France: Fascist Le Pen Scores Big Gain in Elections

Mass protests have swept France in response to large vote for Le Pen. But outrage has been channeled into support for right-wing politician Christian Pen, in the name of saving "honor" of racist capitalist French Republic.

APRIL 29—The successful second-place finish by the fascist Jean-Marie Le Pen in the first round of the presidential elections last Sunday has detonated a storm of protest in France. Almost daily, tens of thousands of people, overwhelmingly high school students and other youth, have filled streets across the country in spontaneous and highly integrated demonstrations. The streets of Paris are covered with graffiti reading, "A skan, Arab, Black and White: Together!" and "No Nazis in This Neighborhood!" Yet the combative spirit and anger of the youth is being manipulated by the entire political spectrum in order to re-elect President Jacques Chirac, a right-wing racist thief! One placard at an April 27 demonstration in Paris expressed the "choice" in the runoff election: "Fascist or Crook—This Is Democracy!"

Last week's election was a stinging repudiation of the class-collaborationist popular-front coalition—led by the Socialist Party (PS) and including the Communist Party (PCF) and bourgeois Greens—which currently administers the French capitalist state. The government's anti-working-class and anti-immigrant policies have filled streets across the country in spontaneous and highly integrated demonstrations. The streets of Paris are covered with graffiti reading, "Vigilante"—the campaign of cop terror in minority communities—and embellishing the France of Vichy (the government of collaboration with the Nazis) and the Algerian War, the demonstrations are filled with signs and banners proclaiming "la belle France" is not Austria or Italy, where ultraright or fascist-infested governments hold power.

Notably, the PS, PCF, Greens and LCR all issued leaflets proclaiming the same slogan: "Block Le Pen!" This means: Vote Chirac on May 5. Support to this right-wing politician can only strengthen his bonapartist appetites and lead to more severe state repression against workers and the oppressed. At the April 27 demonstration of 50,000 people in Paris, the climate of "national unity" was so strong that the refusal by our comrades of the Ligue Trotskyste de France to call for a vote to Chirac provoked a storm of indignation. LTF signs at the demonstration proclaimed: "The PS/PCF/Green Popular Front Opened the Road to Le Pen's Fascism!" and "Break with Class Collaboration! For a Genuine Revolutionary Multiethnic Workers Party!" The large vote for Le Pen is part of a rightward shift in West Europe's bourgeois political spectrum, from Spain and Portugal (where rightist parties are in power) to Denmark. In Austria, a coalition government including Jorg Haider's openly racist Freedom Party (FPÖ) came to power two years ago. Last year, a popular-front government in Italy was replaced by the right-wing demagogue Silvio Berlusconi in coalition with the fascist Lega Nord and the Alleanza Nazionale, which is currently primarily an electoral vehicle but also heir to the historic party of Mussolini's fascism. In Germany, the right-wing Christian Democrats have found renewed strength, soundly defeating the governing Social Democrats last month in the eastern state of Saxony-Anhalt.

But the shift to the right in bourgeois politics has also been accompanied by a polarization at the base of European society. This is indicated in the vote for LO and the LCR and is particularly reflected in huge demonstrations in various countries in defense of immigrants.

By outlook and history, Le Pen is a fascist. But like Haider's FPÖ, Le Pen's National Front (FN) is currently scoring big gains primarily as an electoral party. Reactionary views alone do not define fascism. Contrary to fake leftists who cynically pretend that fascism is just around the corner in order to justify voting for Chirac, France is not currently besieged by organized fascist gangs attacking workers' picket lines or assault ing parliament as the French fascists did in the 1930s. As Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky wrote at the time in "Whither France" (October 1936): "The historic function of fascism is to smash the working class, destroy its organizations, and stifl political liberties when the capitalists find themselves unable to govern and dominate with the help of democratic machin­ ery." Since the proletariat does not currently pose a threat to bourgeois rule, the French bourgeois sees no need to unleash its fascist dogs as a last resort to annihilate the workers movement. However, Le Pen's electoral gain will indeed encourage the fascist bands to come out of their holes and carry out attacks on the most vulnerable sectors of society, in particular dark-skinned immigrants.

A significant threat is posed on May Day, when tens of thousands of workers and leftists mobilize to celebrate the workers' holiday. Le Pen threatens to bring tens of thousands of his supporters to demonstrate the same day in Paris, posing the danger of pumped-up fascist bands roaming the streets and attacking workers, leftists and minorities. If the PCF, LCR or LO—or the CGT trade-union federation—were serious about stopping Le Pen, they would fill the Place du Châtelet with organized union members hours before Le Pen's fascist continued on page 6
On April 23, the government’s “anti-terror” threat machine struck again. In a racist dragnet dubbed “Fly Traps,” agents of the Department of Homeland Security invaded three airports in the Washington, D.C. area, arresting more than 150 workers, including airport screeners and undocumented immigrants. Though admitting that not one of those arrested was connected to terrorist activity, U.S. Attorney Paul McNulty called the racist dragnet as “anti-terrorism initiative.” McNulty declared, “All of these individuals present a risk,” but “we don’t have information as to exactly what risks.” Since September 11, over 450 workers at 14 airports around the country have been rounded up in the government’s “counter-terror operation Tarnac.”

The capitalist press relied on workers’ “fraudulently obtained” airport security badges. But what the airport workers are actually charged with is nothing more than lying on their job applications, for which they face up to five years in prison, $250,000 fines and deportation. If the government’s most nefarious fascist who has falsified their job records, probably half the country would be in jail, including those who make and enforce the laws. We demand: Free the arrestees! Drop all charges now! Reinstatate all the workers with backpay.

Following September 11, more than 1,200 men of Arab and South Asian descent have been rounded up as “terrorist” suspects and thousands of immigrants face imminent deportation—yet not one has been charged with being remotely connected to Al Qaeda or any other group designated by Washington as “terrorist.” To justify the escalating attacks on civil liberties, barely a day passes without the government announcing yet another “terrorist threat.” Just before the airport raids, the Justice Department announced it had informed that American banks were imminently targets of Al Qaeda. When nothing materialized, the FBI cycled to another “terrorist threat.”

The labor bureaucrats support such repressive legislation by the capitalist state to please their organizational masters. We are the only party of the enforcers of state repression, cops and prison guards. Similarly, SEIU union tops today are appealing to the airport security screeners, who are an auxiliary of the armed forces of the capitalist state, albeit on the bottom rung.

Thousands of screeners—immigrants from the Philippines, Latin America, South Asia, Africa and elsewhere—are threatened with losing their jobs under the Aviation and Transportation Security Act. The SEIU, along with other labor federations, which requires screeners to be U.S. citizens. We oppose making citizenship a requirement of employment for anyone. But while we support union campaigns to organize food service workers, cabin cleaners, baggage handlers and ramp workers, we oppose union organizing of screeners and security guards.

To mobilize labor’s social power in defense of its interests and those of all the oppressed requires piercing through the “national security” pretext by the U.S. capitalist rulers and their labor lieutenants. This understanding was key in building the February protest in Oakland initiated by the Labor Black League for Social Defense and the Partisan Defense Committee against the purge of immigrant witchhunt and the MSA, that united-front program, which was endorsed by the poetful ILWU Local 10 longshore union and a number of other unions, was the first time that organized labor had been mobilized in defense of immigrants against the U.S. rulers’ “war on terror.” As the Spartacist League spoke at the rally.

“...The workers and the capitalists have inspired each other to not only attack the state but to do so in the most productive way possible. They want to extract as much profit as possible, drive down wages, etc. The capitalists have a state to help them do this—the cops, the courts, the prisons—and then they try to smear you and say you are ‘terrorists.’ Well, it isn’t a democracy, it’s a barbaric system and we are the only party who makes this clear. To be a leader you have to tell the truth. As Spartacists, we want to be leaders telling you to vote for the lesser evil, they’re the chain tying you to the ball. A crisis-struggle leadership in the trade unions must be forged, a leadership that doesn’t see放进欧美, our enemies are. We need a workers party to fight for a workers government.”

