



Bush and Kerry Mean War, Racism, Attacks on Workers

We are well into the national election campaign, and it is already presenting stunning evidence that no serious choice is offered between the major capitalist parties. The Democrats and Republicans are in virtual agreement on most of the major and even many of the minor questions facing the electorate. Despite the fact that discontent is on the rise, neither Bush nor Kerry is proposing solutions that come anywhere near meeting the needs of the working class and poor of the U.S. – not to speak of the world. It’s exactly the opposite: their programs mean continued war on working people – economic war at home and military war abroad.

This is the real lesson of the 2004 election in the U.S. It is capitalism, not George W. Bush, that must be defeated. Any support for the capitalist parties is a harmful diversion from the necessary tasks: promoting mass struggles against the mounting capitalist attacks and building the revolutionary socialist party leadership. A revolutionary party can show the way to victory in struggle and the necessity of overthrowing capitalism altogether.

KERRY DODGES BUSH’S FAILURES

The last few months have not been kind to George W. Bush. The imperialist occupation of Iraq is a disaster. The given reasons

for war have been exposed as lies, the Abu Ghraib scandal undermined any U.S. pretense of humanity and the anti-occupation insurgency continues with renewed strength. Domestic support for the war and occupation is falling, and surveys show that more than 50 percent of Americans believe the U.S. should never have attacked Iraq in the first place.

On the home front, the facade of the economic “recovery” is crumbling: job growth has stalled, real wages are down, energy costs are skyrocketing, personal debt is at an all-time high, and consumer confidence, despite the best efforts of the White House spin-doctors and the media, is slipping. Politically, the 9/11 Commission

continued on page 7



New York, August 29. Enormous demonstration against Republican National Convention. Majority of protesters showed misguided hopes in Kerry and Democrats.

Inside

LRP Report	2	ISO: Endorsing the Lesser Imperialist	11
In Memoriam: David Melamed	2	Reproductive Rights Under Attack	16

LRP Report

A PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION SUPPLEMENT

This issue of *Proletarian Revolution* is designated as a supplement. A decision of the League for the Revolutionary Party last year called for the publication of twice-yearly supplementary issues of our magazine that would contain shorter articles more accessible to a newly radicalizing audience.

The more extensive articles in *PR* have often included considerable references to Marxist theory, history, philosophy and political economy and have assumed familiarity with these concepts and terminology. We hope with this supplement to attract readers new to Marxism.

THE LRP AT THE CONVENTION PROTESTS

The major rally at the Democratic convention on Sunday, July 25 in Boston was organized by the ANSWER coalition under the nominal themes of opposing the “twin parties” of war and “Bring the Troops Home.” It drew little more than 1000 people, obviously because most of the hundreds of thousands of anti-war protesters of 2003 have been lured into the “Anybody but Bush” camp. Judging from our sales efforts and conversations, most of the participants in Boston were reluctantly pro-Kerry.

Since ANSWER is run by the Workers World Party, several representatives from the Democratic “twin” were scheduled to speak, although no prominent politicians showed up. Workers World traditionally plays a class collaborationist role by featuring and supporting a few, mostly Black, Democrats while less publicly denouncing the Democrats as a whole.

The LRP contingent set up a literature table under the banner, “Democrats and Republicans: Two Parties of War, Racism and Austerity – Build the Revolutionary Party of the Working Class!” We also joined the march, which was heavily intimidated by police in riot gear, to the convention site. Against the tenor of the crowd and the ANSWER bullhorns, we chanted “No Choice in 2004, Kerry Means Imperialist War,” picking up limited support.

In contrast to this paltry rally, the march at the Republican Convention on August 29 in New York was huge: half a million strong on a broiling summer day. Under the leadership of the United for Peace and Justice coalition, here the theme was more explicitly in favor of voting Democratic. The chief slogan – “The

In Memoriam: David Melamed

Comrade David Melamed died on August 3, 2004. Dave was 80 years old and a veteran of the working class movement for well over a half-century. He was one of the founders of our tendency and a fully committed communist revolutionary after breaking with left-Shachtmanism in 1972. Reared in the Jewish socialist tradition, he was an ardent champion of Yiddish culture and a profound revolutionary opponent of Zionism and Israel, which he considered to be anti-Jewish abominations.

Unfortunately, because of serious health problems, his activities on behalf of the LRP/COFI had to be limited; consequently he was a sympathizer rather than a member of the organization. However, his perilous health condition could not stop him from doing everything he possibly could to advance the cause of socialist revolution to which his life was unswervingly dedicated. It could not stop him from being a warm, cultured and profoundly decent human being as well as a dedicated fighter for communism. On both a personal and a political level, we will miss him more than we can possibly communicate in writing.

A fuller description of David’s work and ideas will appear on our website shortly. We are planning a memorial meeting in commemoration of his struggle, in New York. The date is not yet set; interested readers and friends should write us for further information.

World Says No to the Bush Agenda!” – ignored the Democrats’ and above all Kerry’s broad support for Bush’s pro-war and repressive agenda. The crowd, whose numbers had defied continued attempts by city authorities and the police to limit it by denying a permit to rally in Central Park, was overwhelmingly white and middle-class, largely young and more pro-Kerry than anti-war. Many carried the flag of U.S. imperialism.

The highlight of the day for the LRP contingent was our chanting, which could not be drowned out in the large rally. We started with our standard chants: “U.S. Out of Iraq, Stop the Imperialist Attack!”, “No Choice in 2004, Bush and Kerry Are for
continued on page 13

How to Reach Us

COFI Central Office & LRP New York (*new address*)
P.O. Box 1936, Murray Hill Station, New York, NY 10156
(212) 330-9017
e-mail: lrpcofi@earthlink.net; website: www.lrp-cofi.org

LRP Chicago
Box 204, 1924 W. Montrose, Chicago, IL 60613
(773) 463-1340

COFI Australia
League Press, P.O. Box 148, Fairfield, Vic. 3078

COFI Germany
KOVI-BRD, c/o Buchladen ‘Le Sabot’, Breitestr. 76
53111, Bonn
e-mail: KOVI.BRD@t-online.de
website: www.lrp-cofi.org/KOVI_BRD

Proletarian Revolution

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

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

Production: Jim Morgan

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

Send to: **SV Publishing**
P.O. Box 1936, Murray Hill Station
New York, NY 10156, USA.

U.S. Terror Faces Mass Iraqi Opposition

For the second time in a matter of months, the U.S. imperialists launched a massive ground offensive against Iraqi insurgents, only to fail in their objectives and beat a retreat. First, in May, their bloody attack on the Sunni stronghold of Fallujah ended with U.S. forces surrendering control of the city in the face of a nationwide uprising. Then in August, the U.S. forces initiated a second offensive, this time focused against Shi'ite forces led by reactionary Islamic "fundamentalist" Muqtada al-Sadr in Najaf. Again, stubborn resistance by the Iraqi insurgents combined with massive protests to deal the U.S. another defeat.

The U.S. imperialists long ago gave up on "winning the hearts and minds" of the Iraqi people. Now, concluding that predominantly ground-based combat against the insurgency has been too costly, they have turned to terrorizing the population with a murderous aerial bombing campaign. From Baghdad to the Sunni stronghold of Fallujah to the Turkmen town of Tal Afar in the north to Shi'ite cities in the south, the U.S. attacks have killed scores. Still the population remains defiant and the insurgency continues. But the absence of a genuinely anti-imperialist revolutionary working-class political leadership in Iraq means that the potential for a more powerful, united struggle against the occupation continues to be squandered, allowing the imperialists and their puppets to live to fight another day.

BEHIND THE BATTLE OF NAJAF

The battle of Najaf started as an attempt by the U.S. occupiers to re-assert their authority in the face of continuing armed insurgency. The U.S. was particularly anxious to take advantage of the cover provided by the supposedly "sovereign" government of Iyad Allawi – a former cadre of Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party – which it had appointed at the end of June. The U.S. and Allawi wanted a quick and decisive blow against Muqtada al-Sadr's overwhelmingly outgunned Mahdi Army militia, in order to intimidate all the insurgents and the entire Iraqi people. What they got was a costly showdown that lasted for weeks and exposed just how weak and dependent on the U.S. Allawi is – and how ready the Iraqi people are to stand up in opposition to him.

The U.S. and Allawi hoped that a deadly show of force would compel Sadr to surrender, or would succeed in apprehending or killing him and breaking his militia. But their plans were thwarted, not by Sadr and his militia alone but by the outpouring of popular protest against the actions of the U.S. military and the Iraqi government.

Their political defeat was confirmed when Grand Ayatollah Sistani, the predominant Shi'ite cleric, who all along had tried to balance between the occupiers and the resistance, returned to Najaf at the head of a "peace" march of thousands. The U.S. military had to halt its pursuit of Sadr's forces, who joined Sistani's

march in triumph. Sistani, who had wanted to avoid any concessions to his rival Sadr, was forced by the growing mass hatred of the U.S.-led occupation, especially of the brutal assault on the "holy" city of Najaf, to give Sadr a face-saving escape.

