at hospitals that serve working class communities, and young people can join the military and learn an industrial skill.
3. Fighting racism must be an unwavering part of our program. The history of the communist movement has not been as consistent as our party's fight against racism. Only by constantly fighting racism can we overcome the effects of past mistakes.

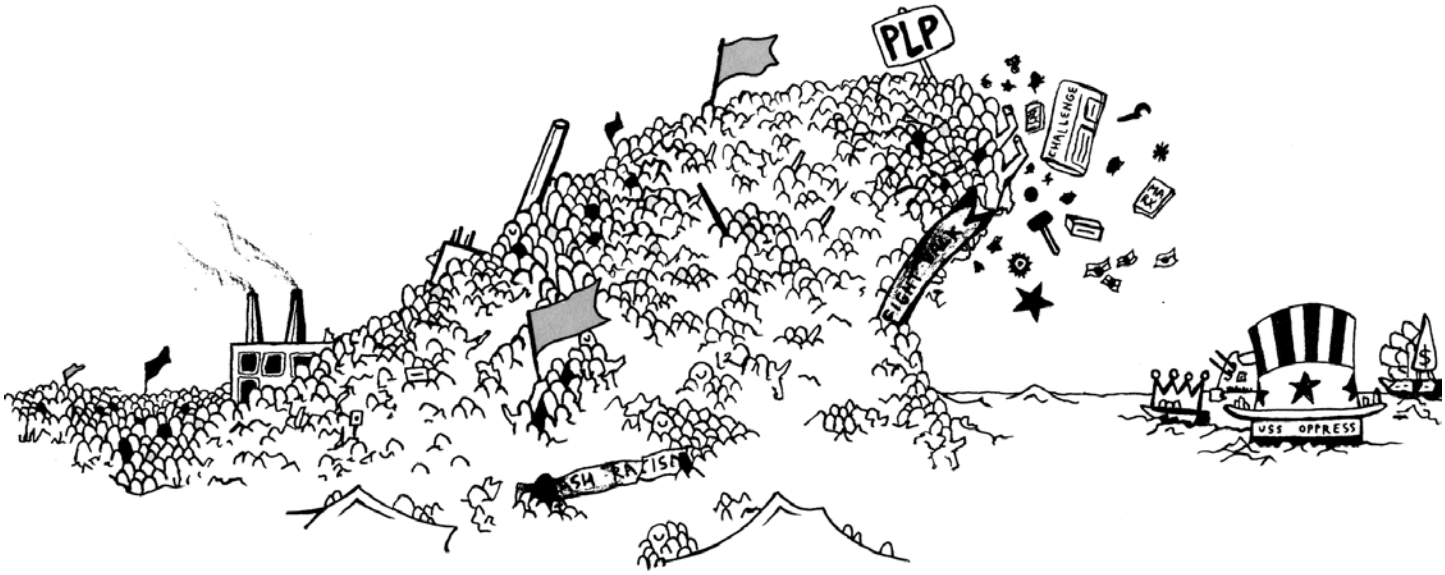
The future of the Party's work at Metro will be determined by how well we train our members to fight for communist ideas with their coworkers. The discussions we have with our fellow workers are short on ideas about the need for communist revolution. We spend many hours explaining how our pension system works, without getting to the real issue that capitalism is destroying pensions and causing premature deaths. We fight against attacks on drivers, without discussing how capitalism causes crime and other forms of anti-social behavior.

We struggle with our base to become leaders of the working class by joining the Party. Most workers are discontent with capitalist society, but they need leadership to point them in a revolutionary direction. The Party represents our collective effort to do this. We are constantly struggling with the ideological obstacles that block workers' path into the Party.

One serious obstacle is individualism. This struggle takes many forms. Workers want to improve their lives. To some this means going into management, to others it means starting your own business and to others it means getting involved in church activities. Despite the fact that few make it into management and most small businesses fail, the ideal of getting out from under the heel of the bosses is a powerful one.

Individualism can take the form of viewing yourself in competition with other workers. The bosses constantly push the notion that some workers are better than others. To them we are all crabs in a barrel fighting with each other. How often have we heard the remark, "I'm willing to fight back, but no one else is." To build the Party we must defeat these ideas. We struggle for workers to emphasize their similarities not their differences.

Only communist revolution will end the twin evils of imperialist war and racism. Building the Progressive Labor Party is the only way to realize this goal. Despite all of our weaknesses, the Party has an organization at Metro, with the ability to recruit new members, expand the distribution of Challenge, mobilize for May Day, lead class struggle and build for revolution.



Workers Sold Out by Union Hacks . . . Need Red Leadership

It was inevitable that this day would come, given everything that had come before. The UAW signed contracts that cut pay and benefits for new hires at GM, Ford, and Chrysler by two-thirds; agreed to take on retiree health care; managing a VEBA fund worth more than $52 billion financed by the auto bosses; accepted 100,000 buy-outs and "buy-downs" (lump sum payments in return for permanent pay cuts) and dozens of plant closings. The day when the union owns more Ford stock than the Ford family, the day when what took 70 years to win, appeared to be taken away with the flick of a pen, a handshake and a smile.

This day was inevitable, a grim reminder of the long, dark night that the working class finds itself in without revolutionary communist leadership. This is the bosses' greatest weapon in their ability to survive every threat, challenge and crisis.

The latest wholesale restructuring of the U.S. auto industry was inevitable due to inter-imperialist rivalry that has seen Asian and European auto billionaires lay claim to the highly profitable U.S. auto market while world auto production shifts to China and India, as well as to non-union factories in the U.S. south, forcing down the wages of auto workers around the world. This imperialist rivalry has already led to growing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and will ultimately lead to world war. This is the price of capitalism. Only communist revolution can end imperialism.

It was inevitable because of decades of "outsourcing" union work to mainly non-union parts suppliers for a fraction of the cost. And it was inevitable, in no small part, because of the collapse of the old communist movement decades ago, leaving the working class without revolutionary leadership. As long as the bosses hold power, the only guarantees for the working class are racist terror, poverty and war.

The attacks on union wages and jobs is the forefront of the ruling class' need to move towards fascism in response to the needs of the rulers. The bosses desperately need their homegrown auto industry to become efficient to better compete against the other capitalists and in preparation for war production.

There were major tremors leading up to the new auto contracts. The UAW agreed to the elimination of more than 100,000 jobs and 40 plant closings a year before contract talks even started.

Chrysler was sold and Delphi, formerly the largest parts supplier in the world went bankrupt. The Ford and GM contracts were re-opened a year before they expired so

Axle workers on strike early this year.

the UAW could grant significant health care concessions.

Chrysler

In 2006, Chrysler lost $1.5 billion and fell behind Toyota to fourth place in the U.S. market. In the summer of that year, there were as many as 100,000 unsold Chryslers sitting in factory and dealership parking lots. Daimler-Benz of Germany had taken over the company in a 1997 "merger." Now they were ready to sell Chrysler to Cerberus Capital Management for $7.4 billion. Cerberus is a private equity company with no experience building cars, named for a three-headed monster that guards the gates of Hell. The $24 billion investment firm specializes in buying money-losing companies cheap, slashing jobs and benefits and stripping assets, in order to re-sell them at a big profit. Cerberus is headed by former Treasury secretary John Snow.

Before the sale, Chrysler said it would cut 13,000 jobs and close four factories. Since the sale, and the new contract, that number has more than doubled.

Delphi

The UAW and GM used the torturous Delphi contract to set the stage for the major restructuring of the industry. GM spun off Delphi in 1999 and is its biggest customer. Delphi filed for bankruptcy protection in October 2005, and proceeded to cut the workforce from 33,000 to 20,000, mainly through buyouts and "flowbacks" (former GM workers bumping back into GM plants).

In June, 2007, one month before talks with the Detroit 3 were to open, the UAW, GM and Delphi worked out a contract that would cut current pay from $28 to $14 an hour, close or sell 21 of 29 plants, end health care and pensions for retirees hired under the new contract,

and much more. Tom Walsh of the Detroit Free Press (6/27/07) gushed, "Let's give a hearty round of applause to [Delphi and the UAW] for doing what needed to be done… to jar what's left of Detroit's domestic auto industry into survival mode."

Having negotiated a two-tier wage system in a prior contract, there were only 4,000 workers left making $28. The rest were already making $14 and had no problem voting to cut the pay of those who had previously voted to cut theirs.

For GM, this meant a $2 billion a year savings from Delphi while forcing other suppliers to cut their costs as well. Lower labor costs at the suppliers means GM can negotiate lower prices. But it would cost GM about $7 billion to make this happen, covering wages, buy-outs and buy-downs for Delphi workers. Workers taking the pay cuts would get a $35,000 lump sum payment, for three years, to soften the blow.

This contract underlined in blood, that the patriotic, pro-capitalist UAW leadership would pick the pockets of any worker, current, future or retired, to help the bosses compete and stay at the top of the heap. For all their problems and challenges, and there are many, the bosses still hold some trump cards. They have a union leadership that is totally committed to the profit system, and a lot of money to throw at a problem.

New Auto Contracts: The Great Leap Backward

On October 11, the four-year UAW-GM contract was ratified and a deal was reached at Chrysler. Ford workers joined them about four weeks later. A two-day "strike" at GM and a 6-hour "strike" at Chrysler give new meaning to the term "staging a strike." More than one-fourth of the workers never struck because their plants were already on temporary shut-down due to a huge backlog of unsold vehicles. These actions were called to rally the membership to support the U.S. ruling class and their union leaders plan for a transformation in auto that is a Great Leap Backward for generations of industrial workers.

The media focused almost exclusively on the transfer of health care to a union-run VEBA trust fund that will ultimately lift $100 billion in health care commitments from the auto bosses. But the real news was the permanent rollback of wages and benefits for future workers. Starting pay was slashed to about $14-an-hour, the rate in 1990 when gas was 80 cents a gallon!

For the moment, new hires at UAW factories in Michigan, Illinois and Ohio will earn less than new hires at non-union Honda, Toyota and Daimler plants in Mississippi and Alabama! Healthcare, pensions, work rules and job security will further decay. Creation of new multi-tiered, "non-core" workers will drop wages and benefits even further. At Chrysler, 11,000 of the 45,000 current jobs are "non-core." Wages will sink and many jobs will be farmed out. This is the depths the union leadership will go to bail out their billionaire masters. It is the legacy they will leave for future generations.

With all the cards stacked against them, more than one-third of GM workers rejected the contract. At Chrysler, the UAW leadership had to fight plant by plant to barely get the contract passed by a narrow margin. With a more militant, anti-racist leadership operating on the shop floor, the contract could have been rejected and a significant wildcat strike action might have been launched.

After rank and file workers almost derailed the Chrysler deal, Ford had to agree to delay six of 16 plant closings and offer a complicated way for some new hires to reach current pay. That sent Ford stocks sinking. Wall St. has been pushing the auto bosses to close plants and slash labor costs for decades. With the U.S. auto market at 16 million and falling, an analyst for Morgan Stanley said the two-tier wage system and VEBA will save Ford $1.5 billion to $2 billion in cash by 2011, but complained about the "absence of additional [factory] closures." (Detroit Free Press 11/7)

After the GM contract was ratified, GM announced it was canceling shifts at three assembly plants and wiping out more jobs with another round of buy-outs. Five days after the Chrysler deal was ratified, Chrysler eliminated another 11,000 jobs, on top of the 13,000 previously announced. Similar job cuts have been announced at Ford and all three companies are in a buyout frenzy, trying to eliminate as many current workers as possible to replace them at one-third the pay. UAW VP for Ford, former "radical" Bob King wrote the introduction to Ford's newsletter pushing the buyouts swaying "There just aren't enough jobs for everyone." In a world with food shortages and infrastructure disasters we know there is a lot of work to be done, but under capitalism there is rarely a job available if the bosses can't make profit off it.

Fighting Racism

The nature of the capitalist beast is that every attack hits black and Latin workers first and hardest. The dozens of plant closings have made cities like Detroit, Flint, Chicago, Lansing, Cleveland, Atlanta, St. Louis and others even more depressed. In these and other cities, black unemployment is twice that of white, and even twice as high again among black youth. These wage cuts guarantee more children growing up in poverty, rotten schools and more subject to racist police terror.

In July, 2007, PLP celebrated the 40th anniversary of the 1967 Detroit Rebellion, one of the most militant anti-racist battles in U.S. history. For a week, armed workers took on the Detroit police, the National Guard, and finally elements of the 82nd and 101st Airborne divisions, detoured from Vietnam. Many of the rebels were young

black auto workers and Vietnam vets. They were rebelling against racist police terror and unemployment, two issues young people today know something about. Detroit Ford and Chrysler workers helped plan and present the event.

While the auto contracts were playing out, another struggle was taking place in the small town of Jena, LA. Black high school students were taunted by racists when nooses were hung from a tree that white students used for shade. Tensions grew and after a fight between black students and the racists, six black students were arrested and one was jailed, sparking a nation-wide effort to free the "Jena 6."

In September, the Chicago Area UAW Civil Rights Council, passed a resolution in support of the Jena 6 and agreed to send members and money to a mass demonstration in Jena on September 20. It took three months (and years of participation on the council) to get the resolution passed. It had originally been tabled and required many discussions with council members and the distribution of many articles about the Jena 6. The resolution passed unanimously and $500 was donated for their legal defense.

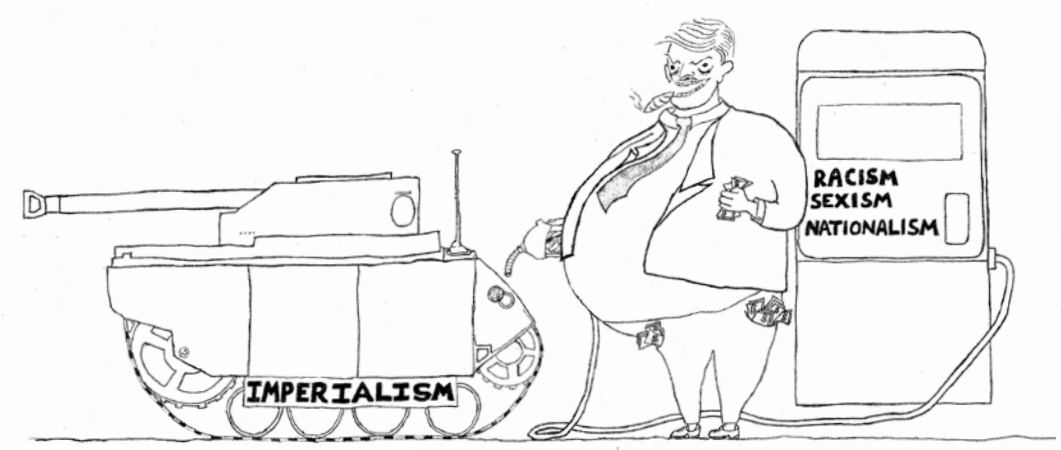
One of the six UAW locals represented on the Council is the Ford Assembly plant, UAW 551. They took the spirit of the resolution back to their local and raised it at a local membership meeting. There was much discussion, and the workers defeated some racists who said that the union should send money to the white students. While agreeing to send a delegation and a $500 check to Jena, they also agreed to take up a two-day plant gate collection, giving the workers a chance to express their anti-racist sentiments in action. A group from the local and the area Civil Rights Council attended the march in Jena, joining over 50,000 workers and youth from around the U.S., and delivered the two $500 checks to the grandmother of the jailed youth. On the same day, thousands of dollars were collected from the hundreds of Ford workers who donated at the plant gate, a positive and powerful anti-racist statement.