—Len Trotsky, “The Death Anatomy of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International” (1938)

CAPITALISM AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Chronic unemployment and immiseration are endemic to the very workings of the capitalist system. In the 1938 Transitional Program, written in light of the Great Depression, Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky stressed the need to mobilize the trade unions in a fight for jobs for all. But the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucrats, who tie the workers to the capitalist class, are incapable of leading such a struggle. The elimination of joblessness and poverty can only be realized through the expropriation of the capitalist class. The property of this country will be divided among the workers of this country will be divided among the workers and not one of them will be able to sell himself as a wage laborer. The question is one of practical successes may be, the workers will best come to understand the necessity of mutual responsibility.

The average wage of every worker remains the same as it was under the old working prices. It is impossible to accept any other program for the present catastrophic period. The Spartacist League is the only party of the workers of the world in the struggle for socialism. The Partisan Defense Committee to the Spartacists, the trade unions, the Partisan Defense Committee in the defense of its interests and those of all the oppressed requires piercing through the “national security” pretext by the U.S. capitalist rulers and their labor lieutenants. This understanding was key in building the February protest in Oakland initiated by the Labor Black League for Social Defense and the Partisan Defense Committee against the purge of immigrant witchhunt and the MSA, that united-front program, which was endorsed by the poetful ILWU Local 10 longshore union and a number of other unions, was the first time that organized labor had been mobilized in defense of immigrants against the U.S. rulers’ “war on terror.”

We write below a 27 April letter by the Partisan Defense Committee to the solicitor of Richland County, South Carolina. The PDC calls on all trade unions, civil rights organizations and student groups to defend Emmett Ruff Eddy for his brave acts:

The Partisan Defense Committee protests the arrest and physical abuse by the police of Emmett Eddy, also known as Reverend Eddy, on the charge of “defacing a monument.” He was arrested after throwing the Confederate flag properly by the entrance at the Confederate Soldier Monument adjacent to the South Carolina Statehouse in Columbia, S.C. Eddy, who comes from a long history of activism against this grotesque symbol of slavery and racist terror, now faces up to five years in prison and up to $5,000 in fines.

The only thing criminal involved in this case is that the Confederate flag was flying at all: it is an inflammatory symbol which every citizen in this country knows stands for black enslavement and racist murder, Ku Klux Klan cross-burnings and church bombings, lynching of anyone who would fight for the rights of blacks, immigrants or labor. With Southern whites, from racist capts to KKK and Nazi skinhead rallies, it is an incitement to racist terror, and a reproach to “historical representation” is a sham.

The Confederate flag was placed on the South Carolina Statehouse as an act of racist defiance against the mass civil rights struggle for black equality and unionization. Now, while the racist flag flies near the Statehouse, inside a major effort is taking place to reinforce union-busting “right to work” laws—laws which we fly the flag of racist terror want to attack all of labor. The Partisan Defense Committee demands that all charges against Emmett Eddy (Rev. E. Slave) be dropped immediately!

Send protest letters to: Warren B. Griffin, Partisan Defense Committee, P.O. Box 1987, Columbia, SC 29202. Send contributions for Eddy’s defense to: E. Slave Defense Fund, P.O. Box 4681, Columbia, SC 29240.
written a book full of unbelievable tales as well as accounts of punishments they say they received at the hands of Andrade. We are unable to know what did or didn't happen among the group members, but even in their wildest claims these two supposed victims of Trevi/Andrade never state that they had been raped or physically prevented from leaving [the group]. Yapor and Hernandez maintain that they had sexual relations with Andrade and stayed with the group because they chose to and because they worried about the effect of leaving on their artistic careers. Yet Trevi, Andrade and Portillo now face charges of rape and kidnapping, which could keep them imprisoned in hellish conditions for many years. The fact that Hernandez and Yapor were under the arbitrarily set “age of consent” for young women when they engaged in consensual sexual activity means that the Trevi group now also faces “corruption of minors” charges. Drop the charges against Trevi, Andrade and Portillo!

Gloria Trevi was one of the most popular and controversial celebrities of the 1990s in Mexico. The name of her famous album “Mujer turbada que nunca” [literally “a perturbed woman and a play on words for ‘mutilation’] made jaws drop among the more conservative sectors of society, while millions of youth rused to buy her album before it sold out of stores. The beautiful, sexy single generated a lot of buzz and has strict ideas about what a woman should and shouldn’t say and do. A recent television documantary on Trevi interviewed woman after woman who all expressed the fear that they might be attacked for their openness and for being sexy. Gloria Trevi because she didn’t accept the way things are. “La Trevi” represented a challenge to bourgeois Catholic morality, characterized by its inculcation of a submissive role for women and the representation of non-normative sexuality, as well as that of youth and gays.

Trevi’s statements didn’t only relate to sex and gender. She has come out on the issues of the day, often standing against oppression and therefore against the powers that be in the patriarchal Mexican society. Trevi solidarized with the massaged City Mexico UNAM student strike for free public education in 1999. She expressed indignation at the massacre of peasants in Aguas Blancas by Guerrero state police in 1995. And Trevi stood for the right of women to have abortions, something that is illegal throughout Mexico. In some states, even the right to abort in the case of rape is being attacked with the increasing role of the Catholic church in politics under [Mexican president] Vicente Fox’s PAN (National Action Party). All of these things make Trevi, and those around her, a target in the eyes of the Mexican rulers.

On 8 February 2000, with Trevi, Andrade and Portillo already behind bars in Brazil, a sexual content scandal search, Karina Yapor appeared as a witness in court proceedings in Mexico against two other members of the Trevi group. Yapor stated, “I have never been raped or mistreated by Sergio Gustavo Andrade Sanchez, nor have I been deprived of my liberty. I didn’t see nor have I ever been deprived of my liberty. I didn’t see nor have I ever been deprived of my liberty.” At the end of the month, “She declared before the court the love she feels for Andrade; she also reaffirmed to family members the feelings that bound her to him and that she felt like a prisoner in her home (with her parents)” (Reforma, 27 June 2000), while her brother publicly accused her of hitting her son and her father stated on TV that she was a liar. The fourth penal court of state and then by her parents, to see the psychologists told her. Both Yapor’s and Aline Hernandez’s change of opinion had to do with “supernatural phenomenon.” Karina says that it was thanks to being able to make contact with god himself. Hernandez, more modestly, simply received a letter from her dead father. At the height of obscurantist stupidity, Yapor in her book tried to prove Andrade’s links with the devil because he had shaved off a lot of time in the bathroom without making noise.

The prosecution of Trevi, Andrade and Portillo fits into a wider anti-witchhunt which includes everything from repealed attacks on the “Condomonbo” and people who work in it, to anti-pedophile campaigns, to brutal, murderous attacks on homosexuals. One aspect of the witchhunt is that it seeks to strengthen the state in its regulation of the population and to spread panic as a diversion from the real brutality of life in a country where 60 per cent of children are born into poverty, women are forced to bear child after child or risk their lives with unsafe abortions, and many of those who manage to find employment get paid starvation wages. We oppose the intimidation of the government into private life and demand an end to all laws against consensual activities like sexual experimentation among youth, consensual sex between adults and youth, and “acts without victim” such as prostitution, drug use and pornography. We oppose “age of consent” and “corruption of minors” laws. These laws, which set an arbitrary age (generally different for men and women, or even only applicable to women) at which one is deemed capable of making decisions about sex and drinking, are reactionary. Their purpose is to represent youth as an object (which it is, although some might not like it, a biological fact), impose abstinence and equate sex with guilt. As we explained in “Britain: Marxism vs. Anti-Sex Hysteria” in Espartaco No. 16 (Fall-Winter 2001) [see also WY No. 744, Fall-Winter 2000]: “The guiding principle for sexual relations should be of that of effective consent, nothing more and nothing less than mutual agreement and understanding as opposed to coercion. One might say that a girl of 11 is too young, whereas one of 14 is all right, depending on what she wants to do. In any case this is not a matter to be determined by the patriarchal state which upholds in every way it can the inherently oppressive and reactionary family, including enforcing sexual repression and fear, with untold results of increased human misery. We vehemently oppose state intervention into people’s sexual activities and private lives. State out of the bedroom!”

