

## Down With the Occupation of Iraq!



Imperialist "democracy": American occupation forces bomb Najaf.

AP

# We Need a Revolutionary Workers Party!

The nasty, brutish and long 2004 electoral campaign is pounding into its final weeks as the two capitalist candidates, Bush and Kerry, contend for the bloody mantle of imperialism's Commander in Chief, each claiming to be the best war president, the hardest on "terrorism." Democrat Kerry says it'll take another four years, but he'll "finish the job in Iraq and refocus our energies on the real war on terror" (*New York Times*, 25 September), while Bush arrogantly claims everything is great in Iraq, lecturing the United Nations and parading his toady Ayad Allawi. But the U.S. occupiers and their loathed, dictatorial puppets face growing chaos, as the American empire brings war, disease, hunger and death to the people of Iraq.

We call for the unconditional, immediate withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Iraq! Tens of thousands of Iraqis have been slaughtered, and over 1,000 American soldiers have died, sent to kill and be killed to maintain the power and profits of U.S. imperialism. An article in the *New York Times* (26 September) titled "What If America Just Pulled Out?" captured why no capitalist politician is calling for an immediate withdrawal: "Withdrawal in the absence of stability would amount to a devastating admission of failure and a blow to America's world leadership. The credibility of the United States, already compromised, would be devastated. More than 1,000 young [American!] lives would appear to have been blotted out for naught." Well, yes.

Against the bloody occupation of Iraq, the American working class should take a side: *with* those fighting *against* the neo-colonial occupiers and *against* the U.S.



Spartacist contingent at San Francisco antiwar demonstration, March 2004.

WV Photo

## Democrats: A History of Knifing Labor and Blacks

workers' own rulers, who enforce exploitation and racist oppression abroad and at home. Every blow struck against the U.S. occupiers, their allies and Iraqi puppets is a blow struck against the enemy of workers and the oppressed all over the world.

Insofar as the insurgent forces on the ground in Iraq aim their blows against the imperialist occupiers (including the over 20,000 private mercenaries operating in the country), we call for their military defense against U.S. imperialism. However, we vehemently oppose the fundamentalism, terrorism, communalist violence, car bombings that indiscriminately

blow up innocent people on the street, the kidnapping of civilians, as the opposite of everything we Marxists stand for. We are for national and democratic rights for everyone, for the liberation of women, for abolishing the capitalist profit system and taking the oil fields and factories out of the hands of the capitalists and putting them under the ownership and control of the working class, so that the wealth of society will serve human needs. It will take working-class struggle, throughout the region and internationally, to achieve these goals.

Our standpoint is that of the interna-

tional working class, the only class that can liberate all humanity from capitalist exploitation through socialist revolution, most centrally in the United States, the most powerful imperialist power on earth. We judge every question from that perspective, including the elections in the U.S. There's no choice for working people in this year's presidential elections. The two capitalist politicians obviously represent their own capitalist class interests, counterposed to ours. Ralph Nader's eccentric small businessman campaign represents no break with capitalism and is opposed to socialism. Fake-Marxist groups like the International Socialist Organization (ISO), which calls for a vote to Nader, claim that such is a vote for "peace." Hardly. Nader is for an "expeditious" withdrawal from Iraq and for the United Nations, filthy handmaiden of U.S. interests, taking over. He owes much of his ballot status to Patrick Buchanan and the Reform Party, who are obviously pushing him as a spoiler against the Democrats.

The main political obstacle to our perspective in the U.S. is the continued hold of the capitalist Democratic Party over the labor movement through the AFL-CIO union bureaucracy. We say workers and black people must break from the Democratic Party—the other party of war and racism—and build a revolutionary workers

party to fight for a workers government. The following presentation, edited for publication, was given in Chicago on September 11 by Spartacist Central Committee member Ed Clarkson. Comrade Clarkson motivates our Marxist perspective in the context of the last half-century of American imperial politics, faithfully carried out by both the Republicans and Democrats.