How is it then that this same UAW local voted overwhelmingly for the Ford contract that slashes wages and benefits for new hires (They were rewarded by having the second shift eliminated)? The same is true for some of the participants in the Detroit 1967 celebration.

The point is, there are not only two trends within the working class, there are two trends within each worker. All of us are full of endless contradictions. On the one hand there is fear, individualism, lack of confidence in our class or in PLP. On the other there is anger, bravery, looking out for coworkers and family, and raising our kids for a better future.

Politically, many workers may be unclear on the future, on economics, believe "there's nothing we can do," or you have to take the lesser evil. But workers who are clear in their anti-racist outlook and have experience fighting for equality, are workers we should be spending our time with. They are the future of the Party. By organizing more anti-racist actions and fight backs while putting forward our line of communist revolution in discussions and through the distribution of CHALLENGE, we can increase the struggle for our communist outlook and sharpen the struggle inside of them (and us) to overcome our capitalist ideas. Fighting racism while putting forward communism as the only solution is the key to building a mass, international PLP that can ultimately lead the working class to power.

Right now, we appear to be a long way from reversing these attacks on the international working class, let alone taking power. Things will get a lot worse before they get better. But things do change, in many cases quicker than we think. The response of workers to our modest efforts in this contract fight, around our anti-racist activities, and our efforts in the current two-month old strike at American Axle against wage and job cuts, shows that in the midst of this long, dark night, we can rebuild the revolutionary communist movement among auto workers.



CHALLENGE Networks: Source of Pro-Communist Organizers Our Class Needs

We can draw many lessons from over 30 years of political work at Boeing. Among the most relevant for today's work is the necessity to build and use CHALLENGE networks. Developing readers and sellers groups that can mobilize and respond to class struggle with our communist ideas remains a key aspect of our work. The paper must be used to develop active cells of readers, by using the paper to discuss the PLP line with them and most importantly by engaging with readers on a personal level. Our work at Boeing has shown that through strong personal ties CHALLENGE readers can be won to further and more consistent action.

CHALLENGE networks are not only the spark that ignites "concrete fight-back," to be forgotten as we are involved in more "urgent and realistic" struggles for reform, but are a vital tool for bringing communist ideas to our base. The health of our network is always a key indicator of the potential for class struggle and recruitment to our Party.

We first got an inkling of the potential of networks when the first Boeing worker to ever read our paper attended his first union meeting. He had read in CHALLENGE about the Party's efforts to physically stop the Klan and Nazis from organizing in the 1970-80s. He started work when blacks, like him, were not allowed to belong to the union. He broke his vow never to attend a union meeting in order to support our resolution against the KKK and Nazis. He's long since retired, but still sells a dozen papers to, among others, congregates in an important African-American church in the area.

In the 1990s, our Party and base helped start the "rolling thunder" tradition in the plants during contract negotiations and strikes. "Rolling thunder" refers to the sound of hammers banging on metal every hour on the hour reverberating through the factory. After weeks of this deafening noise, two black women readers—and later sellers—led over 400 overwhelmingly white, male chanting marches through neighboring buildings. The next day thousands emptied the complex and the strike was on. One of these march leaders joined the Party soon after. Some family members, who also worked at Boeing, followed.

Another contract expired shortly after 9/11. The union mis-leaders couldn't win members to carry on the tradition of marching through the plants. Our party, on the other hand, could and did by mobilizing our network. Nobody carried U.S. flags during the march of 150, a rarity at the time. Steady reading of CHALLENGE helped our base develop the political savvy to overcome the reactionary ideology that flowed through the workplace. The sellers provided the organizing muscle needed to pull this march off. Our coworkers were proud of our efforts; the union hacks nervous.

During the strike before last, we waited four weeks before mobilizing our base to meet independently. Although many at these lunchtime meetings had read our paper, we weren't too clear about how to use this network during the strike. It took us a couple of weekly meetings to hit our stride.

The next strike, we mobilized our network from the get-go. A good thing too, because the strike only lasted four weeks after the panicked union leadership engineered a sellout with the help of the former Democratic party majority leader Gephardt. Our sellers guaranteed two breakfast and lunch meetings every week in two different cities to enable us to reach more workers. These meetings grew to include two-dozen Boeing strikers, retirees and guests from the Northwest Airlines strike (which the IAM international was actively trying to isolate from our members). Everyone was a reader and/or a distributor or was invited by one.

Organizing for these meetings was a priority. The war, imperialism, Katrina, racism on and off the job, the need for class-consciousness, solidarity, and the prospects for revolution were all hotly debated between mouthfuls. By the third week, these working breakfasts and lunches organized "independent" activities. For instance, one group planned to invite over 400 strikers, families and friends to an anti-racist, pro-working class movie and discussion. This, in fact, did happen, albeit in a much more modest fashion, even after the strike was settled.

Over the years, we've been involved in a number of union elections. Our readers not only provided a distribution network for campaign literature, but also gave public political testimonials. These precedent-setting endorsements got better each campaign, raising anti-racist, anti-imperialist, class-conscious politics among tens of thousands of Boeing workers in a moving, personal way. These readers and sellers held their ground even when threatened by the union hacks.

The Struggle Becomes More Overtly Political

As fascism and wider war become more of a possibility, the struggle between capitalist and communist ideology plays an even more important role in the union and on the shop floor. With many weaknesses, our CHALLENGE

networks have been instrumental in bringing politics to the fore in three sharp recent struggles.

In 2006, we introduced the first May Day resolution in at least 50 years in our union. CHALLENGE reported:

> For the first time in anybody's memory, issues of May Day, anti-immigrant racism, how racism hurts all workers, general strikes and the anti-worker role of the systems' laws have taken center stage at two successive union meetings in this key aerospace local. It is been driven by an increasing widespread debate among the rank and file inside plant gates. The posting and distribution of 150 in-plant flyers and an equal number of CHALLENGES helped spread the word about an unprecedented union resolution to "support workers' action on May Day," calling for "unity … [of] all working people." Veteran CHALLENGE sellers and readers struggled amongst themselves and with their coworkers to endorse the resolution, while some new Machinists distributed pro-worker and communist literature for their first time.

Black CHALLENGE readers stepped up among this mostly older white workforce, being among the first to sign on to the resolution. They fought every day against the anti-immigrant racism that was holding back the union's endorsement. One of these black readers, a shop steward, took the initiative to circulate this CHALLENGE article throughout his shop, defended our Party against the top union leaders, and brought his whole family to the May Day march. He later helped us during an even longer fight around the Jena 6.

Fourteen CHALLENGE readers and sellers prepared a resolution to support the Jena 6. The battle around this resolution continued for three months, eventually involving not only the district, but the international as well. Recently, a seller contacted his daughter in another union to draft an anti-racist letter to be submitted to many area union newspapers. We could have expanded this fight in a more timely manner had we more quickly saw the need to rely on our sellers to advance the struggle.

Our modest efforts at Boeing to mobilize readers and sellers groups must be intensified and put on a more permanent footing to deal with the increasing attacks our class will face in the near future. We must have faith in the working class and the idea that if the PLP's politics are boldly put forward workers will respond positively. The work in the factory has shown this to be true and while this is a time of cynicism, there are many opportunities to be seized and acted upon available. This is no small task that can be accomplished overnight. It is, however vital.

My New Factory Job

During high school and for a couple of years after, I thought that the best way to change the system was to buy sweatshop-free clothing, not eat meat or dairy, buy organic food, vote for an extreme liberal, play music, make artwork and do random acts of retaliation. One time, though I needed work, I rejected a construction job because I couldn't afford vegan steel-toed work-boots. I thought that rejecting certain things that where inhumane about the system would change it. The only thing that I wasn't rejecting was the system that was responsible for it all, capitalism. After six years of these dead-end politics, I began to realize that my supposed political actions weren't changing anything at all and never could. The only thing my politics were doing was alienating me and making me extremely individualistic.

Now I understand that having a job and teaching workers communist politics is the only way to change the world. Only the workers who build all of the houses, make all of the clothing, grow the food, build the tanks, guns, bullets and fight and die in the imperialist wars can stop the wars and change how production is run.

As a worker, I know the contradictions of the capitalist system. I joined industry work so I could support my family and teach other workers revolutionary communist politics. I've been working in industry for almost a year now and have been making many friends. Since becoming an industrial worker, I now truly see the power and potential the working class has to change the world. I also see the great amount of work and time that it will take to make communist revolution.

Inside the factory you can see the discipline, the collectivity and the knowledge the workers use everyday to run production. Every two weeks our work schedule changes. Two weeks we are on days and then two weeks on nights and so on. Men and women of all ages and races work side by side for 9 to12 hours a shift. Doing this highly repetitious and laborious work at all hours of the day and night takes a great deal of physical and mental discipline. Working for so long and so hard while trying not to hurt yourself and not to mess up what you're making is exhausting. Nothing I've ever done has been so physically demanding.

Everyday workers come up with safer and more efficient ways to do their work. But none of the changes are made because it would cut into the bosses' profits. As long as production keeps going and the bosses keep raking in profits they don't care whom they lay off, or who gets injured or killed along the way. Since we're not politically strong enough in the factory to change things yet, one

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Building Worker-Student Alliances Key To Fight for Communism

This summer PLP is having two summer projects: one in Seattle from July 4th-17th and one in Los Angeles from July 24th through August 17th. These projects will have students work closely with factory workers to build worker-student alliances. Students and friends of PLP are invited to come to either Seattle, LA, or both. Participants will be selling CHALLENGE, organize and lead study groups, and students with more time will have the opportunity to work in the sub-contracting plants in LA.

These summer projects and the alliances they will build are important, because in the coming period students with communist politics need to build class consciousness and the fight for communism. The liberal bosses are using the electoral circus and their now number one candidate Barack Obama to deliver working class youth on a silver platter, by having them believe that they in doing the best for their country.

The bosses push the lie that the way to "advance" in society is to go to college and escape the working class. The claim that students will get better paying jobs and thus "escape" is an illusion created by the bosses to create divisions in the working class. Many people with college degrees are likely to stay in jobs that pay horribly, are without health insurance and are either short-term or part-time. In the current period of inter-imperialist rivalry – where the rulers of competing countries are fighting for maximum profits and control of markets -- the situation for many working class youth will only get worse. As the U.S. ruling class' position declines relative to their European and Chinese rivals they will be forced to streamline the domestic economy and force more and more students into more exploitative work. Many youth believe that college can be an out from this work and escaping their class.

While students have played an important role in radical change, history shows that the central force for revolutionary change is the industrial working class — these are workers who can stop production, and cut off the bosses' profit. After all, workers produce all the goods necessary for survival and, most importantly to the bosses, the weapons and machinery necessary to wage imperialist war. It is, as history (including PLP history) has shown, only when these two forces join together in a worker-student alliance and arm themselves with communist politics that revolution is possible. In order to do this, we need a communist student movement that includes work on the campus and struggle with ourselves and other students to move into work in the factories or the military.

Fighting Back!

Workers and students have always and will always find ways to fight back against the racist capitalist system.

- In 1968 in France, the suppression of a university protest outside Paris quickly led to uprisings and strikes. Within days, a workers' general strike had shut down the country.
- In China that same year, students and workers fighting for communism were at the height of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.
- Two years later, under PLP's leadership, SDS organized more than 1,000 workers and students to march through Detroit and picket the General Motors headquarters to support striking GM workers.
- In the past year, when 7,000 workers struck at a Northrup-Grumman shipyard in Pascagoula, MS, shutting down production of U.S. war ships, PL led students and workers to join in strike support.

Recently, the fight to free the Jena 6 once again illustrated the potential power of a worker-student alliance. In Jena, LA, over 50,000 workers and students marched against the racist frame-up. In Newark, N.J., a contingent of construction workers joined with over 500 people, including students from Arts High School to march against the racism in Jena. In Chicago, Ford workers passed a resolution to support the anti-racist Jena 6 march, and raise money to send to the people in Jena.

In the spring of 2006, thousands of students across the U.S. walked out of school in solidarity with migrant workers against racist anti-immigration policy. They crowed the streets and halted the business of downtown Los Angeles and many other major cities. In fear, administrators locked down schools, imprisoning students. In the following year, many schools built permanent fences to prevent future walkouts.

However, if workers and students are united, then fences around schools would never get built in the first place. Further, such an alliance, if armed with communist consciousness, could smash the fences of capitalist ideology. Racism, sexism and nationalism are all ideas that the ruling class invents in order to divide workers and win them to die for U.S. imperialism.

Students and the Public Schools

In public schools, bosses lay the ideological groundwork to separate students from workers. They silence labor history in schools and teach students the ideology of "every man for himself." Schools are named after "patriotic heroes" that we are taught to idealize (we all remember learning that George Washington never told a lie); while discussions of working-class struggles are completely absent from all textbooks. In fact, students are taught to be ashamed of being a part of the working class and that all workers are(or at least those who hold steady jobs or aspire to an education) part of a "middle class" that benefits from capitalism. Students are taught these lies by the capitalist education system.

Further, the bosses' textbooks never mention the real reasons behind the increasing difficulties and instability faced by most workers. They never discuss the ways in which rivalries with other imperialists create the conditions that lower workers' wages and reduce their health benefits. In fact, it is these very rivalries that are causing major changes in U.S. public education. These lies are not always straightforward, but are often lies of omission or distortions of the truth. A common capitalist retelling of history was that Columbus "discovered" the Americas, but how can someone discover a land that has been settled for thousands of years. Another particularly insidious distortion is the idea the slaves never fought back, when the opposite is true.[1] By omitting stories such as the John Brown and Nat Turner rebellions from textbooks, the ruling class is denying the real power that the working class possesses.

Losing ground to imperialist rivals, the U.S. ruling class is trying everything from charter schools, to name-brand schools, to business schools in an attempt to train high school students to be more efficient workers in a more technologically driven world economy. The Hart-Rudman Report[2], a blueprint drafted by the liberal wing of the U.S. ruling class, explains that major reforms must occur in public education if the U.S. is going to maintain its supremacy on the global stage.

According to the report, for years the public education system was allowed to decay as the students of the wealthy moved to private schools and working-class students wallowed in under-funded, poorly administered public schools. This led to a decrease in performance in the sciences by American students relative to the rest of the world. Fewer students pursue engineering and the hard sciences at the college level, a problem that that Hart-Rudman feared would undermine US supremacy in high-tech weaponry they have relied on since Vietnam.

In this way, students are seen as a labor investment for the bosses. The same people who own the factories also control the direction of schooling. Corporate institutions such as the Committee for Economic Development and the Business Roundtable, and CEO's from Lockheed Martin, Citigroup, Boeing, Xerox, IBM, among others were the force behind the high stakes testing now enforced by "No Child Left Behind." In the last decade, the Gates Foundation has taken command of the ruling class push for school reform, leading the *LA Times* to pronounce Microsoft billionaire Bill Gates the nation's "superintendent of schools".

With capitalists directing the schools, students are tracked through the education process to ensure maximum profits and preparation for war. Advanced Placement (AP)_and college prep students are told they will to go on to college and make a real contribution to society by becoming lawyers and other "white-collar" workers. Often these students are physically separated from those on "lower" tracks. AP students are often placed in their own classes, bussed to separate academies where they take "advanced" classes, or walled off in self-contained magnet schools within larger campuses.