If Yapor and Hernandez now believe that they shouldn’t have been able to make decisions about their own lives when they were teenagers, at that time they certainly thought they were able to, and in fact they did. Second thoughts and regrets or even unpleasant experiences (which are quite common in the sexual activity in this society) cannot retroactively turn consensual activity into rape. On the other hand, the very notion that effective consent what takes place is a violent sexual assault. Rape and wife-beating are born of the common crimes against women in Mexico. A measure of the indifference of the Mexican rulers to the desperate plight of women and to rape in particular is the case of Paulina, an adolescent who was raped and then denied the abortion she requested (see Espartaco No. 14, Fall-Winter 2000). It is also grotesque that the law does not contain common crimes against young women with violent crimes like rape or wife-beating, to which we are uncondi-

Mexican Trotskyists Say: Free Gloria Trevi!

Down With the Anti-Sex Witchhunt!
Defend the Palestinians!

What’s Wrong with Campus Divestment Campaign

Israel’s assault against the Palestinians on the West Bank, marked by the wholesale destruction of entire areas and the cold-blooded massacre of hundreds of Palestinian civilians, has spurred significant demonstrations internationally, including in the U.S. On April 20, some 20,000 people protested in San Francisco and some 70,000 in Washington D.C., the largest mobilizations since the Gulf War protests of 1990-91. This wave of protests has also hit campuses across the country.

At the University of California Berkeley campus, more than a thousand students attended a “Palestine Day of Action” on April 9 called by the Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP). The demonstration culminated in a sit-in at a campus building, where 79 protesters were arrested. Most were charged with trespassing, though some face additional charges of resisting arrest, while one student was charged with assaulting an officer. The UC administration has announced that those arrested will face student conduct charges and possible suspension from school. The SJP has been suspended as a campus group and prohibited from organizing or having events on campus, pending an “investigation.” This blatant attempt to stifle political dissent is of a piece with the government’s “anti-terror” witchhunt. The UC administration is trying to roll back the clock to the days before the 1960s Free Speech Movement, when political groups were banned from campus. Drop all the charges now! Down with the suspension of the SJP! No administration reprisals against the protesters!

The main demand of the Berkeley sit-in (as well as a demonstration called by the SJP at New York’s Columbia University on April 17) was that the university administration “end its financial ties to Israel by divesting from companies with subsidiaries in Israel and/or substantial financial commitments (over 5 million dollars) to the Israeli economy.” This demand, initiated by the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, has been taken up by ostensibly socialist organizations like the International Socialist Organization (ISO), active in the leadership of the Berkeley and Columbia SJs, and the Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade (RCYB, youth group of the Revolutionary Communist Party), whose members are active in the Berkeley SJP.

At bottom, the divestment campaign looks to employ moral suasion to pressure campus administrations. American corporations and ultimately the U.S. capitalist rulers to ditch Israel and implement a more benevolent policy toward the Palestinians. Aside from the fact that American corporations do not have significant investments in Israel, the notion that moral suasion will make the U.S. dump a strategic and longstanding ally in the Near East is simply ludicrous.

The divestment movement is based on the lie that the Zionist rulers are somehow worse than their imperialist patrons in Washington, who just devastated Afghanistan and whose starvation blockade of Iraq (not to mention countless wars from Korea to Vietnam) has killed more innocent civilians than the Israeli state by orders of magnitude. In this sense, the call for divestment serves merely to perpetuate the image of blood-drenched U.S. imperialism.

Indeed, the April 20 Washington demonstration’s fake-leftists, among them the ISO, pleaded for “a U.S. foreign policy based upon moral considerations rather than military and corporate oppression.” And their chosen keynote speaker, Democratic Congressman Cynthia McKinney, proclaimed: “I believe we once again can make America a force for good in the world. We are the world’s most powerful nation and have a responsibility to act in defense of the weak and to protect them from harm.”

When has capitalist America ever acted as a force for good in the world? From its 1898 Spanish-American War to its slaughter in Iraq a decade ago. Social democrats like the ISO to the contrary, the capitalist state is nothing other than an instrument of corporate—i.e., capitalist class—oppression, a machinery of violence to maintain the rule of capital and suppress the struggles of the exploited and oppressed. The notion that this state can promote social and economic justice is a con job that serves to channel the discontent of working people and rebellious youth back into Democratic Party electoralism.

Like the demonstrations nationally, a central slogan of the Berkeley protest was “Stop U.S. aid to Israel!” There were also calls for the United Nations to intervene militarily on behalf of the Palestinians. The Spartacus Youth Club participated in the Berkeley march and protest with signs calling for defense of the Palestinian people. We chanted, “No illusions in UN peace! For a socialist federation of the Near East!” and “Arah, Jew, black and white—Workers of the world unite!”

The UN, far from being a force for “peace,” is simply a tool of imperialist thieves and their victims that acts as a fig leaf for U.S. military adventures around the globe, from the 1950-53 Korean War to the Gulf War in 1991 and countless other imperialist interventions. A U.S./UN “protection force” was the key way for the 1982 massacre of over 2,000 Palestinian men, women and children at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon. Particularly today, appeals for imperialist military intervention in the Near East, in the guise of defending the Palestinians, only plays into the hands of the Bush administration, which is preparing an “intervention” force to attack Saddam Hussein’s Iraq. U.S. hands off Iraq! All U.S./UN troops out of the Near East!

What is urgently necessary in the face of escalating Zionist terror is the mobilization of the working class in concrete acts of class-struggle solidarity with the besieged Palestinian masses, including political protest strikes and labor action to prevent the shipment of military goods to the Israeli rulers. But such a perspective can only be realized by mobilizing workers in the U.S. against their own rulers, not by fostering illusions in the potential benevolence of the American state.

A “Moral” Investment Policy?

A campaign to convince capitalist institutions to make business decisions based on moral considerations rather than profit motives is patently absurd, and it goes along with the liberal calls on consumers to boycott products made by companies that do business in Israel. The SJP’s sister group at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign demands that its administration “not morally associate itself with the Israeli apartheid/colonial economy for the weapons manufacturers... continued on page 7
On April 20, the Bay Area Spartacus Youth Club led a demonstration against the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) and its effort to recruit prospec­tive UC Berkeley students to the officer corps of the U.S. imperialist military. Stu­dents got a fresh dose of revolution­ary communism as the SYC chanted: “ROTC recruiters—imperialist looters! Off campus now!” A handful of leftist youth enthusiastically joined our picket line and chanted over the hokey Cal marching band that soon came to try to drown us out.

The right-wing, rabidly anti-communist California Patriot crowd mobilized with their American flags in a tiny counter­demo. Their McCarthyite signs, “Shoot a Communist Revolutionary for the US” and “Tell the Proletariats [sic] to Get Back to Work,” constitute an ominous silhouette of a fascistic program to kill the communists and other anti-imperialist workers organizations to extract a higher rate of profit from the sweat and blood of the proletariat. These Pentagon advisers-in­training whip up the “war on terror” hysteria on college campuses against any student who might oppose: the war.