\* \* \*

I have a large "9/11" written here because I realized I was giving this forum

*continued on page 8*



# SWP Office, Black Café Firebombed

## Hazleton, PA

A potentially deadly firebombing destroyed much of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) campaign headquarters in Hazleton, Pennsylvania, in the early hours of September 11. A neighbor's alert reaction and call to the fire department undoubtedly saved the lives of families upstairs. In the black community in nearby Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, the White House Café was torched at the same time. These attacks on leftists and black people highlight the deadly danger posed by increasingly bold far-right fanatics.

Ominously, some 100 miles from Hazleton, at the Valley Forge National Historical Park, 100 neo-Nazi terrorists from the "National Socialist Movement"

massed on September 25. Anti-fascist protesters outnumbered the Nazis by two-to-one, but an even larger mobilization of police protected the fascists. The fascists began their race-hate provocation, organized on the Jewish observance of Yom Kippur, by reviling Jews. The fascist killers should be stopped in their tracks through massive mobilizations of labor, blacks and all their intended victims.

We reprint below a 22 September letter from the Partisan Defense Committee in solidarity with the Socialist Workers Party against the terrible firebombing of their office. The PDC has contributed \$100 toward rebuilding the SWP office. Readers who wish to contribute to the SWP's fund to rebuild their office should earmark checks "Rebuilding Fund," made payable to Socialist Workers 2004 Campaign, and mail to: Socialist Work-

**Firebombed  
SWP campaign hall  
in Hazleton,  
Pennsylvania.**



Militant

ers Campaign, 69 N. Wyoming Street, Hazleton, PA 18201.

\* \* \*

The Partisan Defense Committee, the legal and social defense organization in accordance with the views of the Spartacist League, condemns and protests the firebombing of your campaign headquarters in Hazleton, Pennsylvania, on September 11. Enclosed is a contribution towards rebuilding.

The *Militant* noted that a bar in the nearby black community of Wilkes-Barre was also the target of arson on September

11. In the wake of the deadly terror of 9/11 in 2001, the U.S. government unleashed hysterical repression against immigrants, while seeking to equate all political dissent with treason. This poisonous atmosphere has obviously emboldened far-right racist fanatics to step up attacks on black people and working-class groups. It is vital that all socialist and working-class tendencies, and all defenders of democratic rights, be united in defense of one another and against such potentially deadly attacks. As the Wobblies used to say, an injury to one is an injury to all. ■



TROTSKY

### Social Equality and Black Freedom

In two 1953 lectures, veteran Trotskyist Richard S. Fraser described the limits of equal rights for black people under capitalism and illuminated the class-struggle road to emancipation.

The effectiveness of the struggle for the right to vote in the South will remain limited until it is coupled with the struggle for the right of the southern workers to establish their own independent party of labor with no compromise on the basic question of civil rights.

However, equality is not enough, either in



LENIN

the North or South. The Negro has the right to ask: "What is it to be equal to the undernourished white sharecropper in South Carolina? What is it to be equal in the disease-infested slums of Detroit?"...

In the North and West, equality of Negroes as wage workers can never become a reality under capitalism. For capitalism is a system of scarcity, and the Negroes, the last to be hired by modern industry, will continue to be the first victims of the periodic spasms of unemployment which characterize capitalist production.

What would equality bring to the Negro middle class at a time monopoly capital is squeezing out the white middle class? A hundred years ago it would have had meaning. But today equality, even if possible under capitalism, which it is not, would be only the equality of destitution which is the future of the middle class of the United States.

Each of these examples demonstrates that discrimination against Negroes in the United States is so ingrained in the social structure that only complete destruction of capitalism can lay the foundation for the solution of the Negro question.

A hundred years ago Karl Marx, in urging the American workers to support the struggle of the slaves for emancipation and to support the northern cause in the Civil War, proclaimed the following truth: "Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded." This is just as true today in the modern context of racial discrimination as it was during the struggle against slavery.