Others are tracked into the army, hospital and factory work that they are told has less value. The "mental" labor of the white-collar workers is said to be of more value that the "manual" labor of the blue-collar workers. However, it is in these "manual" labor jobs that real power lies.

History shows that wars can be ended when workers refuse to manufacture bullets and tanks and when soldiers refuse to shoot. This was seen in both the Russian Revolution and the Vietnam War. Students play an important role by allying with the working class. Revolutionary change is possible when workers and students join working-class soldiers in turning their guns around against their true enemy, the capitalist class.

Role of the Universities and Colleges

Under capitalism, the universities serve the bosses' system, by producing the ideas that justify exploitation and war, the technologies of surveillance and destruction, and the soldiers and agents necessary to maintain capitalist rule.

College and Universities produce the racist and sexist ideologies that keep capitalists in power and disseminate it through the "experts" they train. Samuel Huntington, promoter of anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant filth, E.O. Wilson, the inventor of "sociobiology" with its racist justification of imperialism and exploitation, and Richard

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[1]For more examples of facts omitted from American History see James W. Lowen's *Lies My Teacher Told Me*.

[2]The Hart-Rudman Commission was appointed by the Clinton Administration in 1998 to analyze the US position in the world relative to its emerging imperialist rivals in Europe, China, and Russia and offer a plan on how to maintain US dominance in the new century. Their report was divided into three parts and can be found online at http://www.fas.org/man/docs/nwc/.

Herrnstein, who recycled racist lies about the intelligence of the working class, were all on the faculty of Harvard, and have each at one time or another chaired major programs there. Other key agents of US imperialism circulate through these universities into the government and then back again, all depending on which party and what tactics are in favor. Thus Henry Kissinger went to and from Harvard, Madeleine Albright perches at Georgetown, Zbigniew Brzeninski at Princeton, while Condoleezza Rice emerged from Stanford.

With boards of directors tied to the top banks and corporations, universities are very conscious of their role in creating expertise in the service of imperialism. Their undergraduate and graduate programs, led by men and women such as Huntington, Kissinger, and Rice, train intellectuals to spread the racist, imperialist ideas generated by their faculty. And they recruit students from all over the U.S. to become the managers of US imperialism, whether in the State Department, the CIA or Wall Street.

Universities are also key to developing the weapons to defend imperialism. Horrific weapons such as the atom bomb and napalm were developed in universities, as are many biological and chemical weapons. The university is also where the ruling class develops new technology such as satellite based weapons systems and radio frequency identification which can be used to track people and their activities by using their driver's license or passport.

Of course the bosses lie, teaching college students to think of themselves as better than workers who have no degree. This ideological training is key role of the universities. Colleges teach the racist, pro-capitalist theories that are invented at the elite institutions. Operating within a system that requires them to get grants and to publish research to keep their jobs, professors are more likely to study methods to enhance policing at home or ways to demonizemanipulate Islam than they are to study the history of fighting imperialism. University classrooms are filled with the latest "postmodern" theories that blame the working class for its own oppression. Stories of working-class struggles and of working-class anti-racism are seldom in the curriculum. Instead students are taught that only the educated elite are open-minded and smart enough to run things.

Of course, history shows the opposite. It was not the working class but right-wing intellectuals who first gravitated to Nazism in Germany. University faculties (led in many cases by the leading philosophers of the day) were the first to expel Left students and later Jews from their schools, and university students (not the working class) formed the original core support for the Nazi Party. During the Vietnam War, opinion polls repeatedly showed that students were more hawkish than the working class, despite their domination of the public anti-war marches. Yet college textbooks, sitcoms, and PBS documentaries routinely lie claiming that students and "hippies" protested the war, while workers attacked them. These cases show the need for a strong communist student presence on the campus and an even stronger worker-student alliance. Not all German students were fascists, but the Leftists and Communists were purged from the universities very early on in the Nazi regime. Without strong communist politics and strong ties to the working class, students in the US will find themselves in the same position.

Bosses go to great lengths to ensure that students follow dead end political movements and never unite with workers. Anti-war misleaders such as Dennis Kucinich and Ron Paul, internet sites such as MySpace or Facebook, and bourgeois movements such as veganism or environmentalism are just a few of the tricks the bosses utilize to distract students from the struggle against capitalism, the real reason for war, alienation and the degradation of the world around us. The bosses will use anything available to them to drive a wedge between workers and students.

PLP and the Worker-Student Alliance

Since its formation, PL has fought to build communist class consciousness among students and workers. Within the student movement, the party has consistently fought for a worker-student alliance. When students understand themselves to be potential members of the working class, understand that they have the same enemy as the working class, and understand the intelligence of the industrial working class with its historic role as the one class with the power to destroy capitalism, they will be able to succeed in their goals of promoting social change. This becomes even more important now, at a time of even more intense inter-imperialist rivalries, economic crisis and expanding warfare throughout the world.

The press talks about outsourcing, and suggests that most jobs are going to China or India, but they are lying. The bosses are determined to keep war production at home where it can be controlled. Outsourcing is going on, but it is a movement of jobs from unionized areas into subcontracting plants in other parts of the United States or even inside same plants. (See article in this magazine on p.___).. It is to these essential war factories that we want to take our message and thereby gain new experiences, both by leafleting and selling CHALLENGE as well as by taking jobs—for a couple of months, for a year, for a lifetime—in the factories.

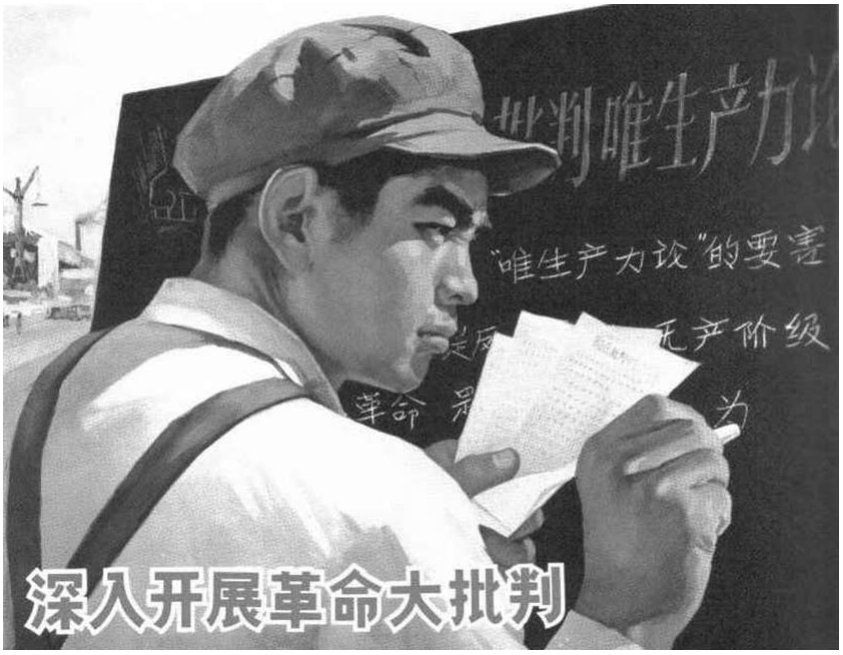
It is time for all students in and around the party to once again take up this call. Students in the universities and in the high schools who want to end racism, exploitation, war and fascism, who want to build the communist movement, can build the class consciousness this requires through building a worker worker-student alliance wherever they are.

- Students can support strikes wherever and whenever they occur.
- Students can get involved with fights and unite with campus workers to make their struggles into campaigns against racism and wars.
- They can take their anti-war, anti-racist, pro-communist campaigns to the factory gates with leaflets and CHALLENGE sales.
- They can fight to learn the history of the fight-back of the working class and to bring this into all their classes and literature.
- They can take jobs in the factories.
- And this summer they can come to Los Angeles and Seattle to participate in summer projects aimed at building the communist movement in the war industries.

As things get worse for workers in the US and around the world, the bosses tell us that the only way to make a difference is to vote. With Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton at the top of the bosses' list, racism and sexism are said to have disappeared. However, voting never has and never will change the fact that bosses still run the show. And as long as capitalism exists so will racism and sexism.

Even in today's "service-oriented" economy, manufacturing industries are still the arteries of capitalism. If organized around communist politics, they hold the key to workers' power. If you really want to make a difference, don't go to the polls, don't rely on the politicians and the bosses, build a worker-student alliance and fight for communism.

This year's summer projects provide a wonderful opportunity for students to interact with workers and build new ties and experience life in the factories. Join us this July and August, come to study, come to work and help us build a vibrant student movement that includes building work in the factories.



China, during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, stressed that workers must be students and students must be workers. They believed that worker-student alliances were crucial to the success of communism and the fight against revisionism. PLP also believes that worker-student alliances are necessary to the success of communism. All students must see themselves as a part of the working-class, and all workers must understand that their study is central to the growth and success of communism. As they said during the GPCR, work 50% of the time, study 50% of the time!

Operation Dixie

In July 1946 as the Truman administration was calling out the army against the post-war strike wave, the CIO launched Operation Dixie. Operation Dixie was an effort to unionize workers in the South in order to raise wages to the levels of those in the North. The CIO leadership proclaimed that this would stop wage cutting and runaway shops. The Southern Organizing Committee (SOC) focused on the textile industry, an industry that had been running south from New England since Reconstruction. But in November, after the Textile Workers Union (a precursor of UNITE) failed to get enough support to hold a union recognition election, the push was virtually shut down, though it would limp along on minimal funds for another six years.

The greatest loss for the working class was the CIO's failure to confront racism, and its willingness to shut down the efforts of those that did. In the 1930s, members of the Communist Party had been leading organizers of CIO unions (for one example see the Great Flint Strike pamphlet). This included organizing in the South. The Communist Party organized sharecroppers in Alabama, a mass movement to save the lives of the "Scottsboro Boys," nine youth falsely accused of rape, and black and white workers in the maritime, tobacco, rubber, and steel industries. The left-led unions encouraged leadership from black workers and fought to win white workers to understand that racism hurt all workers.

Operation Dixie, however, worked to marginalize these efforts. The SOC regional directors were white men who had for years opposed the efforts of the leftist unions to challenge racism in practice. The very structure of Operation Dixie reflected racism. While black workers were flocking to join the anti-racist unions (such as the Food, Tobacco, and Agricultural Workers and Mine Mill), these workers were ignored as the SOC focused on the white workers in the textile industry. And when the bosses wielded racism to destroy the textile drive, using anti-Semitism to denounce union organizers as "foreigners" and attacking the CIO as imposing race-mixing, the SOC did nothing to confront this racism. Rather than fight back by showing how racism hurt all workers, SOC leaders adopted the bosses' politics by insisting on segregated union meetings and blaming the communists for the failed textile drive, even though they had not been involved in, in fact had been excluded from, the effort

In 1947, when the Taft-Hartley Act was passed, requiring unions that wanted to receive the assistance of the National Labor Relations Board to sign non-communist affidavits, mechanism were already in place in the CIO to move against the communist-led unions. In 1949 the CIO expelled 11 unions with some one million members. The expelled unions had been in the forefront of the forefront of the fight against racism in the southern working class. These included anti-racist, left-led unions such as the Mine, Mill which had organized black steel workers in Birmingham, Local 22 of the FTA which had organized 7000 black women workers in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and the National Maritime Union, that had organized black and white workers on the Mississippi River. The South remained predominantly a non-union, low wage haven for US bosses to super-exploit workers.

1968: How 10 Million Workers Shut Down France

Forty years ago this May, a revolt by millions of French workers and students led to a general strike that paralyzed the country for three weeks, caused the government to collapse and electrified the entire world. This struggle's anniversary is noteworthy because "May 68" still has much to teach us.

The upheaval began as a student protest, similar to those occurring on a daily basis during that period throughout Europe and the U.S., although general working-class anger and a 67-day white-collar metal workers' strike in Saint Nazaire in 1967 provided the tinder for the spark that was about to come. That strike affected all the metal workers and won broad solidarity from all the workers in the city, especially from women's protest marches of 3,000 and 4,000.

On March 22 in 1968, about 150 students and others invaded an administration building at Nanterre University outside Paris to demand reforms in the university's budget. The administration called the cops and the students left the building. Protests continued, so on May 2 the administration closed Nanterre.

Four days later, 20,000 students and professors marched to the Sorbonne, Paris's main university. The police rioted, launching tear gas grenades and beating and arresting hundreds of protesters. On May 10, another mass demonstration led to a pitched battle, lasting well into the night. Again, the cops ran amok. Police provocateurs launched Molotov cocktails, providing a convenient excuse for more beatings and arrests.

By now, sympathy for the student protesters and revulsion at police brutality was spreading throughout the working class. The French "Communist" Party -- having long become a pro-ruling class puppet -- and other fake-left organizations attempted to co-opt the growing movement with a call for a one-day strike on May 13. More than a million people marched through Paris that day. The government made minor concessions, but the protests mounted.

Most significantly, they spread throughout the working class. On May 13, workers at the Sud Aviation plant in the western city of Nantes began a sit-down strike. A strike by Renault auto parts workers near the northern city of Rouen spread to the Renault manufacturing complexes in the Seine valley and the Paris suburb of Boulogne-Billancourt. By May 16, workers had occupied 50 factories; by May 17, the number of strikers had swelled to 200,000. A day later, two million were on strike; the following week, 10,000,000 workers, roughly two-thirds of France's work-force, had hit the bricks.

Significantly, these strikes were not led by the organized unions, which did everything in their power to contain and reverse the movement. Police terror having failed, the labor "leadership," including the "Communist" Party, tried bribery, but the workers turned down a significant pay increase and remained on strike.

On May 30, nearly a half-million workers and students marched through Paris chanting "Adieu, De Gaulle" (Farewell De Gaulle), to express their hatred for France's president and his government.

De Gaulle had already flown secretly to Germany to enlist the support of the infamous General Jacques Massu, known for his justification of torture during France's colonial war in Algeria. De Gaulle had appointed Massu commander of French military forces in Germany, and Massu was preparing to send French regiments home to suppress the revolt.

However, the French ruling class didn't need the army. The revolt quickly subsided because of its own internal flaws. Crucial among these was the absence of leadership from a revolutionary communist party with a mass base within the working class. Only such a party could have given strategic and tactical direction to the longing angrily expressed by French workers and students for fundamental change in society. Only such a party could have raised the question of smashing capitalist state power and replacing it with a working-class dictatorship. This is the key lesson for us today, but not the only one.

The revolt occurred at a time when the concept of the working class's role in society and the revolutionary process had come under assault from a gaggle of fake-left "theorists," led by a professor named Herbert Marcuse. The millions who struck France's factories exposed the shallowness of this viewpoint and dramatically showed that the working class alone, which builds and runs everything, has the potential to revolutionize society and bring about meaningful change. This principle is just as valid today.

The events of May 68 also clearly demonstrated the key secondary role of students and intellectuals in the revolutionary process. It's no accident that the struggle began on a college campus before spreading to the factories. Despite several abortive attempts, France's student strikers failed to make a significant alliance with the millions of working-class strikers, but this failure in no way invalidates the strategic necessity for a worker-student alliance. More than anything, it highlights the absence of communist leadership.

A third key lesson is the absolute bankruptcy of

reformism. The workers who rejected the salary bribe had an inkling of the right idea here; without a communist party to lead them, they were forced to fight blindfolded, with one hand tied behind their backs.