Although the cops prevented us from using a megaphone, onlookers heard SYC speeches addressing our defense of the Palestinian people and our opposition to the U.S./UN/EU “national unity military force against absolutely anyone, from Iraq directly under the cross hairs. Bush's mad ranting about “the axis of evil” combined with the $312 billion military budget, the world’s biggest and larger than the arms budgets of the next nineteen countries combined, underline that the main enemy of the world’s peoples truly is American imperialism. As U.S. imperialism sends troops to all corners of the globe, including Colombia, Yemen, Georgia and the Philippines, the Pentagon, the world’s only veteran in the war on terrorism, armed to the teeth in Iraq and the Pacific, is given the green light by the Zionist terrorist state, armed to the teeth with nuclear weapons, in its escalating genocidal war against the Palestinian people. We say: Defend the Palestinians! Zionist Troops, Out of the Occupied Territories! No U.S./NATO Intervention! Hands Off Iraq!”

We reprinted below the 7 April leaflet issued by the Bay Area Spartacus Youth Club and distributed in building the anti­ROTC demonstration.

On April 20, “Cal Day,” prospective students here at UC Berkeley will receive a taste of the murderous American imperialist military, fresh off its deadly ravaging of Afghanistan and eagerly set to launch a new round of human massacre in Iraq. The Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) plans to showcase the U.S. armed forces by rappelling down Wheeler Hall. Although the university provides it with academic camouflage, ROTC’s role is to train the next generation of men and women to direct mass slaughter for the most rapacious imperialist power in the world. To carry out its imperialist adventures, the bourgeoisie needs to regiment the population to accept authority without question. On campus this means enforcing conservative codes of conduct and suppressing leftist ideas. While the administration and its right-wing hackey have recently sought to purge what they consider to be sexual and political “deviance” from campus, ROTC is given free rein by ROTC and always reaps what it sows. Organized outrage during the Vietnam War successfully drove ROTC off campuses across the nation, but when ROTC was reintroduced to Cal in the mid-seventies, we led a campaign against its return. The Spartacus Youth Club today calls on students opposed to U.S. imperialism’s deadly rampages—those of the past present and those who are too immature—to demonstrate on April 20 and demand: ROTC Off Campus! U.S. Imperialism: Hands Off Iraq and the World! Seizing on the entire criminal attack on thousands of people in the World Trade Center, the American bourgeoisie has found the golden opportunity to use “national unity” patriotism to line up the population behind the government. Washington’s quick wins in Afghanistan has only emboldened its readiness to employ military force against absolutely anyone, with Iraq directly under the cross hairs. Bush’s mad ranting about “the axis of evil” combined with the $312 billion military budget, the world’s biggest and larger than the arms budgets of the next nineteen countries combined, underline that the main enemy of the world’s peoples truly is American imperialism. As U.S. imperialism sends troops to all corners of the globe, including Colombia, Yemen, Georgia and the Philippines, the Pentagon, the world’s only veteran in the war on terrorism, armed to the teeth with nuclear weapons, in its escalating genocidal war against the Palestinian people. We say: Defend the Palestinians! Zionist Troops, Out of the Occupied Territories! No U.S./NATO Intervention! Hands Off Iraq!”

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attacks. At the time, the LTF insisted that the heavily minority private sector workers be mobilized in that proletarian struggle and uniquely called on the labor movement to champion the rights of all the oppressed, particularly France's large North African population. Instead, the trade-union militants deflected that class battle from the factories and streets into a campaign to replace the right-wing government then in power by Jospin's popular front. As is the case with all popular fronts, the politics of class collaboration disoriented the workers, derailed their struggles and embodied the forces of reaction.

Fake-left groups like the LCR and LO encourage the widespread illusion that there is no alternative to the trap of bourgeois democracy. The LCR Political Bureau declared: "The LCR is mobilizing for Le Pen to get the smallest vote possible on May 5th (Rouge, 25 April). This is a clear call to vote for Chirac in the second round. As is the case with all popular fronts, the politics of class collaboration disoriented the workers, derailed their struggles and embodied the forces of reaction.

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about the "anti-Semitism of the Maghreb" recently, because that's a pretext for the repression in the ghettos. But it's not the first time that they've called for the leader who declared that the Holocaust of the Jews was just a "detail" and who still identifies himself with the Vichy regime. Le Pen and the fascists don’t represent "bad ideas" that one can debate. Fascism is a virus to wipe out the workers movement, send women back to the home and massacre "immigrants," Jews. Nationalities and homogeneities. Fascist, fascists are the extreme expression of the intertexts of the bourgeoisie and are their rearive army against the proletariat. That's why the fight against fascism has to be linked to the struggle against the system. Capitalist exploitation isn't on the verge of taking power in this country, but his election score will be translated into an augmentation of racist crimes in the streets. Smash the fascists before they smash us! For worker/immigrant self-defense groups based on the factories!

In 1995 the National Front launched its electoral campaign by assassinating Brira­ ham, a young black worker murdered by a mob celebrating his funeral on May Day. Le Pen's call for an FN mobilization on May Day each year, the "international day of the working class," is a sinister provocation. What's necessary is mass mobilizations against the FN and its danger. As Trotsky wrote ("Germany, the Key to the Interna­tional Situation," 26 November 1931): "One is not a socialist if one is afraid of electoral statistics, if one thousand fascist votes weigh as much as a thousand communist votes. But on the scales of the revolutionary struggle, a thousand workers in one big factory repre­sente a force a hundred times greater."

But instead of mobilizing the working class to sweep the fascists off the streets on May Day, the fake left uses the anger of the youth and of all the opponents of the fascists to refurbish not only the social democrats but even Chirac! The "CGT police union" just called for "all republican policemen to participate in all demonstrations organized by the forces of progress." In fact, the cop "unions" would be the organic support for a fascist regime. We say: Cops out of the unions!

The anger at the election results is syn­

... treatment...
Welfare...
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white workers' anger away from capital­ ist exploitation and toward black people and immigrants. Black women face triple oppression in racist, sexist America—as black people, as workers and as women. Although they have always been more whites on welfare racist, sexist America—as black people, as workers and as women. Although there to the lowering of unemployment statistics was the high rate of unemployment of young black and other minority men, mainly imprisoned because of the racist “war on drugs.” This so-called “war” is a pretense to increase the violent police occupation of the desperately poor ghettos and barrios. By 1995, over 33 percent white criminals and targeted by the cops, who just shoot them down in the streets or throw them into prison. The bourgeoisie pointed to the lower unemployment figures of the late '90s as proof that only the “undeserving poor” could be out of work in such a booming economy. In fact, one of the factors that contributed to the lowering of unemployment statistics was the high rate of unemployment of young black and other minority men, mainly imprisoned because of the racist “war on drugs.” This so-called “war” is a pretense to increase the violent police occupation of the desperately poor ghettos and barrios. By 1995, over 33 percent black of men were in prison or on probation. In order for the capitalists to increase the rate of exploitation, they require reg­ istration and control of the workforce. They need a compliant population to throw onto the trash heap depending on welfare benefits. This makes clear that the campaign for welfare which invariably end up with the public assistance is an all-out attack on historic welfare which invariably end up with the right to work. It is the foundation of a “Marriage Savers.” This so-called “war” is a pretense to increase the violent police occupation of the desperately poor ghettos and barrios. By 1995, over 33 percent black of men were in prison or on probation. In order for the capitalists to increase the rate of exploitation, they require reg­ istration and control of the workforce. They need a compliant population to throw onto the trash heap depending on welfare benefits. This makes clear that the campaign for welfare which invariably end up with the right to work. It is the foundation of a “Marriage Savers.”

Clinton signing 1996 bill to “end welfare as we know it.”