—Richard S. Fraser, "The Negro Struggle and the Proletarian Revolution" (1953), printed in "In Memoriam—Richard S. Fraser," *Prometheus Research Series No. 3*, August 1990

## WORKERS VANGUARD

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EDITOR: Alan Wilde

EDITOR, YOUNG SPARTACUS PAGES: Michael Davissou

CIRCULATION MANAGER: Jeff Thomas

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No. 833

1 October 2004

## Free Aaron Patterson!

CHICAGO—On August 5, former "Death Row Ten" prisoner and community activist Aaron Patterson found himself back in the snare of the racist Chicago cops. Patterson is facing federal felony drug and firearms charges—carrying a mandatory 15-year sentence—stemming from a vindictive sting operation aimed at getting him back behind bars. Those familiar with the Illinois moratorium on the death penalty will likely recognize Patterson's name. A successful fight against his frame-up played a pivotal role in then Republican governor George Ryan's subsequent decision to overturn the death sentences of the entire death row population in Illinois in January 2003.

Aaron Patterson was one of the many victims of Chicago's notorious Area Two police torture chamber, headed by Commander Jon Burge who learned his "interrogation techniques" as an MP during the Vietnam War. In the 1980s, Area Two cops routinely secured confessions by hooking live electric wires to the testicles of black "suspects," or suffocating them with plastic typewriter covers. Patterson spent over 13 years on death row after a phony confession was squeezed out of him at Area Two. On 11 January 2003, based on overwhelming evidence that he was framed up, Patterson was pardoned and released from Illinois death row. Since then, he has been very politically active. In March of this year, Patterson lost a bid in the Democratic Party primary for the Illinois House.

As the Partisan Defense Committee stated in an August 10 protest letter to U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald:

"Ever since he walked out of prison last year, Patterson has been in the cross hairs of the racist Chicago cops, particularly for his active and vocal role in organizing against racist cop brutality and the colonial occupation of Iraq. This summer, Patterson was prominent in organizing protests against the Chicago cop killing of anti-police-brutality activist May Molina, a 55-year-old grandmother who died in police custody after being denied medical care. Patterson's arrest last week came just one day after a federal judge had ordered Burge to come to Chicago to give testimony in Patterson's \$30 million civil suit against the City."

Also swept up in the sting are Isaiah Kitchen and Mark Mannie who are facing felony drug and/or firearms charges.

Patterson was set up by a police informant through a five-month undercover sting. Patterson says that sometime during that period, he figured out that the man was an informant. He says he allowed the informant to carry out his dirty work with the aim of exposing the cops' involvement with drug dealing, calling the whole thing a "stunt gone bad." In an interview with the *Chicago Tribune* (19 August) he said that in a raid on his mother's home, the cops confiscated his recordings and documentation laying out their plan to ensnare him. The details are not clear. But one thing is certain: Daley's cops were out to frame up Patterson, again!

We attended Patterson's court hearing on August 11 where, outrageously, he was deemed a "threat to society" and denied bail. The cops did their best to create an atmosphere of fear and intimidation among an overflow crowd of supporters. Those attending his court hearing had to pass through two metal detectors, all bags were searched, and the police demanded photo IDs of all those entering, thus compiling a complete attendance list. The gauntlet of cops, complete with an attack dog, bullied attendees outside the courtroom, including Patterson's lawyer! Inside the courtroom, four cops lined up behind Patterson. The message was loud and clear—Patterson is a marked man, and his defenders are on notice, too!

It is in the interests of the working class, black people and all the oppressed to protest these charges, which are a transparent effort to sweep this black activist off the streets. The racist "war on drugs" is in reality a war on black people, Hispanics and labor. In the name of its "war on drugs" and "war on terror," the government has intensified its draconian gun control laws for the purpose of disarming the population and maintaining a monopoly of violence in the hands of racist torturers like Burge. We are opposed to gun control and all laws criminalizing drugs.