The U.S. lost the political battle despite its bloody slaughter: the military assaults on insurgents and civilians alike destroyed the heart of Najaf and killed hundreds. But a direct military assault on Sadr in the Imam Ali shrine, the Shi'ite's religious site, would have triggered a massive explosion of struggle by Iraq's Shi'ite majority and millions of other Iraqis against the occupation and the regime. Thus Sistani also rescued the Bush administration from the impasse it had dug itself into: attacking the shrine would have led to a mass eruption that would have exposed Bush's failure in Iraq in the run-up to the U.S. presidential election. Bush has to worry that no explosion setting Shi'ites, Sunnis and Kurds against each other occurs before November.

THE LEAD-UP TO NAJAF

The Iraq invasion itself was a risky but necessary maneuver aimed at insuring U.S. supremacy by both controlling the oil supply as a weapon against economic rivals and militarily dominating the strategic Middle East. After the crisis the U.S. faced in Iraq in the spring (see *PR* 71), it was more important than ever for the occupiers to put Iraqi collaborators at the head of the government. They hoped that a nominally independent Iraqi regime could more easily get away with harsher military and police crackdowns than could the U.S.'s previous puppet, the Iraqi Governing Council. The U.S. and the Governing Council had already suppressed Iraqi workers' trade union rights, including the right to strike, thereby aiding the religious leaders in dominating the anti-imperialist resistance.

Allawi did everything in his power to act tough. The most prominent act his government undertook in its first weeks of existence was the security law announced July 7, which allows the puppet regime to declare a state of emergency and impose martial



Insurgents rally inside the Imam Ali shrine.

law at any time. In its spirit, the independent Arabic television service Al Jazeera was suspended and then shut down in Iraq. Meanwhile, the American authorities abandoned the Transitional Administrative Law, the “interim constitution,” that it had promulgated with much fanfare beforehand, trumpeting its guarantees for human rights and women’s rights in particular.

Yet despite such measures and Allawi’s tough talk, the government was unable to assert its authority over much of Iraq beyond downtown Baghdad. Nor could it stabilize the perilous security situation that left the occupation on shaky ground even without an armed uprising. The wave of high-profile kidnappings throughout July, and the humiliating blow the U.S. suffered when the government of the Philippines agreed to withdraw all its forces and personnel from Iraq in response to a kidnapping, showed the weakness of the U.S.’s position.

Under these circumstances, Najaf was a battle that the U.S. and Allawi wanted to provoke – to assert their authority and control, to show Iraqis and the rest of the world that defiance would not be tolerated. Yet even though the occupiers could prevail militarily, they failed to achieve their political goal. Far from stamping out resistance or intimidating Iraqis into accepting the U.S.-backed Allawi government, the showdown in Najaf fanned the flames of resistance.

The U.S. and Allawi were hoping to take advantage of the fact that while Sadr’s opposition to the occupation is popular, his reactionary Islamic ideology enjoys little support among Iraqis, including the Shi’ite majority. In particular, the people of Najaf were angered by the thuggish “policing” of the streets by the Sadr militia, largely drawn from his lumpen, non-working-class base, as well as their reckless military tactics that often drew fire upon civilian areas. But the Iraqi masses understand a fundamental truth: the greatest and most immediate danger they face comes from the U.S. In a battle between the imperialists and Sadr, they have rallied in defense of Sadr, not to support his ideology but to oppose the occupation of their country.

MASS PROTESTS SHAKE OCCUPATION’S PLANS

Sadr responded defiantly to Allawi’s threats, and his forces continued to put up fierce resistance to the massive U.S. military assault. But what really shook the occupiers and their puppet regime were the mass protests of thousands that erupted in city after city across Iraq, especially in the Shi’ite south, as the confrontation in Najaf escalated. The protests not only demanded U.S. forces get out of Najaf, they also demanded the resignation of Allawi and his government. In Nasiriyah on August 11, protesters even set fire to the local office of Allawi’s political party. The next day 5000 demonstrators marched against the U.S. and Allawi in the major port city of Basra. And by the end of a week in which the occupation authorities had planned to deal a major blow to defiance and resistance across Iraq, the opposite was happening. Friday, August 13 witnessed mass expressions of protest against the occupation on a scale broader than anything yet seen in the 16 months since the U.S. invasion:

- In the southern city of Diwaniya, a mass protest attacked Allawi’s local party office, ripping down signs and throwing rocks.
- In Baghdad, thousands marched from Sadr City right to the Green Zone, the massively defended headquarters of the occupation itself, carrying banners with slogans from “Leave Muqtada al-Sadr” to “Shoot Down American Planes.”



Iraqi militia celebrate near a burning British vehicle in Basra, August 17

- In Fallujah, the center of Sunni resistance to the occupation, thousands marched to denounce the U.S. assault on Najaf, shouting, “Long live Sadr. Fallujah stands by Najaf against America.”
- In Kut, a city south of Baghdad that has also been a center of resistance, and where U.S. air raids had just killed at least 72 people the day before, over 1000 Sunnis and Shi’ites marched together to demand an end to the assault on Najaf and the dismissal of Allawi and his defense and interior ministers.
- Most powerfully, that same day protesters began marching from all over Iraq right into Najaf itself. According to *Agence France-Presse* on August 13, “Around 2000 demonstrators marched under the blazing sun to Najaf from the twin city of Kufa, straight through the U.S. and Iraqi lines to the holy Imam Ali shrine, a Mahdi Army bastion since its spring uprising against US-led troops. In Baghdad, a spokesman urged thousands more to march the 180 kilometres (110 miles) to Najaf. Another 1000 began a similar walk from the holy city of Karbala.”

And an *Associated Press* report summed up the next day:

About 10,000 demonstrators, some in buses, others on foot, arrived in Najaf on Saturday to show their solidarity with the militants and act as human shields to protect the city. Many of the demonstrators arrived from as far away as Baghdad, as well as the southern cities of Amarah and Nasiriyah, demanding the interim government’s resignation and an end to the offensive here.

In a clear sign that mass sentiment in Iraq is overwhelmingly on the side of the insurgents, even some Iraqis who are serving in the institutions of the pro-occupation regime have been compelled to come out and openly side with the fighters against the occupation. In Amarah, hundreds of Iraqi National Guardsmen said they

were joining the Mahdi Army until U.S. forces leave Najaf. When the Najaf police chief Ghalib al-Jazaari protested against Sadr militants kidnapping his father in Basra August 16, he had to admit that they were “accompanied by police loyal to Sadr.” According to *Counterpunch*, “4000 Iraqi security forces in Najaf had defected to al-Sadr’s army by August 14.” And officials of the Iraqi “defense ministry” told a Knight-Ridder reporter on August 15 that “more than 100 Iraqi national guardsmen and a battalion of Iraqi soldiers chose to quit rather than attack fellow Iraqis in a city that includes some of the holiest sites in Shi’ite Islam.” The politically necessary attempt to use Iraqi forces as the front for confronting the insurgents became increasingly exposed.

The pressure of mass opposition to the occupation also made itself felt in the political arena. On August 11, at a time when the official Allawi government line was “no negotiations” and the U.S. Marines were “preparing a final assault” on Najaf, Iraq’s deputy president Ibrahim Jaafari, a leader of the Shi’ite Dawa Party, called on U.S. troops to leave Najaf. The final assault was postponed, and the spreading mass protests forced Allawi to engage in a round of negotiations August 13 and 14, but he refused to allow his negotiators to make any substantive offers.

Then as the U.S. and Allawi announced the renewal of the offensive, the National Conference opened in Baghdad August 15. The Conference was portrayed by the U.S., the government, and the U.N. as a critical step toward “democracy” in Iraq. But in reality it was an attempt to incorporate a broad spectrum of political forces across all of Iraq’s regions and ethnic groups into cooperating with the occupation. Democracy will never be won in Iraq apart from the revolutionary overthrow of the imperialist occupation. Indeed, the struggle will prove that not just the imperialists but all the propertied classes of Iraq will oppose democracy for fear such freedoms will be used by the masses against capitalism. Iraqi workers should demand the convocation of a revolutionary constituent assembly as a tactical step to prove that the occupiers and owning classes will never favor freedom from imperialism or the masses’ democratic rights.

The contradictions of the occupation came to a head at the National Conference. While the selection process was arranged so that there could be no possibility of actually challenging the government’s pro-occupation course, the conference had to reflect some broader views in Iraqi society in order to serve its purpose. And at the very time the conference convened, Iraq was united in outrage at the U.S. military assault on Najaf. So when it opened, delegate after delegate rose to call for an end to the fighting in Najaf. They demanded the conference be suspended until the issue of Najaf was resolved, and many Shi’ite delegates threatened to walk out.