After the strike ended, De Gaulle quit the presidency, replaced by his henchman, Georges Pompidou. A host of reforms ensued. Forty years later, France remains a capitalist dictatorship. Unemployment for younger workers hovers between 20 and 25 percent and is much higher for immigrant workers. Racism, particularly against black workers from Africa and Arab workers is rampant in the land of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity." France's rulers continue to seek status as junior partners in the bloody scramble among U.S. bosses and others for control of Persian Gulf oil. French capitalism is thus helping grease the skids for the next world war.

Pro-boss cynics say May 68 justifies the lie that class struggle always leads to disappointment. PLP differs. The struggles of workers and students in France two generations ago belong to our class's living history, if we absorb their lessons and interpret them correctly. In the past four decades, capitalism has solved none of the problems that led to this revolt. If anything, the problems have worsened. Therefore, more revolts are only a matter of time. In fact, now there is speculation about workers' reaction to this 40th anniversary and whether current student demonstrations and school occupations could spark another strike wave.

PLP's job remains the same everywhere: to spread our revolutionary ideas and build our revolutionary organization under any and all circumstances, so that when struggle of this magnitude once again erupts, its goal will be working-class dictatorship and its outcome will be a massive spurt in the ranks of communist-minded workers and students.

Use The Power Of The Working Class To Fight For Communism

The struggles that the workers of Ford went through over many years were sometimes frustrating, but they gave us the opportunity to expose the bosses and their miserable wage "increases", the continuous robbery of the workers' benefits and the constant threat of firings and layoffs, and also to expose the crisis of the capitalist system and its incapacity to meet the most basic needs of the workers, not only of Mexico but also of the US.

The daily chants of the bosses were: "COMPETITIVELY", "GLOBALIZATION", "QUALITY", and the like—all designed to try to get the workers to see our interests as the same as Ford's interests. To fight to maintain their market share, the bosses always had the unflinching goal of subjecting us workers to the most brutal exploitation while trying to get us to defend the company, even with our very lives, in the war to the death that these auto bosses have declared for control of the worldwide auto market. This was the strategy of Ford since the decade of the 1990's with the project called Ford 2000.

This project was clearly based on the principal that whoever could produce more cars paying starvation wages and with the fewest workers (supposedly motivated to serve the company) could control the market. This outlook with its resulting war on the workers has been the driving force and has led to the fact that today as Ford continues to compete for market share, there are only 700 workers out of the almost 7000 who worked at the Ford plant in the 1990's.

The Party led and participated in many struggles at Ford involving hundreds of workers. Hundreds of workers blocked the road in front of the plant several times. Workers attacked union hacks and organized strikes. During this time, we learned from the Party that there is no wage increase, union struggle or reform movement in the world that can resolve the worldwide crisis and contradictions of capitalism. The bosses of Ford, GM, Toyota, and all the other companies will continue cutting jobs, wages, benefits and increasing work loads for those "fortunate" enough to continue working on this speeding car with no brakes for control of the world market.

Today the workers who still have the privilege of continuing to work at Ford face even more extreme and critical super exploitation by the bosses. The union has become a department more in favor of the company than of the workers. Some of the union leaders, even though they began with pro-worker intentions, by not seeing and showing workers the need to destroy capitalism, eventually end up turning into allies of the bosses.

On the other hand, the militant mobilizations in those years of struggle also have shown that we industrial workers have the potential in our hands to bury the bosses and their system of exploitation and lead the

building of a communist system without bosses or profits, where the objective won't be to conquer markets and buy cheap labor, but to provide and satisfy all the needs of the international working class.

The party's work in this plant started around 1990 during a labor battle in which the company, in secret agreement with the union, sent goons to beat up the workers, only for defending their rights as workers. This battle opened the possibility for hundreds of workers to get jobs at Ford, including a member of the Party. In my case, it wasn't until 1994 that I met a person who invited me to participate in the Party. By then, the number of Party members in the plant had grown to four.

At first, my participation with the Party was sporadic since I was more interested in the work of a union caucus which had the support of the auto unions in the US and Canada (UAW and CAW), whose main work was to put out a 4 page newsletter called the PISTON. The goal of this newsletter was to denounce the attacks by the company and the union against the workers. This small newspaper was paid for by some of the workers so we only put out from 300 to 500 copies about every two weeks. Workers would read it and then pass it on, thus guaranteeing that the vast majority of workers knew the contents of the newsletter. We also sent copies of the newsletter and leaflets to a Ford factory in the US and workers there sent us copies of their checks inside boxes of parts so that we could show all the workers how much the racist wage difference was between US and Mexican workers.

One topic that was a subject of debate and which helped me to decide to increase my participation with the Party was religion. From the time I was very small I especially questioned the Catholic priests. For me this was a passionate topic. My parents and my wife were extremely religious and I had a sexist way of handling our disagreements. Fortunately, with the help of a comrade from the Party, I changed my sexist attitude. I was eventually able to convince my wife not only to participate in the Party but she's also now convinced that religion and the Church are an ideological weapon in the arsenal of the ruling class used to keep the workers exploited.

Another thing that helped to convince my wife was the constant socializing between the families of the other comrades and friends of the Party. These get-togethers helped a lot since we all enjoyed ourselves and they always ended up discussing some social or political topic.

During the following years, and until we were fired, we recruited 16 active members to the Party (at different times) and had a considerable number of supporters, achieving a distribution of about 50 Challenges and a few leaflets reflecting the Party's line. We also achieved a certain influence among the majority of workers who worked in this plant for our analysis of the source of the attacks on the workers' conditions, wages, etc, and especially for building solidarity with other workers. The company tried to use its goons to intimidate and attack us, but the workers always defended us.

Another thing that helped to win this confidence by the workers was constantly exposing the company's plans, especially all their projects to better compete against other auto bosses.

We also made mistakes and had weaknesses that contributed to the fact that this work done over many years and with much effort has not resulted in having continuing work in this factory at this time. There were many waves of mass layoffs and in one it seemed that the bosses had identified this movement and fired the active participants. Thus the advance of the Party was stopped in this factory for the time being.

These struggles steeled some of the party members, changing our lives and inspiring us to continue to fight for communism. Our work created an enormous potential for a larger number of workers to regularly receive and distribute CHALLENGE. Also, from all this, those of us who participated learned from these experiences, and have taken to heart the lesson that we have to carry on the work and that building solid and broad networks of regular Challenge readers is key to building and securing the party over the long haul.

Today there are many problems in this plant, especially the sharper exploitation faced by the workers and we see the possibility of re-starting the Party's work through new contacts here.

But most importantly, some of these industrial workers who joined the party through these struggles are today giving communist leadership in their communities, others in factories and some to the whole Party. The local and international Party learned from these struggles to have confidence in the workers' openness to communist politics and to building one international revolutionary communist party of the working class.

Comparison Of Two Typical Jobs Needed In Boeing And Northrop Grumman Aerospace Factories

Machinist Wages

	HOURLY RATE	ANNUAL SALARY
Boeing* Maximum Rate	$31.90	$66,350
Washington** Average	$20.53	$42,700
National Average	$17.22	$35,810
Alabama*** Average	$16.01	$33,300
Southern California Subcontractors	$10.00	$20,800

Assemblers' and Fabricators' Wages

	HOURLY RATE	ANNUAL SALARY
Boeing* Maximum Rate	$28.06	$58,360
Washington** Average	$15.75	$32,750
National Average	$14.68	$30,530
Alabama*** Average	$12.24	$25,470

* Starting salaries can be as low as $16.72 for machinists and $12.72 for assemblers. Presently, most workers get the maximum rate.

** Location of Boeing assembly plants.

*** Location of new Northrop Grumman plant.

Sources: U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics; Subcontractor worker testimony

"Internal Contradictions are Primary" A Key to Revolutionary Dialectics

"Change" is a word that has been in the air for some time now. Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, media pundits, politicians, and conservative as well as liberal intellectuals constantly claim that the world has dramatically changed. The so-called "war on terror" and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have changed the face of global politics. Homeland Security and the growth of policing and intelligence agencies within the United States have ushered in a change in the role and organization of the State. More recently, 2008 presidential hopefuls—from Barack Obama and Hilary Clinton to even John McCain—call for more needed changes in the U.S.: a bigger military, national service, comprehensive immigration reform and a guest worker program, the DREAM Act and a "green-card army," as well as more sacrifices on the part of workers, students, and soldiers. The working class faces a changing U.S. living standard, with more cuts in education and healthcare, ever-lower wages, disappearing benefits and pension plans, closed hospitals, and the tragedies of collapsing bridges, freeways, and levees.

For many working families, these changes seem to have happened overnight. But the truth is that they are part of the long history of capitalism, which inevitably always leads to imperialist wars, racist attacks on workers, and fascism. How are workers, soldiers, and students to understand these recent changes in capitalism and among its competing ruling classes? How should communists understand them? How do they play a role in the struggle for a communist society? Progressive Labor Party (PLP) believes that dialectical materialism—the theory of how things in our world unfold, develop, and undergo change—is the key to understanding the situation in the world today and the changes on the horizon. It is also key to building a movement to make revolutionary change, through class struggle, communist politics, and a strong international mass PLP that will fight for workers' state power and a communist future.

To create a revolutionary communist movement, dialectical materialism must be the weapon of the international working class. It is especially important for industrial workers and soldiers, who have a vital role to play in communist revolution. They need dialectical materialism to understand the broader motives behind the ruling classes' growing attacks on workers. With a dialectical materialist understanding of the larger crises of capitalism, industrial workers, soldiers, and students can put into practice the potential revolutionary power they hold to smash imperialism and the racist profit system that breeds it. PLP fights to make dialectical materialism as popular as possible among its members and among the international working class as a whole. The following article discusses the dialectical principle of "internal contradictions are primary" (how the internal features of a thing determine its development) and why this principle is important to the building of a mass working-class PLP. It furthers PLP's struggle to popularize dialectical thinking and practice among members and workers—in order not only to understand the world today, but more importantly, to change it.

The history of class society, the Communist Manifesto said, is the "history of class struggle," the conflict of the social groups inside society that have opposite relationships to production. This means that social change does not come about primarily by factors outside society, like climate or environmental processes, although these things certainly make a difference. Instead, the effect that external factors have on capitalist society is mainly determined by factors internal to capitalism. Although the U. S. empire was riding high after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it now faces a variety of constantly increasing challenges from other capitalist powers, including Europe, Russia, China, India, Venezuela, etc. These problems for the U. S. have emerged because of the inner laws of development of world capitalism.[1] The same is true of other events, like Katrina disaster in New Orleans, which was not primarily caused by the hurricane, but by internal contradictions—physical and social—of New Orleans and of the U. S. capitalist system.

The General Principle

These processes are examples of the one of the main principles of dialectics, the communist philosophy of change and development. This principle, which says that conflicts inside something are the main cause of how it develops, is called "internal contradictions are primary". We can state that principle more carefully this way:

> Although external conditions make a difference, what happens to a thing almost always depends mainly on its internal relationships, and how it changes and what it becomes are due primarily to its internal contradictions.

This principle applies to phenomena of all kinds in nature, society, politics and thought, and expresses a key idea of dialectics. It is directly opposed to the mechanical materialist idea that change is caused mainly by external factors (see Appendix I for more explanation of mechanical materialism). The fact that internal contradictions are the main cause of change is critical for understanding how the party learns and grows, the role of leadership and struggle in developing the communist movement, and what it takes for communists to advance the struggle for revolution within reform struggles. The role of internal contradictions is particularly important for understanding the growing weaknesses of the capital-

ist system, and the vital importance of a constant internal struggle against opportunism and other weaknesses inside the party. In fact, this is one of the main applications of the fundamental law of dialectics, that everything contains contradictions that make it change, a law that helps guide us to victory in the long-term fight for communism.

It is this understanding that internal contradictions are primary which led our Party to examine deeply the internal contradictions in the old communist movement whichthat led to its collapse, u—unlike revisionists like Michael Parenti who blame the strength of the imperialists for the downfall of the USSR.

Before we get to these big topics, however, let's go through some specific examples.

Getting Sick

Suppose that someone comes down with an infectious disease like tuberculosis (TB). What causes this change from health to disease? Since we are looking for the truth, we are going to answer such questions about what causes change from a materialist viewpoint. Materialism says that causation is an objective relationship that really exists, and that operates whether anyone knows about it or not. Several common theories in capitalist philosophy deny this and introduce a subjective element into causation. They make what causes what depend on what some individual or group of people believe or are interested in.

One common capitalist view, called "empiricism," claims that the difference between accidental relationships and causal ones "consists in our attitude towards them." [2] Others claim that causal connections only exist because of scientists' theories: "Causes certainly are connected with effects; but this is because our theories connect them, not because the world is held together by cosmic glue."[3] A third popular subjectivist theory claims that what causes what depend on the "perspective" of some individual or group:

"Causation is not an absolute relation, however, not a relation that holds in metaphysical reality independently of any perspective. For Earthians it may be a discarded cigarette that causes a forest fire, while for Martians it is the presence of oxygen. Strictly speaking 'X causes Y is true or false not absolutely, but only relative to perspective."[4]

As we will see later, both of these claims about what causes forest fires are objectively wrong, whether you are from Earth or Mars.

Materialism rejects all these bogus ideas and says that causes are objective. But what kind of objective cause makes someone come down with an infectious disease?

Ever since the late 1800s, it has been known that diseases like TB are transmitted by germs. You can't get TB without being exposed to a certain kind of bacteria. These germs are necessary to get the disease, but are they the main cause of the disease? Mechanical materialism says that the answer is "yes," and the scientists who first discovered the role of germs in TB thought so, too. We now know, however, that the answer is "no." One way to see this is to recognize that for many diseases, TB included, only a small percentage of the people who are exposed to the germ that transmits the disease will actually get sick. [5] So getting exposed to the germ is only part of the cause of the disease.

The rest of the explanation of how infectious disease develops goes roughly this way: when a germ enters your body, it is attacked by your body's immune system. That system tries to destroy the germs or neutralize their effects. If the germs win the struggle, you get sick. If the immune system wins, you don't get sick or your illness is minor. Vaccines can strengthen the immune system. The system can also be weakened by other factors, like the presence of HIV. In any case, the outcome of this internal conflict is the main factor that determines whether you get sick once you are exposed to the germ.

Since you can't get sick without the germ, however, limiting exposure also limits the disease.

Convincing Someone

Supposed you try to convince a co-worker that communism is the right way to organize society and wages aren't necessary. What does it mean to convince someone? Convincing is a struggle, which takes place within a relationship that has some degree of unity. You can't just try to make your external influence stronger, by saying the same thing over and over, or yelling real loud, which would be a mechanical approach.

You have to figure out what are the contradictions in that person's thinking, experience, and actions, and show that communism resolves some of them. What those contradictions are depend on who you are talking to. Some people will see the point that communism is the only way to eliminate racism, for example, while others won't agree with this point or won't think it is that important.

By making an argument, or involving someone in a political activity, you are providing an external influence, one that will only be effective if it modifies a contradiction inside that person in the right way. This point also applies to the working class generally. Since most workers are not communists already, communist ideas come from outside workers' reform movements and social organizations, and it is the party's job to provide them. But those ideas will be accepted only if they help resolve contradictions that are already inside, by making those internal contradictions more intense. When this happens, external ideas become internal ones.