Drop the charges against Aaron Patterson, Isaiah Kitchen and Mark Mannie! Free them now! ■

WORKERS VANGUARD

# Venezuela: Workers Deserve Better Than Chávez

8 September 2004

Your position on Venezuela ("U.S. Imperialism's Referendum Ploy Fails," WV 831 [3 September]) is an exercise in dogmatism. Its logical content is merely that the Chavez regime is not a workers government, therefore it's capitalist. You imply that Chavez represents the "national bourgeoisie" against US imperialism, whereas he seems to have zero support from local capitalists. You call him a "bonapartist strongman," which buys into the imperialist line that he is "undemocratic" despite operating via frequent elections and referenda. You make much of Venezuela supplying oil to the USA, as if entering a trade war would be anything other than economic suicide.

The situation in Venezuela has come about because of the triumphalist dismantling of authoritarian structures in Latin America after the Cold War. "Liberal democracy," however, is not a suitable system when so much of the population is dirt poor. The result has been the election of Chavez. The capitalist ruling class controls the political system by concrete means and several have been used against Chavez: media campaigns, economic sabotage, a coup, and political manoeuvring. These have failed due to Chavez's popular support, military ties, and control of the oil industry. Therefore the capitalists have a practical problem in asserting their control over their political system. But to a dogmatist, concrete and practical issues have no importance. While it is true that Chavez is not a revolutionary, he is a rogue element from the capitalist point of view.

Moreover, even by your own admission, the referendum was an imperialist ploy, and surely you should side against imperialism and not abstain.

Niall C.

**WV replies:**

As Niall C. argues, it is indeed the "logical content" of our argument "that the Chávez regime is not a workers government, therefore it's capitalist." Our article quotes Chávez in his own words forswearing any intention to abolish private property—the foundation of capitalist class rule. Chávez does have a popular base of support among the poor and he is opposed by key players in the Venezuelan capitalist class. But contrary to Niall C.'s assertion that "the capitalists have a political problem in asserting their control over their political system," their class rule is protected and guaranteed by Chávez who opposes expropria-

tions and dutifully services the crippling imperialist foreign debt!

As we noted in our article, Chávez has very lately, in the run-up to the August recall referendum, thrown some money toward social services for the poor. He was able to do so because the government is currently flush with revenues from the high price of oil sold on the world market. This is conjunctural and cannot last.

The desperately impoverished Venezuelan masses who eke out a living on the margins of the economy are cynically manipulated by Chávez as a battering ram against the notoriously pro-imperialist CTV unions, particularly the powerful oil workers. Chávez wants the unions under his thumb and the rival UNT labor federation is premised on support to his regime. The role of populists like Chávez is to protect the capitalist order by deflecting the just rage of the oppressed masses. Any serious working-class challenge to capitalist rule will be met with the full repressive force of the bourgeois state ruled by Chávez.

Indeed, Chávez has already put the repressive legislation in place to do so under the rubric of the "war on terror." Anarchist militants in Venezuela who oppose Chávez and also oppose his right-wing opposition highlight that section 11 of Venezuela's "anti-terrorist" law, enacted under Chávez, threatens anyone with the intention of causing "anarchy" with one to three years in prison. The legislation is conveniently worded so broadly as to provide legal cover for a massive crackdown on the left.

Latin American history is full of tragic examples of bloody defeats of the workers and oppressed whose interests were subordinated to populist strongmen. Bonapartism even in leftist garb with a demo-



Thousands of supporters celebrate Chávez's victory in August 15 referendum.

Reuters

cratic facade is an attempt to raise the regime above the influence and control of the competing class forces, to turn it into an arbitrator, i.e., a dictator. Trotsky wrote that bonapartist rule "can govern either by making itself the instrument of foreign capitalism and holding the proletariat in the chains of a police dictatorship, or by maneuvering with the proletariat and even going so far as to make concessions to it..." ("Nationalized Industry and Workers Management," 1938).

Latin American history shows that the same individual can play both roles, for the same purpose: to safeguard the interests of a weak bourgeoisie. Thus Juan Perón's original success in consolidating support among Argentine workers in the 1940s was the creation of an affiliated union bureaucracy (such as Chávez is now trying to do in opposition to the old union apparatus tied to the old regime) and modest social welfare measures and wage increases. Perón's "largesse" toward labor and the poor was derived from Argentina's accumulation of foreign exchange during World War II. By the 1950s, the funds had

run out and Perón was smashing strikes even by the corporatist CGT unions (he had already systematically crushed independent labor organizations).