Yet in negotiations between the delegates and Allawi over the course of two days, Allawi did not yield to any kind of compromise, and the end result was a delegation from the conference heading to Najaf to urge Sadr to leave the shrine, disband his militia, and “participate in the political process.” The protesting delegates were used to further pressure Sadr to give in to the U.S. and Allawi’s demands and to provide cover for a renewed final assault.

POLITICAL LESSONS OF NAJAF

The spectacle of a small but courageous militia resisting the overwhelming might of the U.S. military, and of mass protests dealing a huge political blow to the designs of the U.S. occupation, is a heartening sight for oppressed people everywhere fighting against imperialism.

But small militias and spontaneous mass protests, while they can keep an imperialist occupation in crisis, are not enough to

achieve the masses’ demands for liberation from oppression and a decent, human existence. Indeed, Sadr’s brand of religious “fundamentalism” offers only another form of oppression, just as Saddam Hussein’s repressive secular nationalism did. Neither challenges the root cause of imperialist oppression: the capitalist system that drives the U.S. ruling class to conquer foreign nations and foreign markets to maintain its economic dominance. The only force with the social power to challenge the rule of the occupation regime, whose fundamental interests are irreconcilably opposed to it, is the organized Iraqi working class – and the only program that can lead the struggle to victory can be summed up in two words: socialist revolution.

A small but important development among the mass protests over Najaf was the work stoppage called by workers at an oil pumping station in Nasiriyah August 11, who cut supplies of refined products and liquefied natural gas to Baghdad. The workers issued a statement saying, “We stopped pumping in protest of the inhumane conduct of the interim government and its cooperation with the occupation forces to ransack the holy city of Najaf and insult the Shi’ites, their symbols and holy places.”

Governmental repression has not been the only factor crippling the working-class movement in Iraq. As in the rest of the world, the name of working-class socialism has been soiled for decades by the betrayals of the Stalinists who falsely claimed to speak in its name. The Iraqi Communist Party participated in the puppet Governing Council under U.S. “administrator” Paul Bremer through June, and now enthuses over the pseudo-sovereign Allawi regime. The anti-Stalinist Worker-Communist Party of Iraq (WCPI), has opposed the puppet governments but stands neutral in the armed conflicts between the U.S. occupiers and the Iraqi insurgents. Claiming to base their position on opposition to the reactionary political programs of the insurgents, their abandonment of the anti-imperialist struggle in the name of socialism can only drive the masses away from socialism and into the arms of the reactionaries.

As for the U.S., the Iraqi “government” it has set up controls little more than the center of Baghdad. With the U.S. military focused on Najaf, much of the Sunni region was taken over by Sunni forces hostile to the former allies of the deposed Saddam Hussein whom the U.S. had turned to.

While American troops have been battling Islamic militants to an uncertain outcome in Najaf ..., events in two Sunni Muslim cities that stand astride the crucial western approaches to Baghdad have moved significantly against American plans to build a secular democracy in Iraq. Both of the cities, Falluja and Ramadi, and much of Anbar Province, are now controlled by fundamentalist militias, with American troops confined mainly to heavily protected forts on the desert’s edge. (New York Times, August 29.)

As *Proletarian Revolution* has pointed out repeatedly, despite its pretensions of building democracy, the only solution the U.S. imperialists can be satisfied with in Iraq is a revived strong-man rule along the lines of Saddam, probably administered by some former Saddam and U.S. agent like Allawi. But the August impasse, together with the increased influence of both Sistani and Sadr, has set back this “solution.”

Neither the U.S. military, nor Allawi, nor Sadr, nor even the WCPI, can alter the historical course which drives the Iraqi masses into conflict with the capitalist system that lies at the root of the imperialist occupation, and which will inevitably drive the Iraqi working class into the leading role in the struggle. The urgent task today for revolutionary-minded Iraqi workers is to begin to build the revolutionary party of the working class that will be absolutely necessary to lead the struggle to victory. ●

Publications of COFI

Communist Organization for the Fourth International

Proletarian Revolution

Organ of the League for the Revolutionary Party (U.S.)

\$7 for eight issues,
\$15 for institutions or airmail

The Life and Death of Stalinism: A Resurrection of Marxist Theory

The definitive analysis of Marx's theory of capitalism and the statified capitalism of the Stalinist countries.
by Walter Daum \$15.00

Marxism, Interracialism and the Black Struggle

Black liberation through class struggle, the alternative to the failures of integrationism and nationalism.
by Sy Landy \$3.00

Pamphlets

The Politics of War

Articles from Proletarian Revolution, 1980-1997, on Afghanistan and the Gulf War \$1.00

Fight Police Terror! No Support to Capitalism's Racist Anti-Worker Police! by Evelyn Kaye \$1.00

South Africa and Proletarian Revolution by Matthew Richardson \$3.00

The Democratic Party: Graveyard of Black Struggles by Sy Landy \$2.00

Armed Self-Defense and the Revolutionary Program by Matthew Richardson 75¢

"No Draft" Is No Answer!
The Communist Position on Imperialist War \$1.00

Permanent Revolution and Postwar Stalinism: Two Views on the "Russian Question"
Documents by Chris Bailey of the British WRP and Walter Daum and Sy Landy of the LRP \$3.00

The Nader Hoax How the "Socialist" Left Promotes a Liberal Who Is Pro-War, Pro-Capitalist, Nationalist, Couldn't Care Less about Black People and Is Happy to Have Immigrants Around as Long as They're Only Cleaning Toilets 50¢

The Unresolved Contradictions of Tony Cliff:
A Brief Critique of Tom O'Lincoln's Pamphlet on State Capitalism 50¢

LRP vs. ISO
Trotskyism vs. Middle-Class Opportunism \$2.00

The Specter of Economic Collapse

Articles from Proletarian Revolution, 1983-1999 by Arthur Rymer \$2.00

Haiti and Permanent Revolution by Eric Nacar \$2.00

Bolivia: the Revolution the "Fourth International" Betrayed
Articles by the Vern-Ryan Tendency, with an introduction by the LRP \$1.00

What's Behind the War on Women? by Evelyn Kaye 50¢

Propaganda and Agitation in Building the Revolutionary Party by Matthew Richardson 50¢

Twenty Years of the LRP by Sy Landy, plus COFI Political Resolution 75¢

The Fight Against Imperialist War: Which Way Forward? Complete transcript of the debate between the LRP and the SL \$5.00

LRP vs SL A selection of articles from publications of the League for the Revolutionary Party on the Spartacist League and its politics. \$5.00

The Spartacist School of Falsification
The LRP Replies to "Liars Vanguard" \$1.00

Religion, the Veil and the Workers' Movement
On the French "affair of the veil" in 1991, echoed by today's governmental attack on Muslim women's rights. \$1.00

Australia: League Press, P.O. Box 148, Fairfield, Vic. 3078

Germany: KOVI-BRD, c/o Buchladen 'Le Sabot', Breitestr. 76, 53111 Bonn

U.S.: SV Publishing Co., P.O. Box 1936, Murray Hill Station, New York, NY 10156

Bush and Kerry

continued from page 1

report spelled out the Bush administration's failure to heed warnings about Al Qaeda and its numerous lies and cover-ups.

One might think that the Democrats and John Kerry would pursue a political strategy that took advantage of Bush's weaknesses. If just to get elected, Kerry could be playing up Bush's negligence over September 11, lambasting the botched occupation, talking about bringing troops home quickly and making concrete promises to the working class about jobs and wages. But none of this has happened, despite Kerry's desperately revved-up campaign rhetoric after the Republican National Convention. Instead, it has been the Bush campaign that has been on the offensive while Kerry flounders.

Kerry has made every effort *not* to distinguish his program from Bush's. Internationally, Kerry fully supports the murderous wars and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. In August, a Kerry spokesman added that even with full knowledge of Bush's lies, Kerry still would have voted to authorize the invasion of Iraq and "in all probability" would have launched a war to oust Saddam Hussein had he been president. In September, when Kerry accused Bush of launching "the wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time," he still promised to "stay the course."

Domestically, Kerry repeats the conservative mantras of "fiscal responsibility," balancing budgets by making "tough choices" (i.e. cutting social services) and giving further tax incentives to the capitalists. Before the Democratic National Convention, one Democratic strategist said to expect it to look like a Republican convention, and it did.

KERRY ATTACKS BUSH FROM THE RIGHT

Where Kerry does choose to distinguish himself from Bush, it is hardly cause for support. On the war, Kerry's only suggestion is that America should continue the same path of aggression, murder, and occupation – but with the help of "our allies," so that they could share in the costs. At home, Kerry's alternatives are just as minimal: slightly higher taxes for the wealthy along with further corporate tax cuts. Most of his social programs are tax rebates for the rich. His plan for catastrophic health coverage through employers means government subsidies to insurance companies, which amounts to corporate welfare. His "solution" to job losses is to provide tax cuts for companies who keep jobs in the U.S.