Developing a Good Line is a Constant Struggle

Anybody who understands that capitalism has got to go needs to deal with the fact that the old communist movement didn't get to communism. This means that you

have to figure out what went wrong with the old movement. PLP concluded, as a recent C/D article put it, that "Revisionism and nationalism killed people's war in Vietnam, as they destroyed the once-mighty rule of the working class in the Soviet Union and China."[6] Most leftist groups have been pretty clueless about this, but PLP has been able to make some important advances over the line of the old movement. Why did this happen? Part of the explanation is that external circumstances have changed. Given the failure of socialism in the USSR and China, we have more experience to evaluate than people had in the past. But this is not the main reason for PLP's advanced line.

Although practice is the ultimate basis for all knowledge, people do not automatically draw the right conclusions from practical experience. Beliefs they are already committed to, their determination to get to the bottom of the matter, and other internal factors determine how well they will figure out what previous practice shows. Some of the information that would show that the old movement's line was wrong has been available for a long time. In 1969, for example, PLP declared that nationalism is a capitalist outlook that workers must reject, just as we reject racism as a capitalist attack on the working class. The pro-capitalist outcome of a series of "national liberation" struggles made it easier to see this point. Sixty years earlier, however, a pamphlet written by Stalin listed a whole series of disastrous results of nationalism in that movement, but didn't reject nationalism completely. Still today, many revisionist (fake leftist) organizations claim that nationalism can be a progressive thing. The PLP was able to come to the right conclusion not mainly because of new evidence, but because of its commitment to break with all forms of revisionism. This is true as well of PLP's conclusion that socialism can't get you to communism. Drawing this conclusion probably did require an external stimulus, from the experience of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR) of the 1960s. But almost no one other than the PLP has drawn the right conclusion from this evidence.[7] The party drew the right conclusion mainly because of its line, its leadership, and its internal struggle, although having some of the right kind of historical experience was also necessary.

Developing the right line at one time doesn't mean that the struggle for that line is over, of course. Like racism and sexism, the inner contradictions of capitalism generate nationalism, as a way to make the working class loyal to "its" nation. Rather than giving into the bosses' nationalist propaganda, communists must constantly fight for an internationalist, anti-racist outlook.

Working Out What Internal Contradictions Mean

That internal contradictions are the main cause of change is an important idea, worth working out in detail. To explain it and understand the mistakes that are made when it is ignored, we need to discuss three concepts that are parts of it: (1) what a contradiction is, (2) what we mean by "internal," and (3) what "primary" means. We start with the concept of "internal."

Systems and Processes

The kind of thing that something can be internal to is a system, process, object or relationship, something whose various parts or sides are connected to and depend on each other. This kind of thing has to have enough coherence and organization to be able to tell it apart from any bigger system that contains it. We'll call it "process" or "system." A system can be an atom, a rock, a person, a family, a mass organization, a political party, a class, an economic mode of production, a planet, a galaxy, etc. For most purposes, we can also include theories, or kinds of thinking as systems. Collections of objects that may have little connection with each other, like the people listed on a random page of the phone book, or the contents of someone's pocket, don't count as systems, since these things don't have enough connection or coherence. It is important that the systems we are talking about are whole things, not just pieces of things. The changes in your left foot might be mainly due to processes in your whole body, not just your foot. Likewise, the internal contradictions of California's economy might not be the main factors that determine economic changes in California, since that state's economy is integrated into the whole U. S. economy. The changes in the whole U. S. economy, however, are mainly due to its internal contradictions, even though the U.S is also contained in the larger world economy, and therefore is affected by the contractions-contradictions inside the capitalist system itself.

What a Contradiction is

Supposing we have a system to consider, we next look at the contradictions inside the relationships that make up that system. We use the term "contradiction" here in the sense of dialectical contradiction. A dialectical contradiction means a system whose different parts or aspects are connected with each other but which conflict or interfere with each other, as a unity and struggle of opposites.

The contradiction that is most important in the fight for communism is between the working class and the capitalist class. The working class and capitalist class are connected together and form a system, since you can't be a capitalist unless you exploit some workers, and you can't be a member of the working class unless some capitalist exploits you. This systematic connection is not cooperation, however, and capitalists and workers constantly interfere with each other's aims and plans. The two classes form a unity of opposites, but there is struggle within that unity, a struggle that will eventually break the unity apart and eliminate the capitalist class.

Dialectical contradictions are not limited to conflicts between classes, but occur everywhere. Here are some

other examples:

(a) A basketball game: two teams are united in the same game, but they not only try to score more than the other team, they play defense and hold the other team back.

(b) An atomic nucleus: the protons and neutrons in a nucleus both repel and attract each other. If repulsion becomes stronger than attraction, then the atom is radioactive and flies apart.

(c) Opposite ideas in a party club: Club members are united in the fight for communism, but have conflicting viewpoints and proposals about what the club should do or how to do it.

(d) Rival imperialist powers: Imperialists strive for resources, markets, and labor, and try to prevent their rivals from getting these things.

(e) Reform versus revolution: Organizing for reforms and for revolution may be united in the same person or organization, but are contradictory efforts, which interfere with each other more than they help each other.

The Dominant Side of a Contradiction

The two sides of a dialectical contradiction are not usually equally powerful, and when they are, their equality does not last long. One side is dominant, and the fact that it is stronger determines the quality of the contradiction that contains it. The capitalist class is dominant as long as capitalism lasts, but the working class can become dominant by revolution. If an atomic nucleus stays together, it is because attraction is dominant. If repulsion becomes the dominant side, it will fly apart. Two basketball teams can be tied, but we don't let the game end that way. The winner becomes the dominant side of the contradiction, at least for one game. Either reform or revolution can be dominant in a working class movement, and if reform wins, then communism loses.

Contradictions and Change

The most important thing about dialectical contradictions is that they cause change. They do this because the clash of opposites interfering with each other, which every contradiction contains, is a source of activity. The struggle of the conflicting sides of a contradiction is redirected into one or more directions and produces change. In a basketball game, each side needs to adjust its play to its opponent's game, and when the game is on the line, everyone plays with more intensity. In class struggle under capitalism, the bosses constantly have to come up with new ways to exploit workers and stay on top. On their side, workers are constantly fighting to keep things from getting worse, while more and more are open to learning that we have to get rid of the capitalist system completely.

In the nucleus of an atom, the contradiction of the forces of attraction and repulsion also constantly cause change. Even if the nucleus doesn't fly apart, it still changes shape and particles move around inside it.

Contradiction is the source of all these changes, but the pattern we see in these cases is completely general. There are contradictions in everything and these contradictions cause change

The Main Contradiction

Any real process or system has lots of contradictions, but some are far more important than others. The main contradiction of a system is the one which—for the time being—has the biggest effect on how that system changes. The main contradiction in the world today is between the U. S. empire and its various imperial rivals. The weaknesses exposed by the U. S. failure in Iraq have encouraged other powers to challenge the U. S.: Russian-U. S. conflicts about Eastern Europe are intensifying, China is competing for oil everywhere, Chavez and other Latin American nationalists are taking advantage of U. S. weakness.

Although the main contradiction in the world now is between capitalist rivals, that doesn't mean that working class resistance or its potential activism is not an important factor. To strengthen its side of this main contradiction, the U.S. capitalists need to win over workers, soldiers, and students to believe that the U. S. empire is a good thing for them. One of the ways capitalists try to promote "loyalty" to the U. S. bosses is by building patriotism in reform movements. From the movement against the Iraq war to the fight to defend a N. Y. city charter school that emphasizes Arabic language and culture, to the fight against the racist Minutemen, the liberal bosses will use the call for multi-racial unity to try to get us to follow their leadership and support bosses' institutions and policies. Our job in these reform movements is not only to fight against racism and imperialist war, but to get people to see that, like all capitalists, liberal bosses need to promote racism and war. The liberal bosses are the main enemy. This struggle is critical to shifting the main contradiction in the world from inter-imperialist rivalry to the class conflict between the united working class and the capitalists. At that point, the fight for communism will become central.

The Fundamental Law of Dialectics

The most fundamental principle of dialectics is called the law of the unity and struggle of opposites. This principle says that there are dialectical contradictions everywhere. Everything contains a system of relationships in which some parts interfere with others. These relationships are also included in larger systems, which are also contradictory. Since contradictions are everywhere, and they cause change, it follows that there is change and motion everywhere. More important for our topic of the role of internal contradictions, the unity and struggle of opposites law implies that everything has sources of activity inside it, which can make it change itself. It is a key feature of dialectics, as Lenin said, that it "alone furnishes the key to 'self-movement' of everything existing."[8]

Lenin's expression, "'self-movement' of everything existing" goes one step farther than just saying that the internal contradictions in things are sources of activity. It says that these internal contradictions are the main causes of the changes that happen to those things.

System Versus External Conditions

Our previous examples show that the internal contradictions of a thing or process usually need some specific external conditions in order to operate and produce change. To explain how internal contradictions can be primary, therefore, we need to say a few words about how to tell a system or process from its external conditions. Partly this is done by our explanation of what a system is, that is, a set of inter-connected relationships that depend on and influence each other. But there is more to the relationship of a system and its external conditions than that. One thing that distinguishes many conditions from the system that operates in them is that conditions can be passive. In order to live, a human being must breath oxygen--oxygen is a condition for human life. But oxygen does not tend to produce life, human or otherwise. It isn't a source of that kind of activity.[9]

Active External Conditions

It can happen, however, that an external condition is active and can stimulate internal change, like when you get hit by a car and break a leg. For a human being, being hit by a car is a seriously unfavorable external action, and you are bound to get some damage from it. But the fact that the collision results in injury still depends on the internal make up of the thing that gets hit. If the same car had hit a concrete wall, the damage to the wall would probably be small.

External conditions can also limit or prevent internal change. Plants without water cannot grow, and plants with only a little water will only grow a little. When there is racism, cynicism or patriotism among workers, students or soldiers, it will limit the growth of the communist movement, although the growth of the movement can also reduce these limiting factors.

It isn't only external conditions that can limit development, however. Capitalism's development, for example, is limited by a falling rate of profit, crises of overproduction, and imperialist wars, things that result from the internal contradictions of capitalism. Both internal and external factors can hold back development, but internal contradictions are still the main source of a thing's development.

All processes exist within limits, but limits do not determine the internal contradiction. In fact, it is the internal contradictions of a process that help determine its limits, and by sharpening these contradictions, the limits can and will be changed. In the case of building the Party, what you do counts, that is, what we do, like expanding Challenge networks in a factory, school barracks or neighborhood will expand the limits of the party's ability to influence events and grow. Such growth (however modest) in turn lays the basis to expand the limits of our work even more.

Not understanding that internal contradictions are primary, that we can change the limits, makes you a slave to spontaneity, that is: either we are critical and self-critical and constantly looking for ways to improve our line and work, or we just hope for big movements to arrive spontaneously.

Control is not the Same as Cause

When an external event triggers a complex process, it is seldom the primary cause of that process, but it can often exert some control. When a human being knows that he or she can control a process with an external stimulus, we often hold him or her responsible for the results, even if that stimulus was not the main cause. A gun won't usually fire without pulling the trigger. It is the chemical process inside the cartridge that causes the bullet to fly off, but we still hold the person who pulls the trigger responsible when someone gets shot. Being the main cause of some event and being responsible for it are not the same thing.

Even when an external condition provides a stimulus for change, it is the internal organization of the system that determines what external conditions count, how much importance they have, and what change will result. In fact, whether something counts as an external condition for a system at all will depend entirely on the internal make up of that system. Oxygen supply is an external condition for human life, but a supply of argon gas is not, although that gas is also found in the air we all breathe. The stuff is there, but it presence makes no difference to our internal processes, so it doesn't count as an external condition.

What 'Primary' Means

Internal contradictions are primary partly because they are the active source of development and change, while external circumstances often produce no particular activity at all. Even when an external stimulus is a source of activity of some kind, the effect that it has is modified by a thing's internal contradictions, and may be enhanced, redirected or canceled out by those internal contradictions. Mao Zedong put the point this way: "external causes are the condition of change and internal causes are the basis of change." The development of imperialist war and fascism are conditions that make communist revolution possible, but the basis of that change is the internal make up of the communist movement, and particularly, of its political line.

The way an external condition or event makes a difference is by affecting an internal contradiction. An external influence can strengthen or weaken one side of a contradiction, and even change which side is dominant. You can give a child a booster shot to strengthen his or her immunity to some disease because the shot effects specific internal contradictions. A teacher who thinks the school

board just doesn't have enough money to fix the broken toilets at his school may change his mind when he finds out the board just gave itself a big raise. This information makes a difference to him because it contradicts his illusions about the school board. To someone who is already well aware how capitalist institutions work, however, it probably wouldn't be a big deal. The bosses' patriotic and racist propaganda can provoke hatred and resistance in the working class or it can lead to demoralizatiation and weakness, depending on the working class's internal contradictions, and particularly the leadership of the party.

Something External Can Become Internal

The distinction between a system or process and its external circumstances is easy to see in many cases, but we need to point out a few complications. One is that what starts out being external can become internal. Having food is an external condition for human life, but when you eat it, some of it becomes part of your body, internal to you. This is also true of other physical and social influences. When you learn something, part of your external environment becomes internal to your thinking. People are strongly influenced by their social circumstances and relationships, by their family and their class, influences that become part of their make up. This only happens, however, because our internal organization makes it happen. Our internal organization makes us mold ourselves according to our experiences and relationships.

Which System are You Talking About?

A second complication is that almost all systems or processes exist inside of larger systems, and those larger systems can provide external circumstances for the smaller ones. This means that when we say internal contradictions are primary, we need to pay attention what system we are talking about. The working class is a system, but it is also part of the capitalist system, which is dominated by the capitalist class. The internal contradictions of the working class are the main influence on its development, but the whole capitalist system—and its sharpening contradictions—not only provides the external conditions for that development but penetrates into the working class. The internal contradictions of the capitalist system are the main influence on the development of that system, but not necessarily the biggest influence on every part of that system, including the working class. Bosses' attacks against the working class may be effective or not, depending on the internal contradictions of the working class.

Analyzing Revolution with Internal Contradictions.

Keeping your systems straight is crucial for analyzing internal contradictions correctly. How the working class develops—including the communist movement—depends mainly on the internal contradictions of the working class, and especially of the party. It is the job of communists to solve many of these internal contradictions, and produce a powerful movement, unified around an advanced line. But accomplishing that is not enough to determine whether the workers win and communism is achieved. In order for the working class to become the dominant side of the worker-capitalist contradiction, it is not enough for the working class to grow stronger. A condition external to the working class must also be present: The capitalist class must get weaker, at least for a certain period of time. In fact the communist movement needs there to be weakness on the capitalist side in order to grow strong in the first place.

The communist analysis of the internal contradictions of the capitalist system, developed by Marx, Lenin, and many others, explains why this weakening will actually happen. The internal logic of capitalism leads to ever-larger crises, particularly the crises brought on by the wars that rival capitalists must fight. Imperialist war exhausts capitalist powers, and weakens their hold on the masses, making some powers ripe for revolution and others too weak to intervene to help them, a pattern that was repeated several times in the 20th century. For the capitalist system as a whole, these crises are the product of its internal contradictions. For the revolutionary working class, however, they are external conditions favorable to working-class victory.