The War Against Poor Women

In 1995, the Bush administration proposed a federal mandatory maternal cooperation in paternity suits. So even if the biological father was abusive or pen­ niless, or if the mother simply wants him out of her life, she still is coerced into pursuing him. In many states, additional assistance is denied to children born after a woman starts receiving welfare. This particularly vindictive regulation retreats the old vicious, racist stereotype of black women who supposedly need an incentive to “control their sexuality” or, conversely, are so calculating that they plan to have additional children so they can get the extra big $32 a month. And no bene­ fits come without strings. In a policy dis­ guised as extending medical coverage to pregnant women, the Bush administration has proposed a restriction that, if a woman has a pregnancy she chooses to carry, she would be dead before they qualify. There’s back­ and­ forth among the buzz­ zards in Congress regarding the best time to auction off Social Security on Wall Street, but it’s a tough sell. It’s difficult to convince people of the capitalist long-term viability of the capitalist system while the stock market is going down the tubes and you are reading every day how the financially strapped are being forced to tighten their lives. But it’s a tough sell. It’s difficult to convince people of the capitalist long-term viability of the capitalist system while the stock market is going down the tubes and you are reading every day how the financially strapped are being forced to tighten their lives. But it’s a tough sell.

The current situation recalls the first forms of “workfare” in the epoch of the rise of capitalism. The English Poor Laws of 1834 included the first test of what makes up the “truly deserving poor.” If you were willing to assign yourself and your family to a workhouse and be com­ pelled to perform mindless, repetitive labor such as running treadmills, crush­ ing bones for fertilizer or breaking stones, then the work ethic of the poor could be preserved. Subjecting the poor to degrada­ tion as a condition of receiving assistance was meant as a club for others to labor for the ruling classes. This so-called “war” is a pretense to increase the violent police occupation of the desperately poor ghettos and barrios. By 1995, over 33 percent black of men were in prison or on probation. In order for the capitalists to increase the rate of exploitation, they require reg­ istration and control of the workforce. They need a compliant population to throw onto the trash heap depending on welfare benefits. This makes clear that the campaign for welfare which invariably end up with the right to work. It is the foundation of a “Marriage Savers.”

The Gains of Radical Reconstruction

First let me talk about Radical Recon­struction, which represented the gains for black people and poor whites. Social welfare programs came directly out of the revolutionary struggle of the American Civil War. The Civil War was the second American Revolution—a social revolution in the South which smashed chattel slavery, i.e., private property in human flesh. Established in 1865, the Freedman’s Bureau was the first federal welfare agency in American history. The Bureau had to feed, house and clothe thousands of newly freed slaves and ensure that they were not re­ enslaved by the landowners. The expropriation of the slaveowners laid the basis for a broad range of pro­ gressive social measures. Across the South, relief was extended to poor labor­ ers. The Republican Reconstruction state governments built hospitals and asylums for orphans and the mentally ill. Laws were passed protecting minors from parental abuse and holding white fathers responsible for support of their mulatto children. South Carolina funded medical care for the poor and Alabama provided free legal counsel for indigent defen­ dants. In North Carolina, a law was passed declaring that the property of a married woman could not be sold to pay a husband’s debts. Workers World and the ISO appeal to the conscience of the ruling class. But this system is a dictatorship of the capi­ talists. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels explained that the capitalist state is fund­amentally an executive committee for managing the common affairs of the ruling class. The state is at its core com­ posed of the courts, prisons, police and army. This state maintains a network of power to overthrow the capitalist system. The ISO and Workers World build illusions in the reform­ ability of capitalism and are obstacles to independent working-class action.

The social-democratic International Socialist Organization (ISO) has an arti­ cle in Socialist Worker (1 February) titled Why Don’t the Democrats Fight? After saying some standard things about how the Democrats defend capitalism, they conclude by saying: “Working people can’t wait for the Democrats to wrap up. We must organize to demand health care, the right to join unions and money for education. That’s one way the working-class majority will make its voice heard.” So if we just protest loud enough we would wake up the Democrats who are talking too long and we could hurry them along to fight!

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The War Against Poor Women

AFDC funding is a tiny fraction of the U.S. social welfare budget today com­ pared to Social Security or Medicare. This makes clear that the campaign for welfare which invariably end up with the right to work. It is the foundation of a “Marriage Savers.”

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tem for blacks and whites, against the color line. The South had virtually no schools, since the plantation economy had no need for educating poor whites; and, in regard to slaves, it was a crime to teach them. Under the reign of the Union Army, virtually every Southern state legislature—which included black members, many of whom were from the Union Army—passed laws to build and fund schools. The education system in reality only touched a fraction of the population, but the principle of public education was made part of the new Reconstruction constitutions of every Southern state. It is an indictment of this decaying capitalist system that this historic achievement of free public education is being undermined through school vouchers and privatization schemes, and that school busing to achieve racial integration has been long abandoned.

The Compromise of 1877 withdrew the troops from the South and marked the betrayal by the Northern capitalists of the struggle for black freedom. This was a political counterrevolution in which black people were left defenseless against the ex-slaveholders and Ku Klux Klan terror andlynchings. Over the following decades, Jim Crow laws buried the possibilities of Radical Reconstruction. Blacks were disenfranchised as virulent racism, violence, and disfranchisement in the form of special taxes, voting restrictions, and the use of violence by the Southern state. The 1889 decision of the Supreme Court, Plessy v. Ferguson, ruled that the use of "separate but equal facilities" was constitutional, which legitimized segregation in railroad cars, schools, and other public facilities.

The 19th century “cult of domesticity,” which extolled the virtues of women in the home, did not extend to black women who labored in the fields and homes of their masters. Blacks, as well as men, were cut off from the struggle for black freedom. The black unemployed were less money on a population that it considers "life-sapping". They solicited food from sympathetic grocers and farmers for needy striking workers. They were excluded from the Social Security Act. Agricultural workers were not covered by the Social Security Act.

Poverty and racial repression of blacks in capitalist America. The civil rights movement shattered the myth of a “color line.” People today as we face increasing repression.

Particularly with the onset of World War I, thousands of black sharecroppers were recruited to work in industry in Northern cities. But the racist, anti-immigrant AFL, craft union leaders kept the black workers as a reserve army of labor. After the 1929 stock market crash, some 15 to 16 million workers lost their jobs. By 1933, unemployment among black people was double the national average, and two million were on relief programs. The central to the class battles that ensued was the struggle for mass industrial unions—which included all the workers of a particular industry—that culminated in the formation of the Congress of Industrial Unions. The struggles to form the CIO unions were often led by Communists and socialists. Black workers became part of powerful, integrated mass organizations. You could not organize unions without organizing blacks and whites together. When racist white workers protested—bringing blacks into production jobs, unions like the United Auto Workers (UAW) came in and forced them to accept their black brothers and sisters. These unions were forged through strikes and wildcat strikes, such as sit-down strikes and mass pickets in auto, rubber, steel, coal, the docks and other strategic sectors of the economy—that challenged American capitalism.

In 1934, major class battles like the San Francisco General Strike and the Toledo Auto-Lite strike helped to lay the basis for the later formation of the CIO. The high point of working-class consciousness was the 1934 Minneapolis General Strike led by the Trotskyist Communist League of America. It is significant that in the midst of bitter struggle for union recognition, the revolutionary Trotskyist leadership of that citywide strike also administered social services that had been cut off by the vindictive bosses. They solicited food from sympathetic grocers and farmers for needy striking workers and families and organized an emergency kitchen with transportation. They fought to secure public relief not only for the unemployed, and represented them against their landlords. The postwar class struggle continues to run things on its own.