Moreover, in important ways Kerry has attacked Bush from the right. He complains that Bush didn't send enough troops to Iraq. He calls for 40,000 more troops for the military, more military spending and doubling the number of U.S. spies and special forces. He takes a harder line than Bush in support of Israel's brutal repression of the Palestinian people. And his criticism of the fake "war on terror" at home (which is a very real attack on civil rights, immigrants and workers) is that "President Bush isn't doing enough."

In fact, the issue that has thus far produced the most heat has been Kerry's Vietnam war record. The campaign by Republican operatives mocking Kerry's "hero" status has added fuel to the fire and helped Bush. Of course, neither side will admit that the Vietnam War was a murderous imperialist venture, in which Kerry once admitted to having committed his own share of war crimes. Nevertheless, it is sickening to see privileged "chicken-hawks" like Bush and Cheney, who used their connections to dodge having to fight in Vietnam, making political hay of the matter while they send soldiers to kill and die for their Middle Eastern conquests. In any case, it was the Kerry camp's own deci-

sion to emphasize his war exploits – and therefore his capacity and willingness to prosecute wars at home and abroad – that set up the Bush camp's opportunity.

NO CAPITALIST SOLUTION

Kerry and Bush are playing Tweedledum and Tweedledee while living conditions deteriorate. Even David Brooks, the conservative columnist for the *New York Times*, noticed that neither candidate is offering any real solutions:

We've got 43 million people without health insurance. We're relying on energy sources that are politically dangerous and economically unsustainable. Wage growth is not what it should be, and yesterday's jobs numbers suggest that strong economic growth may not be producing strong job growth. Would it be illegal in these circumstances for at least one presidential candidate to propose policies remotely in proportion to the problems that confront us? (August 7.)

Why has Kerry run on such a similar platform as Bush despite the obvious failings of the latter – even as he must try to convince the voters that he is a better choice? Because Kerry's Democrats, as much as Bush's Republicans, are dedicated to serving the interests of America's ruling capitalist class. Right now the capitalists of this country are overwhelmingly united in favoring the aggressive extension of U.S. military power around the world (in particular through the occupation of Iraq), continuing "stimulus" to the capitalists' sagging profits (with tax cuts and other giveaways) and the intensified exploitation of the working class. They understand that these are not just choices but necessities. So Kerry must accept these core policies and hope to distinguish himself from Bush on how he would conduct them.

Kerry's successful run through the Democratic primaries, overtaking the early "anti-war" frontrunner Howard Dean, was



Democratic Party imperialist John Kerry differs from Bush on how U.S. got into Iraq war but agrees on "staying the course" of the occupation.

built on his appeal as the candidate most responsible to the system. The capitalist media and money-men threw their weight behind Kerry to stop Dean and ensure that the war would not be a campaign issue.

Nevertheless, the two capitalist parties are not identical. Although both directly favor the ruling class, the Republicans more openly represent their class interests. The Democrats appeal directly to parts of the working class and oppressed communities, and thus they must often voice concern or populist rhetoric in order to gain this support. Kerry picked John Edwards as his running mate to add such a flavor to the ticket, and he too is starting to mouth some populist talk. The Democrats are just different enough to be part of a “good cop, bad cop” charade with the voters.

Thus the Democrats face the specific task of appealing to the working class while reassuring the ruling class that they are reliable defenders of capitalism and imperialism. This is the basic reason for Kerry’s notorious “flip-flops,” especially on issues related to the war, which the Bush campaign has so gleefully attacked. Kerry, however, has taken irresolution to an extreme that seems to go well beyond his capitalist duty.

HOLDING THE MASSES BACK

In this election, the ruling class demands a narrower range of difference between the major candidates. Because of its disastrous Iraqi operation, it has been forced into a consensus that separates it from the majority of the U.S. population: it must avoid a humiliating retreat that could weaken imperialism’s position and encourage revolts throughout the world.

Nor do the capitalists have much room to maneuver on the economy. Despite the stock-market boom in the U.S. in the late 1990’s, capitalist growth on the world scale has been dismal. International growth rates averaged between 1 and 2 percent annually in the 1980’s and 1990’s, and have been just above 1 percent this decade. Compare this to the post-World War II years, when growth averaged 3 to 4 percent in the 1950’s and 1960’s, falling to about 2.5 percent in the 1970’s when the boom ended. (For a Marxist analysis of this decline, see our pamphlet *The Specter of Economic Collapse*.) In the U.S. specifically, the ruling class has gained at the expense of the working class: average wages are worse than in the 1970’s, on top of which public services like health care and education have deteriorated under the capitalist attack.

The ruling class has only one basic answer for the economy’s fragile state nationally and internationally: continuing to deepen the exploitation of the working masses. This is no time to change direction by offering sops or bold state initiatives that could raise expectations of workers or oppressed layers of society. That the capitalists won’t do unless they are compelled to.

And the rulers feel no such compulsion. Despite mounting mass suffering and resentment, the class struggle in this country has been relatively contained, with workers and their allies clearly on the defensive. A primary reason for this is that the misleaders of the trade unions and the Black, Latino and immigrant organizations refuse to organize and lead a mass militant opposition to capitalist attacks. Tied materially and ideologically to the capitalist system and fearing the consequences of mass struggle, they have suppressed militancy in their ranks and conducted sellout after sellout. Typically they counterpose working through the electoral process – usually meaning supporting Democrats – to militant social struggle.



Demonstrators protest layoffs during Republican Convention. Labor bureaucrats denounced Bush's economy but squelched mention of Bush and Kerry's wars on Afghanistan, Iraq.

For these reasons, Kerry initially wagered that he could run the type of campaign we have seen and still win. That is, he figured that he could rely on the union and “community” misleaders to deliver the working-class and Black and Latino vote – while making a pitch to “moderate,” mostly white, middle-class voters and above all to the ruling class itself. Even though he has heightened his rhetoric, attacking Bush frontally, re-twisting his position on the war and making more hollow promises on the economy, these are only rhetorical shifts designed to hide the continuing substantive agreement.

The “Anybody but Bush” dynamic on the liberal left is this year’s particularly virulent version of lesser-evil politics. Whether Kerry actually wins – as we write, polls show him slipping – he had good reason to think his original softball strategy was viable. Many left-liberals, “progressive” trade union bureaucrats, Black politicians and self-styled socialists are voting for Kerry while holding their noses. They know Kerry is pro-boss and pro-occupation. But their own role in derailing struggles and shoring up the vote for Kerry has helped him pursue the very policies they claim to deplore.

ROLE OF ELECTIONS: WHICH IMPERIALIST RULES?

The upcoming election is in reality a way for the ruling class to decide who will best rule for imperialism. Bourgeois elections aren't meant for the masses to decide policy, though they provide a very useful illusion of doing so. The bourgeoisie uses elections to legitimize their class rule, sort out what differences they have and help figure out which politician is the better leader for imperialism. The voters' preferences gives them valuable information about the desires, needs, opinions, and outrage of the working class and other social strata. Ruling-class politicians can give a certain voice to these desires and feelings – so that they can then derail and subvert them.

This is mainly the Democrats' job. History shows that when mass struggles begin to pose a threat to the capitalist order, some Democrats move to the left – not because they have seen the light but in order to derail the movements and divert them into electoral traps. That was the role of Franklin Roosevelt in the 1930's and of Kennedy and Johnson in the 1960's. The leaders of the working class encouraged their followers to look towards class-enemy politicians, who adopted reforms not to meet the full needs and desires of the movements but to appease them with scraps and defuse the struggle.

Often working-class voters feel forced to choose one class enemy because they are especially afraid of the other. But this year the choice is especially narrow. It is critical that working-class and oppressed people reject the capitalist candidates and the strategy of passive electoralism.

MASS ACTION NEEDED TO FIGHT BACK

No matter who wins the presidency, the working class in the U.S. will face a government determined to wage imperialist war abroad while attacking the workers and poor at home. Revolutionaries recognize that it is the duty of every worker to oppose "our" ruling class's bloody wars, and we work to build ever larger protests against imperial adventures. A critical component of the struggle against imperialism is the fight to advance the class struggle at home.

Right now workers in the U.S. face attacks from the capitalists and their politicians in the form of job losses, wage cuts and speed-up, budget cuts and rising racism. It is a one-sided class war.

The working class and oppressed desperately need to fight back and win. That means all-out strikes that halt the profits of individual bosses and companies, as well as general strikes that bring capitalist profiteering to a dead stop and show – above all to the workers themselves – the true social power of the working class.

To launch this sort of fightback, the workers and oppressed will have to overcome a great obstacle: their own misleaders. The key force preventing the masses from launching struggles in defense of their interests continues to be the trade union bureaucrats, community leaders and populist politicians. They enjoy a privileged position in the system and don't want to endanger their positions by allowing struggles to break out that they cannot control. Rather, their preferred tactic is to channel workers' rage into the dead-end of voting for the Democrats.