The internal contradictions of the working class direct its development, and the internal contradictions of the whole capitalist system determine how it changes. These two levels, the working class and the capitalist system are also linked together. As the struggle of the imperialist powers weakens them, the struggle for a revolutionary line inside the working class becomes more important, and the pressure from the bosses to cave in become stronger. Lenin's party was able to take power at the end of World War I precisely because they did not cave in, but won over a large part of the working class of Tsarist Russia to their revolutionary line.

How New Orleans was Flooded

Several overlapping levels of processes are also needed to understand the disaster in New Orleans. At one level, we have the system of the city itself. Some of New Orleans is below sea level. It has a large lake on one side and a river on the other. To keep the water out, the city has many miles of levies. This means that there is a physical contradiction in the city, with the lake and river trying to flow in and the levies trying to keep the water out. In ordinary weather, the outward push of the levies is the dominant side of the contradiction. When a big storm blows in, however, it can change the water level enough that the tendency of the water to flood the city becomes the dominant side of the contradiction. This is what happened in August, 2005, and it happened where the government had built the weakest levies, next to black working class neighborhoods. The water rose, the levies failed,

a large part of the city was flooded. If the city had been built somewhere else, or if it had had adequate levies, the storm would have done much less damage. Instead, the storm strengthened one side of New Orleans' contradiction, shifted the dominant side of that contradiction, and the city was greatly damaged as a result. Once the city began to flood, there was no evacuation and little aid, so many died, not only from the physical contradiction of the levies with the lake and the river, but from the internal social contradictions of the racist, corrupt, and incompetent city and state political system.

New Orleans was damaged mainly by its internal contradictions, but most people blamed the federal government. It's true that they were to blame, but we need to distinguish between what the cause was and who or what was to blame. New Orleans did not have the resources to resist rising water or deal with its consequences. This is a fact about the internal structure of the city, and the main cause of the disaster. The fact that the city had this screwed up internal structure was caused by its being part of a system much bigger than the city, the whole U. S. capitalist system. The fact that the levies were not reinforced, although there were many warnings over a long period of time that the next big storm would flood the city, is mainly due to the policies--especially the racist policies--of the federal government.

In most large public construction in the U. S., the federal government pays a big portion of the bill, for the simple reason they have the money that cities and states don't have. The U. S. government didn't spend the money to save New Orleans because of the internal contradictions of U. S. capitalism. U.S. capitalism did not even try to save the workers of New Orleans, either before or after the hurricane struck because the U. S. bosses are involved in a constantly sharpening rivalry with the other capitalists on the planet, and have decided to keep spending money on war and war preparations, not on the physical infrastructure of the U. S., trying to keep their dominant position in the world. The result has been unsafe roads, bridges, and dams all over the U.S., health care and education cuts, etc. Add to this is the racism of U. S. capitalist policies on all fronts. Since they knew that the people who would be hurt most by a flooded New Orleans were the city's black working class, the bosses weren't about to cut back on tanks and warplanes to save them. To understand Katrina, however, you need to keep track of the several different systems whose internal contradictions ultimately produced the disaster. The most direct and immediate cause of the destruction in New Orleans was the internal contradictions of New Orleans. The state of those contradictions, however, was mainly the result of the contradictions of the U. S. capitalist system as a whole and its inter-imperialist conflict with other capitalist powers.

Which System?

We have already seen that when you have systems inside systems, you have to use the right one, or you will not understand how internal contradictions work. Some changes in a thing should really be considered changes in a bigger system that contains it. As an example, consider a worker who is unemployed. Is this due to his or her internal contradictions? This is almost never true. Someone can be trained for a certain kind of job and have a good work record, but still not be able to find that kind of job, just because business is bad and no bosses are hiring, or because of the bosses' racism. Being employed or unemployed is part of a relationship the worker has to the capitalist system, or at least to the particular industry he or she works in. Whether he or she has a job is caused by the internal contradictions of that larger system much more than it is due to the characteristics of the individual worker.

"Overwhelming Force"

Before we turn to applications to our practical work, we should consider a common objection to "internal contradictions are primary." This objection says that there are some cases where the external influence is so overwhelming that the cause of a things' destruction must be mainly external. If someone sets off a nuclear weapon on your front porch, your house is going up in smoke, no matter what its internal structure is. The internal contradictions principle only requires, however, that internal factors are almost always the primary cause of change. There are exceptions, but they are rare. Those are cases where not only the existing internal structure, but any other structure that could have been there instead would have still resulted in destruction. Most cases where people claim that overwhelming force is present just don't hold up, however. The U. S. government did not organize an evacuation when Katrina struck, and over 1200 people were killed. When faced with hurricane Ivan, a category 5 storm in 2004, the Cuban government was able to organize a huge evacuation that resulted in no one being killed by the storm. The fact that Cuba was able to do this shows that hurricanes are not overwhelming forces, and that internal political structure can allow people to deal effectively with strong external forces, even if they can't be stopped.

Some people claimed that the downfall of the USSR in 1991 was caused mainly by external pressure of U.S. capitalism, and especially by its military spending. Revisionist writer Michael Parenti, for example, claimed that the USSR was "Pressed hard throughout its history by global capitalism's powerful financial, economic, and military forces," and was "swept away when the floodgates opened to the West."[11] This ignores the profound internal contradictions of Soviet state capitalism, which the Soviet rulers tried to resolve by moving to private ownership of capital, rather than controlling it through the party and government. Former U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig was right when he said that the end of the Cold War was caused by the internal contradictions of the USSR, and that building enormously expen-

sive "Star Wars" weapons systems and other U. S. actions were merely "catalysts" to its downfall.[12]

Contradictions of U. S. Capitalism and the Iraq War

A recent New York Times editorial claimed that the "America lost the [Vietnam] war because a succession of changes in the South Vietnamese leadership, many of them inspired by Washington, never produced an effective government in Saigon."[13] There is a grain of truth in this, since not getting their puppets to do a good job was a big problem for the U.S. capitalists in Vietnam, as it is in Iraq. The Times analysis of failure in Vietnam ignores, however, the more important causes of defeat: the internal contradictions of U. S. capitalism, and the powerful worker-peasant movement of Vietnam. On Iraq, however, the editorial does focus on the internal contradictions within U. S. imperialism, which have been greatly intensified by its failure to dominate Iraq, recommending that the U.S. face up to its failure and get over it. The result, it says, will be rebuilding its "battered armed forces" to achieve a "nation better positioned to deal with the relentless challenges of global leadership"--that is, the challenges of being the biggest imperialist on the planet. A recent article in Foreign Affairs also focuses on internal sources of U. S. failure in Iraq. It says that the U. S. must face up to its failure and must rebuild its corps of generals, who meekly backed down when the Secretary of Defense refused to allocate sufficient troops to occupy Iraq. It should get rid of the bad political leadership, incompetent political appointees, and reform the press, who "helped sell the war," the article said, and improve inter-agency cooperation and the U. S. "capacity for nation building and counterinsurgency."[14]

While the U. S. empire will probably learn something from its disaster in Iraq and make some changes, its policies are now driven by contradictions that are even bigger than those it had before the war. It needs to get out of Iraq to rebuild its military, but it can't leave the Persian Gulf. It has to stay, not only to be able to control the oil its competitors need (especially China and Europe). It must also prevent Iran, which may soon have nuclear weapons, from dominating and perhaps even conquering Saudi Arabia, with her huge oil supplies.

Developing Fascism

It is a fundamental fact about world capitalism that superpowers cannot retire. They fight to stay on top as long as possible, and finally end up as third-rate powers, like Spain, Britain, Turkey, or Portugal. War and fascism are necessary responses to the intensification of external challenges and internal weaknesses of imperial powers, as they attempt to stay on top a little longer. The U. S. now faces challenges from the Chinese economy and military, the threat of a renewed Cold War with Russia, challenges from Latin American nationalists and others who are encourage by the U. S. weaknesses that are revealed by the war in Iraq.

Trying to deal with these external challenges, U. S. fascism is developing in a number of ways. Among the most important features of developing U. S. fascism are the following:

I. Winning or trying to win the population to support war, using patriotism, fear, and racism, including anti-Arab and anti-immigrant racism, etc.

II. Misleading and oppressing potential opposition, by elections, prisons, surveillance, wiretapping, immigration raids, torture, etc.

III. Lowering the working class's standard of living to pay for war, cutting wages, welfare, pensions, Social Security, health care reimbursements, etc., and doing this in a way that particularly attacks black and Latin workers.

IV. Increased the size and capabilities of the military and building up war production industries.

V. Disciplining the capitalist ranks (Enron, Sarbanes-Oxley, Gov. Spitzer, etc.), and direct rule of capitalists over key institutions like schools (Gates and Broad foundations).

None of these are optional for the U. S. bosses. All are necessary responses to external threats and internal weaknesses of the U. S. empire. For example, much larger wars will have to be fought. McCain is singing about bombing Iran, Hillary has explicitly threatened to do it, and Obama is talking about intervention in Pakistan. Their problem is that most people are already fed up with the present wars, so patriotism, fear, and racism must be increased to try to gain support or at least tolerance of wider war. Elections are working out to be a good way for them to do this.

Since U. S. imperialism needs a bigger military, as all the presidential candidates say, and it can't produce enough or steal enough even to pay for the military it has, the bosses must drive down the worker's standard of living. You can fill in the reasons for the other features of U. S. fascism. It seems to have been true during the crises of the 1930s that U. S. capital could afford to make concessions to the working class. They can't afford it now, so fascism is their answer. Whether the U. S. can develop fascism effectively is the whole ball game for U. S. capitalism. But while the growth of fascism prepares for war, it also intensifies the internal contradictions of the U. S. capitalism, and provides opportunities for the growth of the communist movement.

Internal Contradictions and the Party's Work

We have mentioned a variety of cases that show how internal contradictions bring about change. Our

main application of this idea to our political work involves modifying contradictions through struggle. Eventually we have to resolve the worker-boss contradiction with violent revolutionary struggle. We already have some violent struggles with Nazis, cops, scabs, etc. In most of our work now, however, struggle means persistent, skillful efforts to convince people to agree with some ideas and projects, reject others, and involve themselves in struggles with us. Earlier we discussed the dialectical analysis of convincing someone: It means finding the right external influence—that is, making the right argument or finding the right practical actions that can stimulate a change in that person's thinking, given their internal contradictions. This requires persistence and skill precisely because it comes from outside, which is not the main cause of what someone thinks. We have to learn to understand how our friends and allies see things themselves, how things look to them "from the inside," to understand how to struggle effectively. Political relationships created by base-building provide key opportunities to do this.

Internal Contradictions and Struggle

The struggle of opposites is constant inside a dialectical contradiction, but many political struggles will only have a significant effect if someone deliberately decides to fight for a particular line. This kind of deliberate struggle aims at intensifying existing contradictions or shifting the balance between the contradictory sides. Because internal contradictions are the main cause of change, this kind of struggle works. We can make a difference by modifying those contradictions through deliberate struggle. This is certainly no surprise. We are used to the idea that struggle is necessary and makes a difference. But the fact that internal contradictions are primary provides a clear explanation of why struggle works, by modifying the internal contradictions of things. It is a key part of the philosophy of struggle.

Internal Contradictions and Leadership

Struggle is inseparable from leadership. When you fight for a line or an action, you a trying to exert leadership. Your leadership will be good or bad, depending on the line you struggle for, and your skill and persistence in fighting for it. Your leadership will have an effect, which can be measured by actions against racism, C/D sales, party growth, and other practical ways. In base-building, in work in reform movements, in discussions inside the party, struggle and leadership are the main things that determine whether we get a good outcome or not because of the effect of this struggle and leadership have on internal contradictions. Exercising leadership includes being willing to fight for unpopular positions. Our party's experience during the Vietnam War shows how important this is. Our attacks on nationalism, criticism of the Vietnamese leaders as revisionist, condemnation of the Paris peace talks as a sellout, all provoked howls from revisionists in the anti-war movement, but they were necessary to move forward. "Communists are trail-blazers, not camp-followers."[15]

External conditions can help us advance or they can make it tough, but they are not the main thing that determines whether the work is successful or not. Struggle can shift the dominant side of the contradiction, convince our friends, weaken capitalist ideas in reform movements, and defeat opportunist ideas in the party. This means that it is the responsibility of all comrades to learn to struggle effectively and actually do it. Leading is not just up to people in formal leadership positions.

Responsibility to Lead

Everywhere that people interact, leadership makes a decisive difference. Our party is trying to become the leader of the working class, uniting it in the fight for communism. As PLP's program Road to Revolution IV (1982) stated, "The working class requires a general staff that places the victory of communism above all other goals and that fights to make the party the leader of society." Becoming the leader of the working class will take a long and complex struggle, opposed by the bosses at every step, since the survival of capitalism depends on the capitalists being able to keep their flunkies leading the working class, so it could never win. The victory of communism can only happen if a communist party leads the working class, and does it right. That leadership can only happen if the party is unified around the right line, but that can only be achieved by an effective internal struggle. Let's consider a few examples of internal struggle from the history of the USSR.

The tremendous effort to build a socialist economy in the USSR, which began in 1929, included rapid industrialization and collectivization of agriculture. This was a critical step that allowed the Soviets to survive and defeat the Nazis. To take this step the Soviet communist party (CPSU) needed to conduct an internal struggle lasting a number of years to overcome two wrong lines. One wrong line claimed that socialism could not be constructed in the USSR, and the one other said that building socialism would be a long, gradual process, with development of heavy industry put off for many years.

The first line, that socialism in one country was impossible, was defended by Trotsky and his supporters, who claimed that "a genuine upsurge of the socialist economy in Russia will become possible only after the proletariat is victorious in the major countries of Europe."[16] Without a successful revolution in Europe, the Trotskyites claimed, the USSR would be destroyed by growing contradictions between workers and peasants, or by invasion from the outside.[17] This position was finally defeated at the CPSU party conference at the end of 1926.

The second wrong line was defended by Bukharin and his supporters. They claimed that industrialization could only take place over a long period of time, during which higher grain prices, lower taxes and more consumer goods would induce peasants, especially peasant capi-

talists (kulaks) to produce more grain and fund the build up of light industry. Collectivization of agriculture was also to be developed slowly. These positions were finally defeated in 1929.[18] Both the Trotsky and Bukharin groups refused to accept the party's decisions, and were eventually expelled for forming factions, that is, political groups inside the party that organize against the party's line.[19]

Adopting either of these two wrong lines would have prevented rapid industrialization that the USSR needed to survive. The top leaders of the CPSU, and Stalin in particular, played a decisive role in defeating these two lines. But it isn't only official leaders whose leadership can make a difference in the development of the line of the party. One example of rank-and-file initiative took place during the big push for industrialization.[20] Many industrial workers pooled their wages into "communes" and "collectives." Communes distributed wages equally or by family size, while collectives paid skilled workers somewhat more. The top leadership of the party was not happy with these arrangements, because they undermined the Soviet party's policy of "material incentive" for work. At a Party Conference in June, 1930, party leader Kaganovich attacked the "excesses" of those delegates who wanted "complete collectivization of the shops." In the following year, the party stopped the communes altogether. Looking back, we can see that the rank-and-file initiative to form communes was a big step toward communism, and it was a mistake to stop them. We know that there was an internal struggle to keep them, and it lost out. Although there isn't a lot of information available on how this struggle went, it would be wrong to say that it is just the fault of the top leaders that they came up with the wrong line. It is just as important to say that a lot of workers had the correct line, and they didn't fight hard enough or well enough to get it adopted. Internal struggle is decisive, and we will fail if we don't understand this.