The most devastating defeat for the Latin American proletariat was the bloodbath of the Chilean proletariat and the left in the Pinochet coup of September 1973. The road to this was paved not by a bonapartist strongman, but rather by a popular-front coalition government of working-class and bourgeois parties, headed by Salvador Allende. This popular front was a different instrument to achieve the same goal: to deflect the workers from a politically independent class-struggle road and subordinate them to a parliamentary coalition. When the workers were no longer pacified with piecemeal reforms, the popular front was replaced by a ruthless military dictatorship.

The Spartacist League had no crystal ball when confronted with the elections for Allende's Unidad Popular government in the fall of 1970, but we had our program of fighting for working-class rule through championing the political class independence of the workers, and a lot of history to guide us. At the time, when thousands around the world were hailing Allende as "compañero presidente" and denouncing the Spartacist League as "dogmatic," we warned: "Any 'critical support' to the Allende coalition is class treason, paving the way for a bloody defeat for the Chilean working people when domestic reaction, abetted by international imperialism, is ready" (*Spartacist* No. 19, November-December 1970).

Niall C. says WV should "side against U.S. imperialism and not abstain" in the August referendum. We explicitly stated in our article that "Had there been a rightist military coup against the Chávez regime, as there was in 2002, we would have sought to mobilize the working class in military defense of Chávez while politically opposing his regime." There was no such military threat. As we noted, "As there was no means to express the crucial need for the political independence of the working class from the bourgeois state in this referendum, abstention was the only choice for revolutionaries." ■

## Ta-Nehisi Coates

21 September 2004

Dear Editor,

While I have a different take on certain things presented, I thought the Cosby article was on the whole excellent at intersecting ongoing discussion in the black community (see "The Crisis of Black Leadership," WV No. 832, 17 September). Its historical depth and breadth are far superior to most commentaries of all stripes extant.

However, on that note, I would like to

point out that the article refers to *Village Voice* writer Ta-Nehisi Coates as "She." Ta-Nehisi Coates is a very smart writer well worth reading and quoting. He is however, a "he." Perhaps a small correction is in order.

Comradely,  
Gershon Brown

**WV replies:**

Comrade Gershon is correct. We apologize for the mistake.

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# Mexican Trotskyists Say: No Reliance on PRD!

## Class Battles in Mexico

We publish below an article put out as an August 2004 *Espartaco* supplement by the Grupo Espartaquista de México, section of the International Communist League, addressing the Mexican government's attacks on the Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores del Seguro Social (SNTSS—National Union of Social Security Workers), which organizes the workers of the Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS). The IMSS provides medical care and other benefits for all workers except those employed by the state.

### ESPARTACO

For over a year, IMSS directors and the government have been trying to do away with important union gains such as retirement plans. The union has responded with mass mobilizations, and the fear of the workers' social power has thus far prevented the authorities from ramming through their anti-worker "reforms." But as the article below explains, Congress and the Senate recently passed legislation overriding key clauses of the collective contract of IMSS workers relating to the retirement fund and union hiring. This was a first step toward eliminating hard-won union gains and eventually pushing forward a plan for privatization.

In response, the SNTSS, the UNT union federation—to which the SNTSS is affiliated and which includes the powerful union of telephone workers—and the SME electricians union called for a mass demonstration on August 31 and a national work stoppage on September 1, drawing hundreds of thousands of workers to protest on the streets and to surround Congress on the day of right-wing president Vicente Fox's government report (state of the union address). The fear of workers' anger was such that thousands of federal police and army troops were mobilized to protect the Congress, and Fox arrived by helicopter.