The most militant and politically advanced workers must come together to begin building a new leadership for the working class in every workplace and community. But that new leadership must learn the lessons of history if it is not to repeat them. Those who currently pass for the leaders of the workers and oppressed continue to betray our interests and struggles because they are tied to the capitalist system. As capitalist profits fall and the bosses demand sacrifice, these leaders go along and seek to limit struggles in the interests of the system. The only leadership of the working class that can be trusted to fight for what the masses need – rather than accepting what the system can afford – is a revolutionary socialist leadership dedicated to the system's overthrow. (We urge readers to check out our web site at www.lrp-cofi.org to see examples of our revolutionary work.)

Revolutionaries are part of all struggles by workers and oppressed people against war, racism and all capitalist attacks. Through struggle, the working class becomes conscious of its own power and its role in society. Workers begin to see the need to reconstruct our world and realize that we have the power to do it.

The history of our class shows that gains are made only through mass struggles by workers and oppressed people that are powerful enough to actually threaten the system. But history also shows that if the system remains in place, inevitably the capitalists relaunch the attacks. So mass struggle in itself is just the beginning of what is needed. Instead of constantly settling for

Fight Police Terror!

No Support to Capitalism's Racist Anti-Worker Police!

A Proletarian Revolution Pamphlet

- Why capitalism is driven to deepen exploitation and racist oppression.
- Why revolution is necessary to achieve a society free of exploitation and oppression.
- Why the chief barriers to effective struggle are the Democratic Party politicians and the union bureaucrats.
- Why a revolutionary party must be built by the workers and poor if we are to stop being sold out.

***From the Struggle against Police Brutality to the
Struggle against the System That Oppresses Us All***

\$1.00

Order from / Pay to:

SV Publishing Co., P.O. Box 1936, Murray Hill Station, New York, NY 10156



LRP literature table at August 29 rally. LRP banner and chants denouncing Kerry as well as Bush stood out against mood of "Anybody but Bush" crowd.

half a loaf which quickly crumbles, a struggle for socialist revolution and a whole new world is necessary. Instead of just threatening the system, the working class has to prepare for revolutionary struggle to overthrow it.

SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

The goal of socialist revolution is to replace the capitalist system with a workers' state, a political system run by the working class that will in turn control and direct an economy no longer in the private hands of exploiters. Under a workers' state, conditions of prosperity and equality that are given promise and potential but never fulfilled under capitalism, will become possible. Racism and poverty can finally be wiped out, since without capitalist exploitation there is no material interest in perpetuating these scourges.

Central to this possibility is the workers' willingness and ability to raise the productive forces to new levels and insure that they benefit the masses. To an extent, capitalism furthers technical progress but also inhibits it, since every productive advance threat-

ens the value of the capital that has already been invested, which becomes obsolete. Under capitalism, such innovations have increasingly come to mean mass unemployment, as workers are replaced by machines and are added to the reserve army of cheap labor. In contrast, under a workers' state, productive innovations will be employed for the benefit of society. A shortening of the work week is possible, and jobs will be spread around to include all able members of society. With greater leisure for each worker, the working class – the greatest productive force created by capitalism – will have more time to develop its creative talents and develop and run society.

These ideas for a socialist future are not just dreams but have a firm scientific basis. It also becomes increasingly clear that capitalism's continued decline will present ever greater misery for the bulk of the world's people.

Struggles are mounting around the world challenging ruling-class power (see, for example, PR 69 on Bolivia or PR 64 on Argentina). They are evidence of growing revolutionary potential.

However, without a revolutionary party to show the way for the working class to take power for itself, the new rulers will inevitably be committed to carrying out the exploitative demands of capitalism.

In the U.S. right now, the class struggle is contained. But it will build up and explode as capitalism's drive to misery inevitably provokes a powerful response. Our class needs its own party that knows the lessons of class struggle and is based on a genuine revolutionary program. Such a party will fight to see that the struggles are not derailed into the Democratic Party death-trap. Then they can continue to challenge and finally overthrow capitalism itself. The League for the Revolutionary Party is working today to rebuild the revolutionary party of the working class, both here in the U.S. and around the world. ●

***Bush & Kerry Mean War, Racism, and Anti-Worker Attacks!
Workers Need A General Strike!
Re-create the Fourth International, the World Party of
Socialist Revolution!***

Subscribe to *Proletarian Revolution* ...

\$7.00 for eight issues

\$15.00 overseas

Begin with Issue No. ____

...and get a free sample issue for a friend!

Your name

Friend's name

Address

Address

Pay to: SV Publishing,
P.O. Box 1936, Murray Hill Station, New York, NY 10156

ISO: Endorsing the Lesser Imperialist

After equivocating for months, in mid-summer the International Socialist Organization (ISO) finally endorsed the “independent” presidential campaign of Ralph Nader. Although the ISO had supported Nader in 2000, this year they held back until the last minute (although some ISOers had joined the Nader camp earlier). For one thing, they had hoped to recruit from among the “Anybody but Bush” pro-Democratic Party milieu – making clear that people who planned on voting for Kerry could still join the ISO. For another, as their own press pointed out, Nader’s courting of right-wing support, including his nomination as the presidential candidate of the Reform Party, made it difficult to endorse him, even for a group that had already crossed the class line by backing this capitalist candidate in 2000.

But after Kerry made his blatant right turn after securing the Democratic nomination for President and after Nader had selected as his running mate Peter Camejo (a Green Party leader and “socially conscious” capitalist stockbroker), the ISO saw its opportunity. Denouncing the “Anybody but Bush” forces’ lesser-evilism, they jumped aboard the Nader bandwagon. Four years ago Nader had drawn crowds of thousands while this year it is only hundreds. But the ISO can now supply a significant fraction of Nader’s electoral machine. It is a big fish in a small pond.

Still, it is a capitalist pond. Nader is not opposed to capitalism and has repeatedly declared that he is out to save “corporate capitalism from itself”. His campaign is not based in the working class or on any working-class struggle. Moreover, Nader has adopted grossly anti-working-class policies that should shame and condemn any “socialist” involved in his campaign. Crossing the class line for Nader means swallowing – or covering up – some particularly reactionary positions.

NADER NOT “ANTI-WAR”

When the ISO finally joined the Nader campaign, it had a lot to say about what’s wrong with Kerry but apparently found it so difficult to find something right with Nader that it had to lie to do so! *Socialist Worker’s* August 6 editorial, “Bush vs. Bush Lite; Where’s the choice?” – the ISO’s first public endorsement – mentioned Nader as an afterthought: “We don’t have to accept a choice between George W. Bush and Kerry’s copycat policies. Nader and Camejo are giving a voice to the vast majority left out



Ralph Nader, third capitalist candidate, favors occupation, opposes immigrant and abortion rights.

of this rotten political system – and their campaign deserves our support.” An accompanying article called Nader’s a “genuine anti-war candidacy.” But that was a lie, since Nader backed, although critically, the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan (as the ISO admitted at the time – see *Socialist Worker*, Oct. 19, 2001) while idiotically hoping it could be done peacefully.

As for Iraq, while Nader opposed the initial invasion, he certainly doesn’t want to see imperialism defeated there and so opposes an immediate end to the occupation. Instead, he advocates the replacement of the U.S. occupiers with U.N. forces (ignoring the fact that the U.S. is occupying Iraq with a U.N. mandate). Specifically, under Nader’s plan, U.S. forces and their civilian contractors would be able to stay in Iraq until mid-July 2005, when they would be replaced by this “neutral” United Nations force. He calls for “free and fair elections . . . as soon as possible under international supervision” (*USA Today*, April 22) – thus keeping the imperialists in charge.

As one ISOer wrote in the May 7 issue of their paper, when the ISO was still mulling Nader over: “Socialists must be clear that a U.N. occupation is merely a fig leaf for U.S. imperialism. How can we be arguing this position with fellow activists while campaigning for someone who calls for a U.N. occupation?”

NADER, BUCHANAN OPPOSE IMMIGRANTS’ RIGHTS

On other central issues, an April 9 *Socialist Worker* editorial had complained about Nader’s acceptance of the nomination of the right-wing Reform Party, which ran the racist nationalist Pat Buchanan for president in 2000:

Meanwhile, he [Nader] stays quiet about “social” issues, including the dominant question in U.S. politics today – the U.S. occupation of Iraq. Nader’s letter to “disgruntled conservatives” doesn’t even use the word Iraq. Nader is flirting with political forces that have reactionary positions on immigration, economic nationalism and more. If he wants to contribute to building a left in this country, he should be denouncing the politics of scapegoating and victim-blaming – yet Reform Party members have been made to feel comfortable within the Nader campaign.