Don't Rely on the External Circumstances

Some comrades don't have this perspective, but rely on external events to push us forward--or hold us back. Because of this they tend to make wrong estimates of the how the party benefits from work in big reform movements. Usually a big reform movement is a favorable condition for communist organizing, but we can't forget that external conditions are not the main thing. If we don't struggle for communist politics in the mass movement, or worse, if we have a line which conflicts with revolution, we don't advance. How many times have we knocked ourselves out in a union or an anti-war group, and come out with nothing, when the favorable circumstance was there, but the struggle for communist politics within the group was not?

We also have plenty of experience that shows that being active in mass movements has a tendency to move people to the right, as we work closely with people whose thinking is to the right of us. Although this tendency is unavoidable, giving into it is not. Reformist external influences don't have to move us to the right, provided we carry out a continuing vigorous internal struggle, in the clubs and in the party press. Instead of being moved to the right, we can move at least some of our friends in the movement to the left if we fight for the line, for the paper, etc.

Struggling Against Our Own Weaknesses

Probably the most important thing to understand about internal contradictions for our work is that our weaknesses hold us back more than external conditions. This means that without a determined struggle to overcome internal weaknesses, we will fail. But you can't struggle against weaknesses you don't know about or don't face up to, so the struggle against them requires being honest and self-critical with our comrades, our base, and the masses we are trying to win. We must not hide difficulties, mistakes and failures, and not exaggerate our victories. We must also make accurate estimates of what is possible in a given period and what is not, given our forces and the external conditions we face. Of course, we must also resist the temptation to minimize or ignore our weaknesses by over-estimating the importance of external difficulties.

Misunderstandings of "Internal Contradictions are Primary"

There are several important ways to misinterpret the ideas that internal contradictions are primary. One misinterpretation is to understand "internal contradictions are primary" subjectively, as saying that we concentrate on internal contradictions only because they are easier to do something about. In fact some external circumstances can be easier to change than internal ones. Our political work can increase the respect and agreement that people outside the party have for it, and as the party grows, it can make can make bigger changes in external circumstances. This can happen even if the party has serious internal contradictions that are hard to eliminate. In any case, it is a general principle about all change that the main cause of change is internal. We do not focus on the internal just because it is easier to work on.

Some comrades misinterpret "internal contradictions are primary" as meaning that we can accomplish anything if we just do it right.

This is not what the principle means. The extent of change can be limited by external factors. In present conditions, the party can only grow slowly, not matter how good are line is or how hard we work. This is partly a matter of the influence that capitalist ideas have over the working class, especially since the collapse of the old movement has called into question whether the working class can seize and hold power and build communism. But what we do today, including how we answer these doubts in theory as well as in practice, lays the basis for more rapid growth in the future as the objective situation

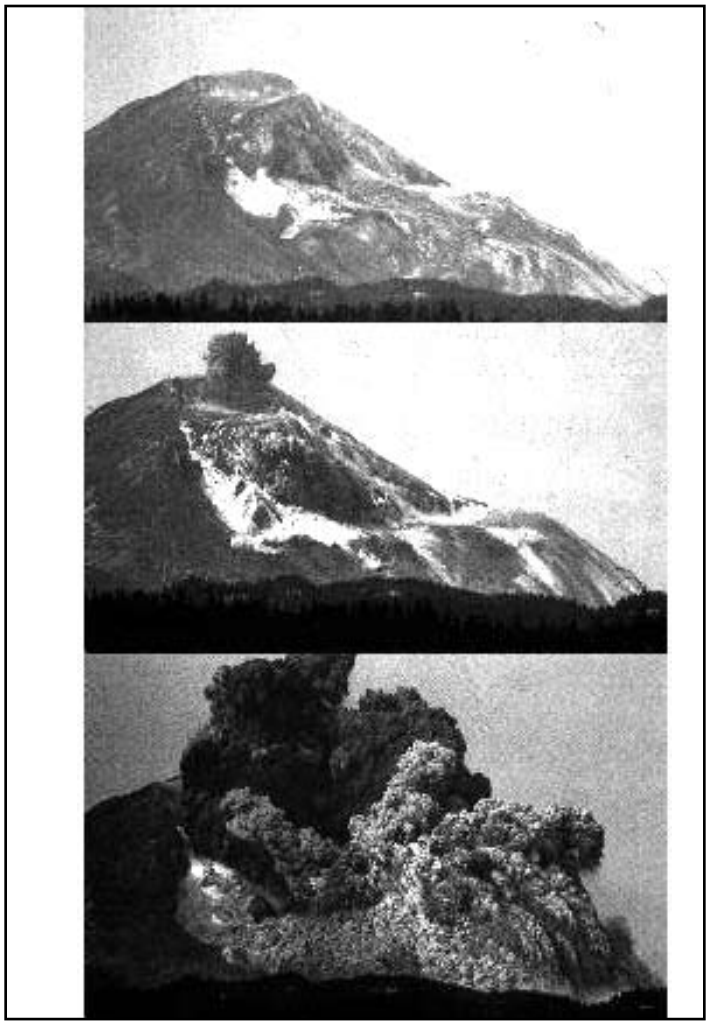
in the world changes.

Growth is also limited by conditions inside the party. Our small size limits our ability to reach people and the influence we can have on events, and it is easier to get people to join a movement that is obviously powerful already than one whose influence is still fairly small. In fact the size of the party constitutes an internal contradiction, since it contradicts the mass party that we aim for and must have to win.

Our confidence that the working class can win communism is not based on the idea that we can do anything we want to if we try hard enough, but that we can learn to do the specific things that it takes to win. That confidence must be renewed everyday by fighting for our line in the mass movement and at work, school and in the military. In this way, as we fight for our line, we influence our base and often they influence us, demanding that we do more and explain more to them and their friends. These things can expand the limits in which we operate.

The fact that we can sustain ourselves and grow in the face of growing fascism is not just a fact about dialectical logic, but about the strengths of the working class and the weaknesses of capitalism. At the moment, the political cost to the U. S. capitalists of trying to destroy the communist movement is probably too high for the bosses to pay. They have other fish to fry now. As we get to be a bigger threat, however, they will be willing to pay that price.

We prepare for that situation by growing in size and influence, especially by building a mass base for the paper. We also need to work skillfully, in a way that minimizes what the bosses know about us. It is not just dealing with the internal contradictions of the party and the working class that makes it possible to win, but also the intensifying internal contradictions of capitalism and growing anger and disillusion of the working class about them. Understanding dialectics is essential for us to understand how capitalism works and how our movement can advance, but you can only get the right answers from applying it if you also get your facts right about specific internal contradictions, both the bosses' and our own, and about the tremendous potential of the working class to create a communist future. In fact, if PLP hadn't studied dialectics, we wouldn't exist today as a revolutionary communist party.



Internal contradictions of the Mt. Saint Helens volcaino lead to explosion, May, 1980

APPENDIX I:
What is Mechanical Materialism?

Mechanics is a part of physics that deals with how things change when physical forces push or pull on them. One of the basic principles about forces is that if there is no force at all acting on something, that thing doesn't change speed or direction. In the simplest cases, mechanics does not ask what happens inside something and ignores internal forces. So, in those cases, an object will only change its speed or direction if there is an external force on it. This is the kind of case that mechanical materialism takes as a model for its philosophy of change, assuming as a basic principle that all change is caused from the outside. For certain objects and certain kinds of change, this principle works. We may be able to explain the path of a bullet fired from a gun, for example, without knowing what happens inside the bullet. If we want to understand the shape of the bullet, however, internal forces play a decisive role, and cannot be ignored. The mechanical materialist strategy for dealing with things whose internal structure can't be ignored is to imagine them as broken down into the tiniest possible particles, so that inner structure is completely done away with. Physicist Max Planck explained this strategy this way:

"We can however regard each body as composed of very many material points, and the differences in the mechanical properties of bodies can be reduced to the effects of different forces that individual points exert on each other. Thus the question of the laws of movement of material bodies is reduced to the mechanics of systems of material points."[21]

The price of this reduction of objects and even people to a collection of "material points" is that mechanical materialism must ignore the qualitatively different properties and kinds of causal relationships that occur in the different levels of organization of material reality. This is a hopelessly dead-end approach for most of science, especially the biological and social sciences.

Beginning in the 1600s, the successful development of mechanics helped make mechanical materialism an influential point of view. Although not a materialist himself, French philosopher Descartes expressed the mechanical materialist position well when he claimed that it is a law of nature that "each particular thing continues to be in the same state as long as it can, and that it only changes by encountering something else."[22] In the 1700s, French materialist philosophers extended this idea to people and societies. Baron D'Holbach claimed that people's choices are determined by causes outside them.[23] Montesquieu claimed that climate and soil largely determine the structure of societies, so that slavery, for example, is more likely to occur in very hot climates.[24]

In the 1800s, after the development of thermodynamics, the science of heat, there were many attempts to use it to prove that change must come from the outside. The argument was that every isolated system tends to equilibrium, a state of internal balance, and in that state there is no tendency to change, so any change that happens must come from the outside. Writers like H. Spencer, who were not materialists at all, also defended this idea. One big flaw in this argument is that most real systems, including people and societies, are not isolated, but must exchange matter and energy with their surroundings in order to survive.[25] Instead of using this bogus argument from physics, others, like economists Pareto and Walras, simply constructed their theories to be as similar as possible to mechanical systems.[26] As they developed the ideas of dialectical materialism, Marx and Engels showed the bigger problem with the equilibrium view, the fact that people and social systems are not in internal balance, but are moved by unresolved internal conflicts that tend to become larger (see appendix II).

In the 1900s, developments in physics and biology gradually discredited the idea that everything is to be explained by particles exerting forces on each other, so that change would come from the outside. Even so, mechanical materialism continued to be defended by many philosophers and scientists, and by pro-capitalist economists, anthropologists, geographers, etc., who want to try to prove that class struggle does not determine social development. Typical of a large portion of capitalist economic thought, economist Paul Samuelson claimed "Within the framework of any system the relationships between our variables are strictly those of mutual interdependence.... The only sense in which the use of the term causation is admissible is in respect to changes in external data or parameters."[27] Trying to replace dialectical materialism, anthropologist Marvin Harris' "cultural materialism" claimed that environmental and biological factors external to human society determine human culture, for example, that the Aztecs practiced human sacrifice because there was a shortage of protein in central Mexico.[28] Jared Diamond's Guns, Germs, Steel: The Fates of Human Societies, later a PBS TV series, claimed that the most important features of human societies are determined by their physical and biological environment.[29] Thus mechanical materialism remains an important trend in capitalist philosophy and pseudo-science.

APPENDIX II:
Some History of "Internal Contradictions are Primary"

Prior to Marx and Engels, the most important contributions to the development of dialectics came from the German philosopher G. F. W. Hegel. We note here some of Hegel's comments on the role of internal contradictions.

"Negativity," that is, the struggle of opposites, Hegel wrote, is the "the internal source of all activity, vital and spiritual self-movement, the dialectical soul which all truth has in it and through which it alone is the truth." In his own notes, Lenin described this passage as "the kernel of dialectics."[30] Other comments by Hegel express similar ideas: "contradiction is the root of all movement and vitality; it is only in so far as something has a contradiction within it that it moves, has an urge and activity."[31] "This inner contradiction of the concrete is itself the driving force of development."[32]

Marx and Engels make many applications of the idea that things develop because of their internal contradictions. Their fundamental principle that class struggle drives the development of class society, that "All history of hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles,"[33] illustrates this idea since classes are the opposing sides of contradictions inside society. Marx's analysis of commodity production and capitalist society is another clear example of causation by inner contradictions, since he shows how the development of the capitalist system is a result of its internal contradictions, in particular, the contradictory nature of commodities. "The inner opposition of use value and value wrapped up inside commodities," he wrote, "is thus expressed through an external opposition, that is, through a relation which holds between two commodities, one commodity whose value is to be directly expressed only as use value, and another commodity in which value is directly expressed only as exchange value."[34] Commodity production eventually becomes transformed into capitalist production, and at that stage "the laws of appropriation or of private property, laws that are based on the production and circulation of commodities, become by their own inner and inexorable dialectic changed into their opposite."[35]

More importantly, the fundamental internal contradictions of capitalism tend to become more intense:

"This internal contradiction [between capitalists' drive to expand production and their need to limit workers' consumption] seeks to resolve itself through expansion of the outlying field of production. But the more the productive power develops, the more it finds itself at variance with the narrow basis on which the conditions of consumption rest. It is no contradiction at all that on this self-contradictory

basis, there should be an excess of capital simultaneously with a growing surplus of population. For while a combination of these two would, indeed, increase the mass of produced surplus value, it would at the same time intensify the contradiction between the conditions under which this surplus value is produced and those under which it is realized. "[36]

This intensification sets limits on the future development of capitalism, or as Marx puts it, "The real barrier of capitalist production is capital itself."[37] As Engels summed the matter up,

"Capitalist production being a transitory economical phase, is full of internal contradictions which develop and become evident in proportion as it develops."[38]

When discussing the development of the party by internal struggle, Engels makes the point that this is a general principle of dialectics:

"It seems that any workers' party of a big country can develop only through internal struggle, as indeed has been generally established in the dialectical laws of development."[39]

Throughout the 1920s, Soviet philosophers struggled against mechanical materialism. By the early 1930s, they had defeated mechanical views and produced a series of party dialectics texts that included emphasis on the primary role of the internal:

"[According to the dialectical materialist viewpoint,] the causes of development are not found outside a process but inside it, the main attention is directed at revealing the source of the 'self-development' of a process. From this point of view, knowing a process means revealing its contradictory sides, establishing their mutual relations, and tracing the movement of its contradictions. This viewpoint gives the key to 'jumps,' shows the transformation of the process into its opposite, and explains the destruction of the old and the origin of the new.... Not only social phenomena, but all phenomena of objective reality develop in an internally contradictory way." [40]

Developing the ideas of the Soviet textbooks further, Mao Zedong gave a classic presentation of the idea that internal contradictions are primary in 1937 in his essay "On Contradiction," where he wrote:

"The fundamental cause of the development of a thing is not external but internal; it lies in the contradictoriness within the thing. There is internal contradiction in every single thing, hence its motion and development. Contradictoriness within a thing is the fundamental cause of its development, while its interrelations and interactions with other things are secondary causes."[41]

In 1938, Stalin wrote that "development takes place by way of the uncovering of inner contradictions,"[42] but he did not explicitly discuss the relative importance of internal contradictions and external circumstances.

Later Soviet philosophy often supported the internal contrdictioncontradiction principle explicitly. One influential author from 1952 declared that

"In each process, internal and external opposites are interlaced, connected with one another, and interact with each other. But inner contradictions and the struggle to overcome them are basic and decisive. This struggle is the main moving force of all development and all movement."[43]

After the restoration of capitalism in the USSR in the 1960s, when Soviet philosophers began to defend opportunist positions on the resolution of social contradictions, they often continued to defend the primacy of internal contradictions. One text stated, for example, that "it is the internal contradictions that play the decisive part in all development."[44]

In its press and its internal study of dialectics, PLP has taught internal contradictions are primary for many years. For an earlier discussion, see the PLP pamphlet JAILBREAK! An Introduction to Dialectical Materialism.