The workers' will to fight in defense of their gains has been obvious from the beginning, and not only in the case of the state health care workers. Telephone workers, electricians, electric bus drivers, flight attendants, university workers, schoolteachers and many others who understand that these attacks are directed at the working class as a whole have joined the protests. But the union leaders have done their utmost to minimize the power of the protests. Thus, the UNT and SME's work stoppage was merely symbolic, maintaining the regular function of communications and electricity. There are also widespread illusions, peddled by the union leaders themselves, in the bourgeois-nationalist PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution), which has been posing as a "friend" of the workers, trying to keep the workers' struggles within limits acceptable to the bourgeoisie and derailing their discontent in the direction of the ballot box.



Reuters photos

**Mexican Social Security workers and other unionists demonstrate in Mexico City against government's anti-worker "reforms," August 31.**

**Right: Workers burn effigy of Mexican president Fox.**



The fight is not over. The SNTSS is calling for a strike on October 16 over a wage increase while fighting the reforms Congress passed through other legal channels. Our comrades of the GEM and its youth group, Juventud Espartaquista, have actively intervened in the protests, also organizing speakouts calling on students of Mexico City's National University (UNAM) to join the workers in struggle. Our comrades have emphasized that the working class must rely on its own power to successfully reverse these measures—confidence in the PRD or any other bourgeois party can only lead to defeat. The political independence of the working class is a fundamental premise for the forging of a revolutionary workers party capable of overthrowing the entire capitalist system and replacing it with workers rule.

\* \* \*

Once again, the right-wing regime of Fox and his allies, following the dictates of the World Bank, are trying to topple the historic gains of the Mexican working class. This time they want to start their attack with Social Security [public health care system]. The plans drawn up by IMSS management include a drastic reduction in the salary percentage that future IMSS retirees will receive in pen-

sions, driving these well below what a worker needs for a decent living, along with an increase in the age and number of years of service required to receive this pension. In addition, the reform of the IMSS law passed by the Senate on August 5 and enacted by Fox on August 11 forces each worker to pay for his pension out of his own pocket in advance during the years they work, and endows the "Technical Council" (composed of businessmen, representatives of the Congreso del Trabajo [corporatist labor congress] and the federal government) with full powers to create, substitute or contract out jobs. The law also gives the IMSS and Technical Council control over the retirees' pension fund, tossing the union aside and trampling the union gains codified in the current contract. The government is pushing all this in the name of even further reducing the meager budget that the bosses and government allocate to public health care for the impoverished population, a service that Fox and his cohorts consider superfluous. Far from benefiting IMSS patients, as the government argues, these reforms attack the very existence of Social Security.

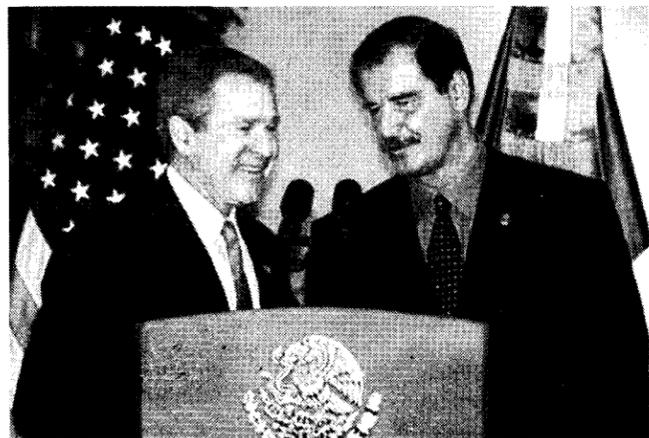
Throughout the world, capitalist governments have pushed similar cuts at the expense of state workers and the poor in general. In Brazil, the supposedly "leftist" government of Lula carried out a similar cut last December; in Great Britain, the government wants to increase the retirement age to 70 years. Especially since the destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92, a colossal defeat for the workers of the world, the imperialists and their lackey governments perceive the threat of working-class revolution as remote and are emboldened to carry out increasingly frenzied attacks against their own working class. In the face of these attacks, workers internationally have the same interests.