In this climate of rising working-class militancy and militantly, social legislation was hastily put forward to derail the growing class consciousness of the masses. Roosevelt launched a whole series of programs. Many were meant to be temporary, although many lasted until the mobilization for World War II revived the economy. Others, like Social Security and unemployment compensation, continue to exist today. The 1935 Social Security Act was an unprecedented national social insurance program that originally had sections to benefit the aged, unemployed and single mothers. Nevertheless, the public assistance programs for poor women were uniquely punitive and inadequately funded as compared to the old-age and unemployment insurance mandated by the same act. Pensions and unemployment benefits were labeled “insurance,” conveying the notion that they were a guaranteed entitlement. Poor mothers got “aid” that was discretionary and stigmatized—not an automatic, socially acceptable form of support but a payment for which the recipient must prove “worthy.” A 1939 amendment created a special category of guaranteed insurance for so-called “blamed” women—those whose poverty was due to their husbands’ deaths and not something that supposedly they could control. Aid to white women—the majority of this category—was not stigmatized. The vast majority of impoverished black women were left in the “guilty” category. As more black women entered the welfare rolls, the whole idea of relief for mothers changed from assistance to enable them to stay at home with their children to a way to police and humiliate black women who had supposedly chosen poverty.

Social Security was universal in name only. Domestic workers and agricultural workers, both disproportionately black, were excluded from the Social Security Act. Agricultural workers were left out explicitly because Roosevelt knew he would never get Southern support if any benefits ended up in the hands of black sharecroppers. Only just over half of all employed workers were eligible. About two-thirds of the labor force was excluded from unemployment compensation.

In the late 30s, with the support of the reformist Communist Party (CP), Roosevelt’s New Deal coalition tied organized labor not only to its Northern liberal class enemies but also to the Southern Dixiecrats, to whom Roosevelt gave free rein to wage racist terror against black people and labor. That the majority of the black population looks to this day to the Democratic Party, the historic party of slavery, as the “lesser evil” is a legacy of the treachery of the CP of the 1930s.

The Civil Rights Movement and the “War on Poverty”

Attitudes toward social welfare during the post-World War II period were shaped by the bourgeois ideology of the “American Century”: capitalist prosperity and growth would conquer all remaining poverty, and any expansion of social programs provided by the state was un-American and subversive. But beginning with the 1955 Montgomery bus boycotts, the society was shaken by the fight for black equality and democratic rights, a struggle which for over a decade dominated American political life. The civil rights movement was an eruption of black struggle against a century of Jim Crow. Protests ranged from the lunch counter sit-ins to “freedom rides,” wildcat strikes, marches, rallies and massive ghetto uprisings. The movement shattered the anti-Communist atmosphere of the ‘50s, which we should keep in mind today as we face increasing repression.

The social legislation known as the “War on Poverty” and “Great Society” was passed because the ruling class saw the urban centers go up in flames, as black youth saw that they had no future in capitalist prosperity and racist repression of blacks. But beginning with the support of the reformist Communist Party (CP), Roosevelt gave free rein to wage racist terror against black people and labor. That the majority of the black population looks to this day to the Democratic Party, the historic party of slavery, as the “lesser evil” is a legacy of the treachery of the CP of the 1930s.
Welfare...

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set up a myriad of agencies and social programs, among them Medicaid, food stamps, Head Start school programs, job training and legal aid. At the same time, the Nixon administration moved against the long, bloody and losing imperialist war waged by U.S. imperialism against the Vietnamese people.

Johnson’s “War on Poverty” programs were effective in co-opting a new generation of black radicals into the lower levels of government bureaucracy. Some became part of the Democratic Party, like Marion Barry Jr., and founded the non-violent Coordinating Committee, who became mayor of Washington, D.C. and set out his master’s anti-administration cutbacks and layoffs. Installed to cool off the ghettoes, the black Democratic mayors of the major cities became the key to the dismantling of social welfare programs throughout the 80s and 90s. They are the black front men for murderous capitalist rule.

Many militants that couldn’t be co-opted into the capitalist state, especially many of the Black Panthers, were hounded by the FBI or killed outright by the CIA. Their right to self-defense, to express their freedom, was criminalized. Poverty, unemployment, police brutality—none of this can be ended via a new war or a new program.

Some former black activists write nostalgically about the ’60s protests. Rhonda Y. Williams writes in Black Scholar (Fall/Winter 2001) about impoverished East Baltimore. Welfare recipients battled for increased grants for rent, food and clothing and organized rent strikes. She praises “Black Power” politics and “Women’s Empowerment” on a “familial and community-wide level.” But the urban ghettos like East Baltimore in every major city remained hotholes for black people. These courageous but desperate struggles could not have any lasting impact without being linked to the social power of the organized working class.

In the North, there were large, integrated unions such as the UAW that could have wielded their power to ally with and lead the oppressed against the common capitalist enemy. By the late ’60s there were a quarter of a million black auto workers in Detroit. The struggle for racial equality meant directly confrontations with the capitalist class. The main wing of the AFL-CIO leadership were simply stone racists like George Meany. We must condemn the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy. The main wing of the AFL-CIO leadership were simply stone racists like George Meany. We must condemn the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy.

Cornel West picks up Jackson’s theme, and would have wielded their power to ally with and lead the oppressed against the common capitalist enemy. By the late ’60s there were a quarter of a million black auto workers in Detroit. The struggle for racial equality meant directly confrontations with the capitalist class. The main wing of the AFL-CIO leadership were simply stone racists like George Meany. We must condemn the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy. The main wing of the AFL-CIO leadership were simply stone racists like George Meany. We must condemn the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy.

Capitalist politics was simply stone racists like George Meany. Religion is an escape, and is used by the ruling class to pacify the oppressed and distract them from fighting now for what they need. In 1990, Charles Murray, a Reaganite from the University of California at Berkeley, published his notorious book _The Bell Curve._ Murray claimed that U.S. citizens are genetically inferior.” Socioeconomic differences are the cause of inner-city poverty, the “breakdown of the family structure,” the “cycle of depen­dency.” The victims are blamed for their own oppression.

In the 1980s, Jesse Jackson performed a valuable service for the racist oppressors by joining the capitalist class. In 1994, the “Bell Curve” was reprinted as _Genocide U.S.A._ Black History and the Class Struggle No. 12.) Murray puts forward that since black people are genetically inferior, social programs are pointless. This racist garbage is not new. It is in the American tradition of the vulgar Social Darwinism of the late 19th century, which preached “the survival of the fittest” and racialized racist Jim Crow legislation.

For Workers Revolution!

We oppose the destruction of welfare and other social programs benefiting the working class and the poor. But our program is not the defense of the miserable status quo. Welfare at best helped millions of mothers and unskilled laborers to poverty and exclusion from social production. We fight for jobs, for all, for union jobs at union wages, for a shorter workweek with no loss in pay and full cost-of-living escalators, for union-run minority job recruit­ment and training, for organizing the unorganized, for free 24-hour childcare, and for free abortion on demand as part of free, quality health care for all! There’s plenty of work to be done—For a massive public works program! The capitalists say they can’t do it? They won’t do it. It’s not in their class interests. A planned economy under a workers government can and will.

The greatest obstacle to victorious class struggle is the treacherous labor bureaucracy that continues to shake the powerful, integrated working class to its class enemies. These labor fakers obvi­ously march in lockstep with the bosses and crow for “national unity” as jobs are slashed. Despite the savagery of the imperialist war on the black poor, immi­grants and the rest of the working class, and despite the increasing marginaliza­tion of the ghetto masses, black workers are a strategic part of the labor move­ment and will be a key component in a revolutionary workers party.

We seek to build a Leninist vanguard party that fights for proletarian revolu­tion. To win, we must become a tribune of the people, championing the struggles of all the oppressed, including the fight for the liberation of women. For women’s liberation through socialist revolution! Only a socialist planned economy under the workers government can lay the mate­rial basis for the emancipation of women and the integration of black people into American society with full economic, social and political equality. We look to a communist society where women will be freed from the isolation, drudgery and oppression of the bourgeois family. Our program is the Bolshevik program of the October 1917 Russian Revolution.

Claude McKay, black American poet and early supporter of the Russian Revolu­tion, wrote a report in 1922 after his trip to the new Soviet workers state, where he attended the Fourth Congress of the Communist International. He observed the great leap that the working masses had taken in seizing state power, and the way that the revolution was inspired and guided by the international solidarity inspired by the communist revolution. Tsarist Russia had been stopped on the path of socialist revolution. The revolution opened up the possibility for full national equality as well as equality for women.