While Nader is not an open racist like Buchanan, he flirts with such right-wing forces because he shares with them “reactionary positions on immigration, economic nationalism and more.” This comes through clearly in an interview with Buchanan that made the front page of the latter’s *American Conservative* magazine (June 21). In the article appropriately entitled “Ralph Nader: Conservatively Speaking – The long-time progressive makes a pitch for the disenfranchised Right,” Buchanan asked Nader if he supports the proposal to offer amnesty to “illegals who have been in the country for five years and who have shown that they have jobs and can support themselves.” Nader responded:

This is very difficult because you are giving a green light to cross the border illegally. I don’t like the idea of legalization because then the question is how do you stop the next wave and the next?

This is trademark national chauvinism, and nothing new for Nader. Genuine anti-imperialists and anti-racists fight against all restrictions on immigration and for equal rights. The reason so many immigrants seek to cross the border is imperialism, which forces waves of economic and political refugees to flee their homelands.

But Nader is indifferent to the fate of the international working class. He goes so far as to criticize the AFL-CIO for changing its position on amnesty for illegal immigrants. He chastises the labor leadership for looking to organize illegal immigrants instead of fighting against amnesty, which he describes as a “wage-depressing” immigration policy. His chat with Buchanan is fully in keeping with the position he announced four years ago: immigrant workers would be allowed into the U.S. only for “a short period of time,” high-tech workers would be barred, and immigrants would be allowed in only to perform work “that Americans don’t want to do.” (*Fresno Bee*, Oct. 22, 2000.) As we noted in our pamphlet *The Nader Hoax*, this “progressive” is happy to have immigrants around as long as they’re only cleaning toilets.

NADER CAPITULATES ON ABORTION RIGHTS

In the same interview, when Buchanan asked his position on “partial-birth abortion,” Nader answered in the following dialogue:

Nader: I believe in choice. I don’t think government should tell women to have children or not to have children. I am also against feticide. If doctors think it is a fetus, that should be banned. It is a medical decision.

Buchanan: Between the woman and her doctor –

Nader: And whoever else, family, clergy.

First of all, as defenders of legal abortion know, the Partial-Birth Abortion Act signed by Bush in 2003 was a tactical move led by forces who want to criminalize abortion but understand that this must be done in stages. (Hence the overt emphasis on banning a particular late-term abortion procedure, not all abortions involving fetuses, as Nader would seem to have it.) For this very reason, there is a growing battle to overturn this Act, which will likely end up at the Supreme Court. There are many Democrats who go along with the general rollback of legal abortion rights, but even they make a point of calling for exceptions when the life of the woman is at risk. Nader is so quick to capitulate that he doesn’t even bother with such “details.”

Secondly, by bringing in “whoever else, family, clergy,” Nader also capitulates to the right-wing demand for parental notification laws and other restrictions on a woman’s right to abortion. As we show in the article on page 16, the liberal demand for “choice” ignores the limited choices available to working-class and poor women under capitalism. But for Nader, “choice” does not even mean that the woman makes the decision on an abortion herself. The attitude of this “progressive” meshes with the contempt he expressed in his 1996 campaign, when he dismissed struggles for women’s and gay rights as “gonadal politics.”

NADER’S LEFT-RIGHT “ALTERNATIVE”

At one point in its flirtatious dance with the candidate before embracing him, an ISO writer commented, “Nader has launched a campaign that represents an alternative to what he rightly calls the two-party ‘duopoly’ in Washington. Unfortunately, he hasn’t been clear that he wants a left-wing alternative.”

No, he has been perfectly clear that he does *not* want a left alternative. Nader wants to play both sides of the fence, appealing to both left and right populism, lining up with both Camejo and Buchanan. In 2000, Nader ran as the candidate of the Green Party, a left capitalist outfit that some socialists tried to paint as a step forward for the working class. This year he is the candidate of the undisguisedly bourgeois Reform Party, and his program (much the same as four years ago) fits it well. He is for imperialism, even if it’s a “kinder, gentler” imperialism than that of Bush or Kerry; he is against immigrant rights and accommodates to the racist reasoning of his Buchananite allies.

Moreover, Nader is running not to lead a break from the capitalist Democrats but to try to force them to sound more militant so that they can win. An ISO leader wrote in the March 5 *Socialist Worker* that “Nader talked about helping the Democrats recapture the House of Representatives in key swing districts.” As Nader himself put it in a speech in March, “We are going to focus on defeating George Bush and showing the Democrats, if they’re smart enough to pick up on it, how to take apart George Bush.” That is, Nader believes that building support for himself is a way to get Kerry to talk left and disguise his real program.

For any organization claiming to be socialist (like the ISO, Solidarity, Socialist Alternative, etc.) to endorse this campaign is a shameful betrayal of the internationalist and anti-racist principles they allegedly stand for. The ISO opposes voting for the “lesser evil” Kerry, but they have chosen a somewhat lesser evil themselves – a pro-capitalist, pro-imperialist candidate with progressive pretensions whose program reeks with contempt for the most oppressed layers of the working class.

THE REAL REVOLUTIONARY ALTERNATIVE

The reason genuine revolutionaries never support candidates of capitalist parties is that there is nothing more dangerous for the workers and oppressed than endorsing a class enemy. The idea of supporting even a lesser imperialist candidate in the U.S. is even more unspeakable.

What then is the socialist alternative? We want the working class to become conscious of itself and its power in society. Genuine revolutionaries understand that all political consciousness begins with recognition of the fundamental class division: the working class versus the ruling capitalist class. Success in the class struggle demands working-class independence from all capitalist parties and programs.

Marxist revolutionaries can use electoral campaigns to encourage working-class struggle and promote socialist consciousness among workers. But we always tell our fellow workers the truth: electoralism is no way forward for the working class. Serious social change has been achieved not by electing one capitalist candidate or another but rather by fighting the ruling class in the workplaces and the streets.

None of this can be learned from the “socialist” Naderites who show their absolute lack of confidence in the working class by their endorsement of this class-collaborationist campaign. The ISO campaigns for him shamefacedly, dodging or excusing his pro-imperialist, anti-woman and anti-immigrant positions while praising his break from the two-party “duopoly.” They feel desperately pressed to offer a pragmatic “solution” on November 2, even though any genuine Marxist knows that there is no electoral solution.

The great Russian revolutionaries Lenin and Trotsky regarded reformism – and bourgeois liberalism all the more so – as counterrevolutionary. We in the League for the Revolutionary Party base our political work on Lenin’s conception of the vanguard revolutionary party, a disciplined association of the most class-conscious workers to present themselves as an alternative leadership of their class in open and uncompromising struggle against the reformist leaders.

In contrast, the ISO thinks it can promote reformist leaders like Nader today and outsmart them tomorrow by recruiting their supporters. This will supposedly help the socialist and working-class struggle. But all they are doing is giving a radical cover to capitalist reformism and diverting activists from the necessary tasks: fighting for mass struggles to defend the working class and oppressed from the capitalist attacks, and building the revolutionary party needed to lead such struggles to victory. ●

LRP report

continued from page 2

the War!” and interspersed pro-Palestinian chants as well. We also decided to challenge marchers in our vicinity with “No Vote in 2004, Workers Need Class War!” The anti-Kerry chants drew boos and hostile comments from nearby marchers, and led to some interesting if mostly hostile discussions. But we got to make our point in a crowd overwhelmingly out of tune with revolutionary opinions.

CHALLENGING THE ISO ON NADER

At one point a contingent from the International Socialist Organization was marching alongside us carrying anti-war placards plus a few Nader/Camejo posters. We chanted at them: “ISO, Shame on You, Nader is Imperialist Too.” They were caught by surprise and eventually tried to retaliate with counterchants like “Hey, Hey, Ho, Ho; The Occupation’s Got to Go.” We joined in with their chant for a while, evasive though it was, and then returned to our anti-Kerry chants. The ISO tried to change “No Choice in 2004” to “Vote Nader in 2004,” at which point we returned to the “ISO, Shame on You” chant we had begun with. This basic altercation was repeated two or three times with some variations as different sections of the ISO contingent appeared

alongside us. The battle of the chants was a decided victory for us, since they had no answer to our assertion about Nader.

The LRP continued to challenge the ISO’s support for Nader on September 9, when we each held forums on the City College campus. We attended their meeting and distributed a leaflet denouncing the ISO for endorsing a pro-imperialist and anti-working class candidate. (An article amplifying this leaflet is on page 11.) As a result of our intervention, the ISO – which normally disdains all discussion with revolutionary opponents – was forced to agree to a public debate with the LRP on whether socialists should support the Nader campaign. We expect, however, that the ISO will return to form and back out of its commitment.

SUPPORT THE LRP!

Readers should note our new post office box address. Because of our growing audience and increased work in the U.S. and abroad, we have moved to a larger and more centrally located office in New York City.