NOTES

1. Lenin made this point back in World War I: "the strength of these participants in the division [of the world among imperial powers] does not change to an equal degree, for the even development of different undertakings, trusts, branches of industry, or countries is impossible under capitalism. ... Is it 'conceivable' that in ten or twenty years' time the relative strength of the imperialist powers will have remained unchanged? It is out of the question." Imperialism, the Highest State of Capitalism, Chapter 9.

2. A. J. Ayer, The Central Questions of Philosophy, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973, p. 180. Lenin gives many examples of views like this in his 1908 book Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, V. I. Lenin Collected Works, Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1962, vol. 14, pp. 158ff.

3. N. R. Hanson, Patterns of Discovery: An Inquiry into the Conceptual Foundations of Science, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958, p. 64.

4. Ernest Sosa, "Putnam's Pragmatic Realism," The Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 90, No. 12. (Dec., 1993), p. 607.

[5] About one-third of the world's population has been infected with TB. "5-10% of people who are infected with TB bacilli (but who are not infected with HIV) become sick or infectious at some time during their life." World Health Organization website: http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs104/en/

[6] See "Anti-Vietnam War Era Big Leap Forward for PL, *Challenge/Desafio*, August 1, 2007.

[7] We know that there were revolutionaries in China in the late 1960s who got this right, because their "one revolution" view was attacked in the famous leftist manifesto "Whither China?" written about 1968.

[8] V. I. Lenin, "On the Question of Dialectics, *Collected Works*, Moscow, 1961, vol. 38, p. 360.

[9] A famous example from Mao Zedong makes a similar point: a fertilized egg can be turned into a baby chick by its inner contradictions, which are chemical processes in this case. These processes require oxygen and a specific range of temperatures in order to operate. But for the inner contradictions of some other system—a rock for instance--oxygen and temperature may have no effect, and certainly will not help turn the rock into a baby chick. You can try any combination of oxygen and temperature you want, but it won't produce a chick from a rock, because the right internal contradictions aren't there.

[10] A physical example is a planet orbiting around the Sun. Most of the changes in the planet will be due primarily to its internal contradictions, but changes in its orbit around the Sun may not be. That orbit depends on the relationships between the planet, the Sun, and the other planets, so changes in the orbit can be due to the internal contradictions of the solar system, not just the planet. In both cases, what seemed at first sight to be a characteristic of one thing is actually a characteristic of a larger system that it fits inside of, and the internal contradictions of that system mainly determine its properties.

[11] M. Parenti, *Blackshirts and Reds: Rational Fascism and the Overthrow of Communism*, San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1997, p. 75.

[12] 1999 PBS interview with Alexander Haig, http://www.pbs.org/redfiles/prop/deep/interv/p_int_alexander_haig.htm

[13] "The Problem Isn't Mr. Maliki," New York Times, August 24, 2007.

[14] James Dobbins, "Who Lost Iraq? Lessons for the Debacle," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October, 2007.

[15] See "Anti-Vietnam War Era Big Leap Forward for PL, *Challenge/Desafio*, August 1, 2007.

[16] Quoted in Fifteenth Conference of the CPSU(B), "Resolution 'On the Opposition Bloc in the CPSU(B)'," October 26 – November 3, 1926, reprinted in *Against Trotskyism: The Struggle of Lenin and the CPSU Against Trotskyism. A Collection of Documents*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972, p. 262.

[17] On Trotsky's claims, see M. J. Olgin, *Trotskyism: Counter Revolution in Disguise*, New York: Workers' Library Publishers, 1935, reprinted San Francisco: Proletarian Publishers, n. d., pp. 50-65.

[18] On the claims and the ultimate defeat of Bukharin group, see F. M Vaganov, *Pravyi uklon v VKP(B) i ego razgrom (1928-1930)*, Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 2nd ed., 1977, chaps 5 and 6.

[19] See Fifteenth Conference of the CPSU(B), "Resolution 'On the Opposition Bloc in the CPSU(B)'," and "Decision 'On the Expulsion of Zinoviev and Trotsky from the CC CPSU(B)'," *Against Trotskyism*, pp. 259-272, and 281-282. On the factionalism of Bukharin and his allies, see the decision of the CPSU Central Committee, November 17, 1929, "O gruppe t. Bukharina," in V. P. Danilov, et. al., eds., *Kak Lomali NEP. Stenogrammy Plenumov TsK VKP(B) 1928-1929 gg.*, Moscow: MFD, 2000, vol. 5, pp. 543-4.

[20] See "In the 1930's Soviet Union, Many Workers Organized for Communism Rather than Socialism," *Challenge/Desafio*, August 1, 2006.

[21] Max Planck, *Einführung in die Allgemeine Mechanik*, Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 2nd ed., 1920, p. 105.

[22] *Principles of Philosophy*, Part II, Article 37, in Victor Cousin, ed., Oeuvres de Descartes, Paris: F. G. Levrauld Librarie, 1824, vol. III, p. 152.

[23] "The will of man is secretly moved or determined by some exterior cause that produces change in him." P. H. Thiry, Baron d'Holbach, *System of Nature*, London: T. Davison, 1820, vol. 1, p. 18.

[24] "… the excess of heat enervates the body, and … nothing but the fear of chastisement can oblige them to perform any laborious duty: slavery is there more reconcilable to reason." Quoted in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/montesquieu/#4.3

[25] See C. E. Russett, *The Concept of Equilibrium in American Social Thought*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966, chapters 2 and 3.

[26] B. Ingrao and G. Israel, Economic *Equilibrium in the History of Science*, Cambridge: M. I. T. Press, 1990, chapters 4 – 7.

[27] *Foundations of Economic Analysis*, enlarged edition, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983, p. 9.

[28] *Cannibals and Kings: The Origins of Cultures*, New York: Random House, 1977, pp. 164-166. See the critique by P. Diener, K. Moore and R. Mutagh, "Meat, Markets, And Mechanical Materialism: The Great Protein Fiasco In Anthropology," *Dialectical Anthropology* 5 (1980) pp. 171-180.

[29] New York: Norton, 1999. See the critique by James M. Blaut, "Environmentalism and Eurocentrism," *The Geographical Review*, July 1999, Vol. 89 (3), pp. 391-408.

[30] V. I. Lenin, "Conspectus of Hegel's Science of Logic," *Collected Works*, Moscow, 1961, vol. 38, p. 229.

[31] G. F. W. Hegel, *Hegel's Science of Logic*, A. V. Miller, trans., Atlantic Highlands, 1969, p. 439.

[32] G. F. W. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, Stutgartt, 1970, vol. 18, p. 44.

[33] K. Marx and F. Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in *Marx Engels Collected Works*, New York, 1976, vol. 6, p. 484.

[34] K. Marx, *Das Kapital*, Bd. I, in *Marx Engels Werke*, Berlin, 1956, vol. 23, p. 75-76; Cf. Capital, vol. I, in *Marx Engels Collected Works*, New York, 1976, vol. 35, p. 71.

[35] F. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, quoting Marx, in *Marx Engels Collected Works*, New York, 1976, vol. 25, p. 150.

[36] Marx, *Capital*, vol. III, in *Marx Engels Collected Works*, vol. 37, p. 243.

[37] ibid., p. 248.

[38] F. Engels to N. Danielson, September 22, 1892, in *Marx Engels Collected Works*, vol. 49, p. 537.

[39] F. Engels to E. Bernstein in Zurich, October 20, 1882, in *Marx Engels Collected Works*, vol. 46, p. 342, emphasis added. See also F. Engels to P. Lafarge, October 30, 1882, ibid., pp. 350-1.

[40] A. Aisenberg, et. al., eds., *Dialekticheskii materializm*, Leningrad : OGIZ-Priboi,1931, pp. 161, 164.

[41] Mao Zedong, "On Contradiction," *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, Beijing, 1965, vol. I, p. 313.

[42] J. V. Stalin, "Dialectical and Historical Materialism," *Sochineniia*, Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Pisatel'," 1997, vol. 14, p. 258.

[43] M. M. Rosenthal, *Marksistiskii Dialeticheskii Metod*, Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Political Literature, 1952, p. 268.

[44] A. Spirkin, O. Yaknot, *The Basic Principles of Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971, p. 63.

MY NEW FACTORY JOB

continued from page 20

thing that workers can do to celebrate their collectivity and organization is to organize potluck lunches. All the workers involved bring a dish and we pass around and share everything that's brought. After we eat I always state how great it was that everyone followed through, how much better the food is, how much easier lunch is and how production could also be better when the workers organize and run things.

Over the time I've been in the factory I have been learning how to defend myself and other workers as a whole and how to struggle politically with friends. Building a base and solidifying friendships that are political as well as emotional takes a long time. I didn't quit realize this going into industry, but I realize now how long deep political struggle can take and even how fast sometimes it can even happen.

After working multiple jobs but especially from being an industrial worker I now see the political benefit of workers collectively defending themselves for their own interests rather than retaliating individually. In other words I understand the importance of class-consciousness. Now I see the decisions that I make in my life as collective decisions. I think about how my actions and words will affect other workers, my class, the working class. Your actions either support capitalism and the ruling class or they work to liberate and free the working class.

At work if one individual speaks up and rebels against working conditions, it's a great thing but it's easy for the bosses to fire and replace that one individual. But if 500 out of 2000 workers in the factory decide to stop production, occupy the factory and demand better conditions, the bosses can't go on with production. The struggle is a lot stronger even though it could still be better, but collectivity is the formula that workers must use to achieve class power.

Class-consciousness brings you to see that class society is a dictatorship. The ruling class oppresses and dictates to the subordinate class, the working class. There can be no harmony between these two classes because the existence of one class means the death and oppression of the other. It is constant class warfare. The only way to resolve this contradiction is to get a job and build a base amongst the working class in order organize workers with revolutionary communist politics. Then the workers can abolish the racist, sexist, exploitative capitalist system. The workers can then put in place communism and can produce for the need and necessity of society rather than for profit.

Bosses' Will Need More Soldiers for Imperialists Wars

The armed forces are as essential to the bosses as their factories. Soldiers produce nothing themselves, but under capitalism, they are necessary to the ruling class to mine surplus value. Without the millions of workers handed rifles, the bosses could not defend their interest overseas, extract the raw materials to feed their factories, or secure their ability to exploit the working class at home.

The only reason the military exists is to help provide for the bosses the framework within which the produced surplus value is guaranteed to come to them. It is a tool of the bosses, used to preserve their system. Any slogan to change its use-without overthrowing the system- such as "Out of Iraq and into Darfur"- will only help this weapon be used to exploit other workers.

The military is the trump card for the ruling class. It is used to secure their interest when coercion fails. All their negotiations, both with the workers and other rulers are held under the shadow of their army. They tell the workers "You don't have to sign the contract, but try to strike and see what happens."

At the same time, the fatal flaw in their set-up is that they must rely on the same workers they exploit to fill the ranks of their armies, and die in their wars.

The Class Structure of the Army

The Senior Officer Corp is made up of those most committed to the military and the majority of them have internalized the goals of U.S. imperialism as being good for them, or at a minimum good for their careers. When you do see division in the upper officer corps it usually reflects larger divisions within the ruling class. Such as on Iraq, Abu Grahib, or Iran. These officers are joining with one side or the other in these fights, either as career moves or because they believe in one direction or the other as best for U.S. imperialism.

The mid-level officers corps is where the military has been having its most problems recently. The Army has only 80% of the Majors and Lt. Colonels it needs. It used to be selective about promotion of people into this level, but these days, any Captain that re-enlists is assured of promotion, virtually regardless of their performance.

Many Lieutenants, fresh out of college have become disillusioned with the military by the time their first six year commitment is up. The reality of the many deployments, corruption in the military, and lack of political commitment to the U.S. ruling class' goals in Iraq, causes these officers to look elsewhere for their careers. With degrees from top colleges and universities they have options, and many more than the Army would like are moving to the civilian sector, where they can work less and make more money.

Non-commissioned officers ensure the orders from the top are carried out. They are the day to day supervisors of the enlisted men. The senior NCO's are lifers who have made the military their career. Attitudes among them range from a "hardcore" commitment to the military and it's missions, to cynical, "cover your ass" types. What they tend to have in common is that they are survivors. They have survived the internal politics of the military and they are looking to retire on an Army pension. For the most part this makes them pretty conservative, and unwilling to rock the boat.

Younger NCO's are a little bit different. They have recently come up through the ranks, and more of them may question what they're being told to do, or whether or not they want to do this for the rest of their working lives.

The heart of the military and also the weakest point for the ruling class are the lower enlisted ranks. These are the men and women who have joined the military most recently. Many of these people were lied to by their recruiters desperate to make quotas. Economic circumstances or illusions about the realities of the war got others to join.

The lower enlisted, the grunt, the boots on the ground, the deck hand. They are the frontline in the wars, the people who carry the guns for the bosses.

Even when patriotism, nationalism or racism clouds the thinking of some soldiers, few fail to understand who's in charge. After a few days into basic training every recruit instinctively understands the class nature of the military. A favorite expression is "S--- rolls down hill!" For the privilege of voluntarily entering into an arrangement close to indentured servitude, where soldiers give up the ability to quit, to leave, even to call in sick without command approval, yet they cannot refuse orders or assignments, they become the expendable human fodder of the military. Their only job is to kill and be killed for the greater good of the ruling class.

The current war in the middle east has resulted in tremendous casualties, several million Iraqi's have been killed or wounded, and casualties among U.S. soldiers are now being estimated in the hundreds of thousands if PTSD and other psychological wounds are included.

PLP has been doing political work in the active duty military for the last 40 years. This has been an up and

down process. During the height of the Vietnam war and the anti-imperialist struggle of that period, the U.S. military was in a state of collapse. Fraggings of officers numbered in the hundreds in 1971. Military prisons in Vietnam, Germany, and the U.S. were filled with soldiers who had refused orders, rebelled, or tried to go AWOL.

During this time PLP was very active organizing inside the military. We helped lead rebellions against army racism, defended a black soldier, Billy Dean Smith, who had been an anti-racist organizer in his unit and was charged with fragging. On bases around the world we published several GI underground newspapers, participated in the defense of many other soldiers, and built a following for PLP.

After the Vietnam War and the advent of the all volunteer army, our members and base left the military and our activity trailed off until the 1980's when PL made an organizing push to send young members in to the military to once again build the Party among soldiers.

While the class struggle was not at the same level as the Vietnam War, we had some small successes organizing against racist cadences in several basic training units, building small PLP groups in Hawaii, Germany and Illinois. We also had two Illinois National Guardsmen in uniform leaflet Minnesota National Guardsmen called out during the Hormel Strike in 1986. Then in 1990 on the eve of the invasion of Iraq we organized a public demonstration of GI's in formation against that war in a Chicago Armory. In addition, during the build up to the invasion and war and for a time the occupation we published the Newsletter *REBELLION*. This along with Challenge was distributed in several units hand to hand, also door to door in military housing areas, and by mail to many hundreds of soldiers.

It's difficult to know exactly how the war will play out. But the military is severely strained. It has been difficult for the ruling class to get all the soldiers it needs on a voluntary basis. There are more mercenary troops fighting for the U.S. in Iraq than regular Army at this point. This is unsustainable situation because of cost and the low level of commitment on the part of the pay to fight troops. Now Secretary of Defense Gates is calling for an increase in the number of troops, something McCain, Clinton and Obama agree on. Unable to get the Mid-East under control, it is likely the ruling class will look to some kind of National Service façade to make forced enlistment more palatable. This will once again change the nature of the military as a de-facto draft, and escalating war will sweep in more people, communists included.

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