The women of the great bank in Moscow insisted on hearing about the women’s movement in the United States of America and after a brief outline I was asked the most exciting questions concerning the positions that were most available for the workers movement, and general relationship with the white women workers. The details I could not give; but when I got through, the Russian women passed a resolution sending greetings to the colored women workers of America, exhorting them to organize their unions, secure their needs, and become a revolutionary force. I received a similar mes­sage from the Propaganda Department of the Petrograd Soviet which is managed by Nikolaev, a very energetic woman.

The Russian Revolution opened the road to women’s emancipation for the first time in history. The Bolshevik Party set up as one of its primary tasks to remove all obstacles to raising women’s material conditions. They promised to open private hospitals to all, provide childcare, public laundries, kitchens and libraries. In the same year, the church opened up a stampeding reversal of social pathology: poverty was reasonable to the church marriage and divorce, to legalize abortion and abolish the concept of inferiority. In the countryside, predominantly rural country, their efforts could only hint at the possibilities for women had socialist revolution spread to the advanced capitalist countries.

The U.S. ruling class has been hailing the market boom of the late 1990s as the market ever since the 1991-92 counter-revolution in the Soviet Union. The bloody imperialists, nuclear madmen, feel that the war in Iraq, carry out mass murder and terror in Afghanistan and threaten large parts of the rest of the world. In the United States, the conditions of masses and poverty are inherent in rotting, decaying capitalism.

We are living in a time of mass unemployment and the market collapse, of hunger and want. The revolutionaries of the 20th century had to build a vanguard party to win mass support. The capital­ism is defined by the capitalist class. The movement is not the defense of the miserable status quo. Welfare at best helped millions of mothers and unskilled laborers to poverty and exclusion from social production. We fight for jobs, for all, for union jobs at union wages, for a shorter workweek with no loss in pay and full cost-of-living escalators, for union-run minority job recruit­ment and training, for organizing the unorganized, for free 24-hour childcare, and for free abortion on demand as part of free, quality health care for all! There’s plenty of work to be done—For a massive public works program! The capitalists say they can’t do it? They won’t do it. It’s not in their class interests. A planned economy under a workers government can and will.

The greatest obstacle to victorious class struggle is the treacherous labor bureaucracy that continues to shake the powerful, integrated working class to its class enemies. These labor fakers obvi­ously march in lockstep with the bosses and crow for “national unity” as jobs are slashed. Despite the savagery of the imperialist war on the black poor, immi­grants and the rest of the working class, and despite the increasing marginaliza­tion of the ghetto masses, black workers are a strategic part of the labor move­ment and will be a key component in a revolutionary workers party.

We seek to build a Leninist vanguard party that fights for proletarian revolu­tion. To win, we must become a tribune of the people, championing the struggles of all the oppressed, including the fight for the liberation of women. For women’s liberation through socialist revolution! Only a socialist planned economy under the workers government can lay the mate­rial basis for the emancipation of women and the integration of black people into American society with full economic, social and political equality. We look to a communist society where women will be freed from the isolation, drudgery and oppression of the bourgeois family. Our program is the Bolshevik program of the October 1917 Russian Revolution.

Claude McKay, black American poet and early supporter of the Russian Revolu­tion, wrote a report in 1922 after his trip to the new Soviet workers state, where he attended the Fourth Congress of the Communist International. He observed the great leap that the working masses had taken in seizing state power, and the way that the revolution was inspired and guided by the international solidarity inspired by the communist revolution. Tsarist Russia had been stopped on the path of socialist revolution. The revolution opened up the possibility for full national equality as well as equality for women.

The women of the great bank in Moscow insisted on hearing about the women’s movement in the United States of America and after a brief outline I was asked the most exciting questions concerning the positions that were most available for the workers movement, and general relationship with the white women workers. The details I could not give; but when I got through, the Russian women passed a resolution sending greetings to the colored women workers of America, exhorting them to organize their unions, secure their needs, and become a revolutionary force. I received a similar mes­sage from the Propaganda Department of the Petrograd Soviet which is managed by Nikolaev, a very energetic woman.

The Russian Revolution opened the road to women’s emancipation for the first time in history. The Bolshevik Party set up as one of its primary tasks to remove all obstacles to raising women’s material conditions. They promised to open private hospitals to all, provide childcare, public laundries, kitchens and libraries. In the same year, the church opened up a stampeding reversal of social pathology: poverty was reasonable to the church marriage and divorce, to legalize abortion and abolish the concept of inferiority. In the countryside, predominantly rural country, their efforts could only hint at the possibilities for women had socialist revolution spread to the advanced capitalist countries.

The U.S. ruling class has been hailing the market boom of the late 1990s as the market ever since the 1991-92 counter-revolution in the Soviet Union. The
We print below a 15 April leaflet issued by our comrades of Spartacist South Africa demanding freedom for 40 demonstrators arrested and held without charges in Johannesburg. The arrests took place during an April 6 protest denouncing the government’s cutoff of electricity services in Johannesburg as part of its iron-fisted drive to crush the working class. The police sealed off thousands of households without this basic necessity. Statements in support of the detained protesters have come in from Mauritius and as far away as South Korea and England. Nearly 600 people cheered on the detainees as they were finally released from prison on April 16. They are scheduled to appear in court on May 10.

The government’s electricity cutoffs are part of a whole range of attacks against South Africa’s militant working class and poor, including widespread privatizations. The government seeks to recover revenue lost in the 1980s and early ’90s, when the African National Congress (ANC) called on township residents to boycott payments of electricity and other services as part of the struggle against the racist apartheid regime. When the ANC took power in 1994, it promised to cancel these “debts.” But as Spartacist South Africa No. 2 (Summer 2002) noted: “In the ‘new’ South Africa, yesterday’s heroes of the oppressed during township anti-apartheid revolts are today’s rent collectors for the white bourgeoisie, signing letters of termination of electricity and other services as administrators in the newly restored South ‘nonracial’ capitalism.”

Nearly a decade after the end of naked apartheid rule, the black masses still suffer mass impoverishment. South Africa is ruled by a neo-apartheid regime—a Tripartite Alliance led by the ANC and including the thoroughly reformist South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions federation—which lords it over the South African masses on behalf of the white bourgeoisie. Many of those who cheered the release of the detainees were burning their ANC membership cards. But even as they face repression, the working class, armed as an ANC-led nationalist popular front, many of the groups involved in the protests against government cuts and privatizations, such as the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APP) and Keep Left!, which is associated with the British Socialist Workers Party, promise the illusion that the ANC can be pressured to support the interests of the working people and oppressed. During the 1994 and ’99 national elections, Keep Left! and its predecessor (the International Socialists of South Africa) supported the ANC.

We fight for the political independence of the working class from all bourgeois parties, including the ANC. What is necessary is the building of a revolutionary workers party that champions the cause of all the oppressed, mobilizing the working class in struggle against its capitalist exploiters. As our comrades explained in Spartacist South Africa: “Those, like APP, who preach reliance on the ‘goodwill’ of the ANC, bourgeois nationalists are pulling wool over the faces of the masses. The working class is the only motive force for effective struggle against superexploitation and oppres-

Many of the political prisoners are working-class militants and activists in Keep Left!, the Anti-Privatisation Forum and Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee who fight against electricity cut-offs and the denial of services to the poor and elderly. Amongst those arrested were expelled ANC councillor Trevor Ngwane and SAMWU (municipal workers union) provincial organiser Rob Rees, who was obviously denied bail because the court refused his union work address! As SAMWU noted in its 8 April statement, “The state is returning to apartheid practices of holding people in prison for little or no reason.” The gaoling of demonstrators under capitalism. The emancipation of the working class is the act of the working class itself. Those who labor must rule! • • •

Spartacist South Africa calls for the immediate release of the remaining 40 activists arrested with several others during a protest at the Johannesburg mayor’s house on April 6. At the demonstration, the mayor’s armed security guard fired live ammunition into the crowd of demonstrators, injuring three and provoking chaos. The continued jailing of these activists under the pretext of preventing, according to the home affairs department, that there was “nothing but detention without trial.” It is the duty of all leftists, union militants and revolutionary youth to defend these protesters against harassment and victimization by the bourgeois state. Free all detainees! Drop all the charges!