Our interventions this summer were examples of the revolutionary activities carried out by the LRP. We aim to build a voice of opposition to the imperialist parties within all the struggles we participate in. As our tasks grow, our expenses also increase. We ask our readers to help out by sending what they can to SV Publishing at the address on page 2.

Reproductive Rights

continued from page 16

been no been mobilizations to defend the clinics.

The legislative defeats, as well as many of the clinic attacks, could have been fought with massive mobilizations and militant tactics. Yet the first “pro-choice” rally in a dozen years took place only *after* these rulings were in place – to provide an election-year boost for the Democrats. The leaders recite a litany of the awful things that have happened under Bush – as if masses of women were powerless to stop him.

For example, on April 7, President Bush signed the reactionary Unborn Victims of Violence Act. This law elevates the status of a fetus to be equal to that of the mother, making it a separate crime to kill or injure a fetus during the commission of another federal crime. Although this law doesn’t overtly reclassify abortion as murder, granting legal rights to the fetus independent of the mother intentionally provides legal groundwork for the future prosecution of women who seek or have abortions, as well as of those who provide them. Yet this federal law was only the capstone of similar laws in twenty-seven states – and there had been a years-long energetic campaign by anti-abortion forces *before* its enactment. No actions were organized against it by the pro-choice outfits.

This legislation was cynically but effectively crafted to present itself as protecting the well-being of the fetus as well as pregnant women, which of course is a matter of genuine concern. The anti-abortion politicians conveniently show such touching concern for the welfare of fetuses and pregnant women only when it suits them, whereas their aim is actually to undermine the rights of women. These hypocrites oversee a system and advocate policies that offer miserable health protection and living conditions for the masses of human beings already on the planet – never mind for the next generation ahead.

The same scenario had occurred with the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003. This law on the surface appeared to target only a rarely performed specific late-term abortion procedure. Its actual purpose will be to undermine the right to the more commonly practiced abortion procedures during the first or second trimester as well. No mass rally was organized against the ban, which had also had precedents in many state laws in prior years. Sizeable minorities of Democrats in both House and Senate voted for it.

Marxism, Interracialism and the Black Struggle

A Proletarian Revolution pamphlet by Sy Landy

An overview of the Marxist understanding of revolutionary proletarian interracialism and the historical course of the U.S. Black struggle. The pamphlet discusses the political failures of both integrationism and nationalism in detail, and develops our notion of Black liberation through socialist revolution as the alternative.

\$3.00 from:

Socialist Voice Publishing Co.
P.O. Box 1936, Murray Hill Station
New York, NY 10156

DEMOCRATIC PARTY: NO SAVIOR FOR WOMEN

The mainstream women’s rights organizations make the argument that electing Democrats is needed to ensure that future Supreme Court justices will be “pro-choice.” However, *Roe v. Wade* was one of many decisions that prove that judges are not

immune to the pressure of mass action. On the other hand, left to their own devices, Democratic-controlled Congresses have frequently approved nominations of judges who are notorious enemies of legal abortion rights; a notable example is Clarence Thomas.

Moreover, Democratic presidents have hardly protected women. Yes, they sometimes provided a weak defense against particularly vehement campaigns by the “pro-lifers.” But they also have caved in substantially and have led particular attacks themselves. In fact, cataclysmic decisions that chipped away *significantly* at real access to legalized abortion took place under Democrats as well as Republicans.

● In 1976, the Hyde Amendment was passed by a Democratic-controlled Congress under Jimmy Carter. Representative Hyde openly aimed at overturning *Roe v. Wade*; he settled for cutting off federal funds for abortions, thereby eliminating access for poor women. When he signed this bill, Carter commented, “There are many things in life that are unfair.” Yet because this happened under a Democratic president and did not overtly affect middle-class women, NOW, Planned Parenthood et al did not mobilize any fight against it. Most states passed similar laws regarding state funds, so that to this day most poor women have no actual access to legal abortion.

● In 1993, Bill Clinton came into office promising to overturn the Hyde Amendment and to fight for a Freedom of Choice Act. He quickly betrayed those promises, even though Democrats controlled both houses of Congress during his first two years. In 1992, just before his inauguration, a Supreme Court decision, *Casey v. Planned Parenthood*, upheld major restrictions on abortion access in Pennsylvania, including informed consent requirements and 24-hour waiting periods. NOW and the others held a massive rally urging women to vote for Clinton. Yet Clinton did not use his presidency to fight this catastrophic ruling. By upholding the right of states to place further restrictions on abortion access, it paved the way for state legislatures to continually chip away at access to legal abortion, a process which has only speeded up in recent years, sweeping across 47 states.

● Clinton did champion other legislation. He approved “welfare reform” (the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act), “immigration reform” (the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act) and the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act. These were all abominable laws which together resulted in the denial of welfare and other public services for masses of working-class women and their children, among other effects. And these anti-woman, anti-worker and racist attacks were spearheaded by a Democratic President that women were told to support.

“CHOICE” VS. WORKING-CLASS REALITY

The majority of the working class supports legal abortion, although it has never been galvanized into action. Yet feelings remain somewhat mixed because the mainstream “pro-choice” organizations do not and cannot speak convincingly to working-class people.

For most women, abortion is not only a physical burden but a painful emotional ordeal. If they had the money, time and social support, many working-class and poor women would choose to have more children. But often the decision to abort is forced on them by the weight of economic and social circumstances. Furthermore, capitalist society is permeated with the dictum that bearing and taking care of children is a woman’s main role, while the state, especially in the U.S., provides little support for women and children. In this setting, women – especially working-class women – do not have the luxury of choosing from a wide range of options in living their lives and

developing a range of potentials, including raising children or not. The “choice” sloganeering exposes the middle-class bias of the women’s rights outfits, which mainly represent women who are better off and *do* have some choices, even though they are still oppressed as women.

Even on the most immediate practical level, abortion is not a free “choice,” since the same forces that oppose abortion also restrict the availability of contraception. For example, emergency contraception (commonly known as the “morning-after” pill) has been on the market for 25 years; it is now developed so that if taken within several days, the pills can prevent pregnancy after unprotected sexual intercourse. Yet it is still not widely available. Even though it meets the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) standards for safety and effectiveness, the FDA recently refused to approve it as an over-the-counter drug. Many scientists vocally objected, pointing out that with this reactionary decision, the FDA was bowing to the oppressive policies of the Bush administration on sexual matters.

Modern society is advanced enough in its scientific capacity to provide safe and effective contraception and other options to end a potential pregnancy when necessary or desirable. But the capitalist establishment is not interested in developing and providing better options. A genuine program for reproductive rights must include the fight for free, safe and reliable contraception, a public program of effective anti-repressive sex education that affirms the rights of youth and women in particular, as well as free abortion on demand so that the most oppressed women have access to the procedure when necessary.

RELENTLESS RACISM

The right to bear and raise safe and healthy children is an equally vital issue for women. In that regard, the discrimination against Black and Latina women is if anything more pronounced. The Hyde Amendment especially affected women of color, who were disproportionately barred from having access to safe and legal abortion. Moreover, the history of government-sponsored sterilization schemes has not been overcome. Such racist policies are carried out today, if less overtly than before.

In this effort, Norplant is the drug of choice for those interested in curtailing the reproductive rights of women of color. The FDA approved it for marketing in 1990, hailing it as a big breakthrough. Silicon tubes are implanted and a woman is protected from pregnancy for five years. Sounds good? In reality it is a form of sterilization that the woman herself has no control over.

From the start it was advocated as a way to reduce the “underclass,” that is, limit the rights of poor women – and most definitively women of color – to have as many children as they want. Today, state governments are enthusiastically financing Norplant schemes, and at least half the women who have used Norplant are Medicaid recipients. Numerous states pressure women on welfare to use Norplant, by tying their benefits to its use or by offering a one-time bonus.

However, not only are women already experiencing a spectrum of side effects from Norplant, but its long term effects are not fully known. And many poor women find it difficult or impossible to find a doctor to remove the implants. The women’s physical health is endangered.

If the words “reproductive rights” are to be taken seriously, they mean not only an all-out mobilized defense of legal abortion but a fight to extend the quality and access to all kinds of reproductive health care for all women. It means destroying the racist system’s control over the reproductive destinies of women of color. No one can seriously believe that the Democratic Party will deliver any of this.

WORKING-CLASS VIEW

The middle-class leadership and much of their base is consumed by illusions in capitalism's ability to provide equality for women. But more and more working-class people, especially youth, are more than capable of understanding the need for an all-out fight to defend legal abortion and other rights for women – but in a different way than today's leaders envision it.

Political class consciousness will be raised the most when the working class engages in its own struggles and the role of working-class women comes to the fore. The intimate link between the more obvious class warfare and the anti-woman attacks will then be more fully understood. Sexism and racism in all forms are major weapons of the capitalists to divide and conquer the working class. Until the working class sees through these reactionary ideologies, building an effective defense against any of the attacks suffered by any given sector will be hampered.

Revolutionaries understand that the right of women to control if or when to have children is a fundamental aspect of their liberation from oppression under capitalism and at the same time is critical to workers' struggle as a whole. The system of wage-labor exploitation finds it essential to assign working-class women the task of reproducing labor power to be exploited: not just giving birth but also raising children and maintaining the household for the wage-earning man. By getting workers to believe that this is naturally the role of individual women at home, they can more easily cut social services and scapegoat women for a whole range of problems actually caused by the society.

As well, nowadays most working-class women work outside the home. There are also many female-headed households. Nevertheless, a women's income is often regarded as supplementary or optional, and the myth that women's "proper" or main role is caring for the family is perpetuated to justify their getting lower wages than men. But the fact that women can often be hired more cheaply in turn drives down the wages of the working class as a whole. (See "Women and the Family: The Ties That Bind" in *PR* 34.)

The family is one of the few institutions that working people, women and men, often feel positive about, in that it can provide material and emotional support. It is understandable that some working-class women, would even oppose abortion – because they can see it as a putdown and attack on their central role in the family. After all, they have no reason to relate to middle-class feminism which ignores their life situations, and they have yet to see any other alternative that makes sense.

It is nonetheless true that the family as developed by capitalism is essential to women's oppression: it enforces an oppressive division of labor at home, and it strengthens the relation of exploitation between the bosses and the working class as a whole. Thus giving women greater control over reproduction undermines aspects of the subordinate role assigned to them. The rhetoric of "family values" is reactionary because it implies all sorts of restrictions on options for women. But it is pushed by Democratic politicians as well as Republicans, even those who are generally more liberal on abortion.



In much of the U.S. today, poor women on public assistance have no access to abortion but may be sterilized with full governmental funding. Black and Latina women are disproportionately affected by these horrific policies.

REVOLUTIONARY ANSWERS

For working-class women, their oppression as women cannot so easily be separated from their exploitation. The two are tied together as one predicament. The fact that women workers remain largely in unskilled job ghettos, the lack of day care facilities, the high infant mortality rates suffered among Blacks and Latinos, enforced "workfare" job slavery – all these are women's "issues." Anti-gay attacks, anti-immigrant and racist attacks, attacks on unions, economic hardship – these likewise are key "women's issues."

The notion that "women's struggles," "Black struggles," "union struggles" and the "anti-war struggles" are fundamentally separate is just a surface appearance. None of the miseries imposed by imperialist capitalism can be tackled head-on without the development of revolutionary working-class consciousness and working-class unity. Yet this year we had the spectacle of a "March for Women's Lives" whose message was that we must vote for a party and candidate that stand for the continuation of *all* these attacks, including an imperialist war that has massacred Iraqi men, women and children by the thousands.

Authentic revolutionary socialism means an end to racism and sexism and imperialist war. The working class is the only social force that can create its own leadership, a revolutionary party, to unite workers and all the oppressed, to end all oppression and exploitation. Then we can talk about real "choice," not the pathetic crumbs of promises thrown to some women today. Unless imperialism and its political parties are overthrown, the sufferings of the masses of oppressed women in the U.S. and across the globe will only escalate.

A revolutionary workers' state will provide jobs for all with a shorter work day and universal wage hikes. The new society will provide extensive child care as well as kitchen, laundry and other collective facilities to release women from the drudgery of individuated household labor and caretaking burdens. It will mean free transport, health care, education and housing. The essential ingredient right now is that more and more working-class women join in the struggle for revolutionary socialism. ●

Reproductive Rights Under Attack

Mainstream “pro-choice” groups are betraying the fight

A March for Women’s Lives took place on August 28 in New York as part of the anti-Republican National Convention protests, attracting about 25,000 defenders of legalized abortion. Politically, the protest repeated the theme of the historically huge March for Women’s Lives last April in Washington D.C. From the podium, speaker after speaker stumped for the Democrats and said the solution was to vote Bush out. But the truth is that abortion has been under attack since it was won in 1973, and both Democratic and Republican politicians have overseen these attacks.

In brief, the dominant “pro-choice” organizations are betraying the fight. The force that won the right to legal abortion was mass action – from a conservative Supreme Court under Republican President Nixon. The legalization of abortion, codified in the Roe v. Wade decision, was a hard-won victory. It was achieved in large part as a result of the women’s liberation struggles of the 1960’s and early 70’s, itself inspired by the Black liberation explosions and the anti-Vietnam war upsurge. At the same time it was a very qualified triumph, since it left the door open to future narrowing by the courts. The ruling was generally clear about the right to abortion during the first trimester of pregnancy, but it also recognized the right of the state to restrict or prohibit abortion after fetal “viability.” It was based on an abstract concept of individual rights and not on the social needs of women as an oppressed group.

Today the only way to *begin* to stop attacks on legal abortion and related gains is through mass mobilization. The acts and consciousness of the working class will prove central. Experience shows as well that any gain under capitalism will be temporary and limited. Revolutionary solutions are necessary.

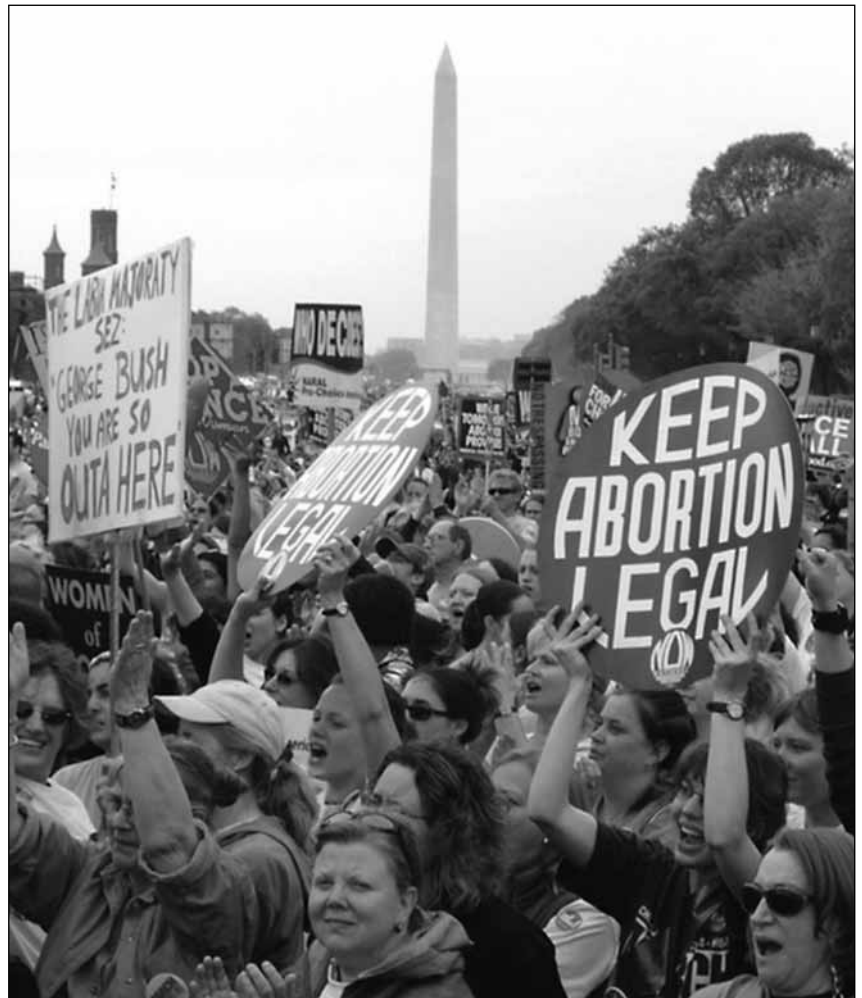
ELECTORALISM VS. MASS ACTION

The strategy of relying on the Democrats is a terrible substitute for building the fight that is both needed and very possible. Planned Parenthood has become a main organization pushing this strategy. Mainstream sponsors of the marches, all favoring the same strategy, included the National Organization of Women (NOW), NARAL Pro-Choice America (formerly the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League), Feminist Majority, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, and the Black Women’s Health Imperative. As we will demonstrate, none of these organizations represent the point of view of the working class. They even betray the interests of their base of middle-class women. And

the interests of Black and Latina working-class women are particularly ignored. Under capitalism, where everything is determined along class and race lines, access to abortion is no exception.

Because they are wedded to pro-capitalist electoralism, none of the mainstream organizations fight for a militant strategy. Until April 25, 2004, there had not been one mass protest called since 1992. Yet these years have seen a number of significant legislative defeats, buttressed by violence against abortion clinics and direct threats and assaults on women and abortion providers. Just this July, an abortion clinic in Palm Beach County, Florida, was fire-bombed by as yet unknown arsonists. Yet in most cases there have

continued on page 13



April 25, 2004: one million women rally in Washington, D.C. in defense of reproductive rights.