A day or two after bail was denied to 40-odd protesters, the ANC Gauteng provincial office issued a shameful statement in the name of the ANC-led Alliance. It read in part: “The ANC, SACP, COSATU and SANCO (ANC-led civic organization) in Gauteng wish to condemn, with the strongest terms, vandalism attack on the house of Johannesburg Executive Mayor, Mr. Mamoso.”

The statement denounces the “lunatic ultra-left fringe” and sentences all “those who believe that the ANC regime will face heavy repression. Hands off the protesters!”

The Gauteng jail­

Many of the personal prisoners are working-class militants and activists in Keep Left!, the Anti-Privatisation Forum and Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee who fight against electricity cut-offs and the denial of services to the poor and elderly. Amongst those arrested were expelled ANC councillor Trevor Ngwane and SAMWU (municipal workers union) provincial organiser Rob Rees, who was obviously denied bail because the court refused his union work address! As SAMWU noted in its 8 April statement, “The state is returning to apartheid practices of holding people in prison for little or no reason.” The gaoling of demonstra-

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We print below in edited form a presentation by Spartacist League speaker Karen Cole at a forum in New York City on April 6.

For several years, both Republicans and Democrats have been making triumphant announcements that the elimination of welfare has been a big success. After all, through the year 2000 the statistics showed the welfare rolls shrinking. State governments had already been scrambling to reroute federal money earmarked for welfare, anticipating that they would no longer have to give anything to destitute women and their children. 2002 was to be the big year: the end of the maximum, 5-year lifetime "drop deadline" for the first wave of welfare recipients. With a job or not, you get dumped permanently.

Bush and the Democrats have exploited to the hilt the criminal attack on the World Trade Center to ram through curtailments of democratic rights and civil liberties. Now Bush is proposing to make work requirements for welfare recipients even more onerous since, as he said, "too many Americans still have not found work and the purpose it brings." The rapacious ruling class, which lives off the profits extracted from the labor of the working class, tells the masses to go and find employment in grinding, miserable jobs. They will not say that the real purpose of working for slave wages is to keep the capitalist parasites fat and rich. And what jobs are we talking about, anyway? In New York City alone, tens of thousands have lost their jobs even as the bourgeoisie proclaims that the recession (which some of them claimed "never happened at all") is now "over."

By the end of 2001, as the country plunged deeper into recession, with massive layoffs, not surprisingly welfare caseloads had risen in two-thirds of the states. There were one million more in 2001 than in 2000. Predictions are for 1.6 million more job losses in 2002, hitting workers in the lowest-paying jobs hardest. At least two million people lost their medical insurance in the last year. Slave-labor "workfare," where you are conscripted to work for your welfare pittance, was promoted as the road to permanent employment. But the jobs were simply puny. The program took people out of educational programs, into "jobs" that led nowhere, trained workers for nothing and put thousands of people back into despair or on the streets.

Not only has Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)—cash assistance to mothers—been given a lifetime cutoff; but food stamps, Medicaid and housing aid have been going through round after round of cuts. And what's the result of all this? Among industrialized countries, America has the distinction of being the only one where childhood is the age of greatest poverty. The term "welfare reform" is a cruel joke. "Reform" is supposed to mean "improvement," not the opposite. In this case, "reform" means the reversal of social benefits that have existed to one degree or another for over 60 years. A Connecticut state welfare official put it this way: "We have to remember that the goal of the reform program was not to get people out of poverty, but...to get off welfare. Capitalism is a ruthless system of production for profit, and it will take a socialist revolution to sweep it away with all its poverty and misery."

In 1988, we wrote in Workers Vanguard (No. 463, 21 October 1988) about Reagan's earliest shot at eliminating welfare, "The Family Support Act." This legislation was drafted by Democratic Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who was already infamous for saying back in 1965 that the fate of the ghetto masses should be left to "benign neglect." We wrote: "Genocide is what this new 'workfare' is all about...This is not welfare reform, it's a plan to turn the ghettos into vast cemeteries—because there are no jobs to get. The aim of this legislation is to see to it that layers of the minority population die, because the merchant capitalist system no longer needs them."

Racist Oppression and the Profit System

What of the "welfare to work" success stories? Increasing numbers of families with a working parent are showing up at homeless shelters and food pantries because they cannot survive on their wages. Seventy-five percent of women off welfare for two years are still living below the government's official poverty "threshold," as they call it. The longer women are off welfare, the less likely they are to have any health insurance.

Those who have found work discover that the work-associated expenses of child care, transportation or even a telephone all contribute to sinking further into poverty. A large percentage of those who have dropped off the rolls are not working at all—they left welfare because of increasing restrictions. For example, women convicted of drug-related felonies can only get public assistance for the rest of their lives. In some states, more people left the rolls due to sanctions and new regulations than due to finding a job.

In 1996, Democratic president Clinton finally succeeded in ripping out the last planks of social support for the poor by adding a lifetime limit to cash assistance. Clinton was already starving to death over a million hungry children, by means of the U.S./U.N. blockade. The elimination of aid to dependent children is a domestic reflection of the U.S. imperialists' murderous role around the world. Clinton's election campaign made appeals to the racist Southern and white suburbanite yuppie vote, the so-called Reagan Democrats. Now in retirement he can look out his window from his Harlem office and see the human wreckage and misery he has caused!

The '90s Wall Street bubble economy—casino capitalism—was used as a rationalization for eliminating welfare. The '90s decade was hailed as the biggest boom period in American history, but for whom? Over the last two decades there has been increasing inequality, a spectacular concentration of wealth in the hands of the already bloated rich to a level higher than any other industrialized country. Almost 50 percent of the total real income gain during the last 15 years went to the top 1 percent of the population. Twelve percent went to the bottom 80 percent.

Because the motor force of capitalism is to maximize profits, there is a continuous drive to increase the rate of exploitation by lowering wages and speeding up work. The unemployed have always been used as a club to drive down wages in general, and "workfare" in particular is a union-busting move to replace union labor with cheap labor. Welfare recipients have been put into city and transit jobs that were formerly union, slavery for their meager benefits with no union protection. The bosses are only able to get away with this due to the collaboration of the union tops who knuckle under to them in exchange for some worthless sops.

The exploitation of the working class in America has always been wrapped in the envelope of raw racism. The paltry social welfare programs that have existed throughout American history illustrate how this ruling class has used racism to deny the most basic necessities to the poor. In America today, capitalists and their apologists have turned welfare into a code word for "black chiselers." The elimination of welfare has been motivated for decades by promoting vicious racist stereotypes of the black urban poor. Black people are a color that are forcibly segregated at the bottom of this society. By "caste" we mean that even the tiniest layer that is able to escape enforced poverty still faces racial oppression in multiple forms every day of their lives.

The American capitalist class has used racism, historically rooted in the system of black chattel slavery, to divide and weaken the working class to turn...continued on page 8

We workers have the power to end welfare. In 1988, we wrote: "We write: 'Get people out of poverty, get people out of welfare, get people out of this system.'"

We don't mean the reversal of capitalism—getting rid of the system that makes welfare necessary. We mean the reversal of the racist oppression that has made welfare necessary. The end of welfare is a demand for the end of the system of capitalist exploitation and domination.

We workers have the power to end welfare as part of the socialist revolution that we proclaim and work for.