But these measures are not yet a *fait accompli*. The IMSS workers, who have demonstrated great willingness to fight

against these measures, are organized in the SNTSS, which with close to 360,000 members is one of the largest unions in the country, and is also part of the UNT [National Workers Union]. *The degree to which this reform can actually be carried out, or not, will ultimately be determined by the strength of the union movement's resistance.* There is a lot at stake, and at this point demonstrations and street blockages are insufficient, as are legal challenges, which in the final instance depend on the decision of the bourgeois regime's judges and jurists; what is needed is for workers to draw on the immense social power they possess as the producers of all the services and wealth, a power they can use fully by withdrawing their labor, that is, through striking. We communists of the Grupo Espartaquista de México say: *For decisive strike action on a national scale to defeat the reform of the IMSS law!*

If this attack on workers' living standards is not fought, it will be followed by attempts to privatize the IMSS, the ISSSTE [Institute of Security and Social Services of State Workers] and the electrical and oil industries, as well as to weaken all unions. Even the bosses' own mouthpieces have recognized that "the outcome of this conflict could be the basis for future negotiations with other unions, given that the benefits received by IMSS workers through the RJP [pension system] are also present, to a greater or lesser degree, in the pension schemes of other companies, such as the ISSSTE, Pemex [nationalized oil industry] and the CFE [electrical industry]" (*Línea Económica*, BBVA-Bancomer, 9 August). The right of wage earners to subsist after their retirement is what the bosses of COPARMEX [Mexican bosses' confederation] (who, as Rosendo Flores [electricians union leader] aptly put it recently, are like "pigs" who only "eat and squeal") and their press call "privileges." Therefore it is in the immediate interest of *all* workers' unions to energetically join the SNTSS's strike actions in order to beat back these measures. Many workers from the UNT and the SME [Mexican Electricians Union] understand this and have already expressed their willingness to join the struggle. United on the basis of a class-struggle program, the workers movement has the power to shut down the country and bring the government to its knees!

Notwithstanding the mismanagement of Social Security and the exorbitant wages of its managers, which reach more



**Vicente Fox with U.S. president Bush during Special Summit of the Americas in Monterrey, January 12.**

### ESPARTACO

China: ¡Derrotar la campaña imperialista de contrarrevolución!

¡Defender, extender las conquistas de 1949!

¡Por la revolución política obrera para echar a la burocracia estalinista!

Publication of the Grupo Espartaquista de México

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than 200,000 pesos a month [approximately \$20,000] (look who's talking about "privileges"!), the health system requires much greater economic resources than are currently expended in order to guarantee the right to free, quality health care for all. This would require an enormous expansion in facilities, medicine, ambulances and in workers' salaries. The same could be said of the education system and housing. This society produces much more than the meager resources actually allocated for social expenditure, but the function of the Mexican capitalist state is to maintain a status quo where the bulk of the wealth produced by workers is destined, through exploitation, to fatten the profits in the pockets of a few millionaires while at the same time to increasingly subordinate the Mexican economy to the imperialists. While working-class families wait hours to be treated in Social Security hospitals, private hospitals have facilities and medicine that could save the lives of thousands of patients but which are inaccessible through high prices. It is necessary for workers to throw the representatives of the bourgeoisie out of power, destroy their state through socialist revolution and construct a new state, a *workers state* where the wealth produced by society goes directly toward human needs through a planned, collectivized economy. This includes the struggle to extend the revolution to the imperialist

current leadership of the union movement. Instead, the union leaders seek to advance their own interests through *class collaboration* with the politicians and representatives of the bourgeoisie. A particularly gross example is the leadership of the CTM [Confederation of Mexican Workers] and the Congreso del Trabajo, historically affiliated to the PRI [Institutional Revolutionary Party], who have not only endorsed the proposal to dismantle the pension plan, but have even called for breaking the national work stoppage proposed by the SNTSS, the UNT and SME (see Web site of the STRM [telephone workers union], 11 August).

Another case is that of Roberto Vega Galina himself, the general secretary of the SNTSS, who continues to belong to the PRI—whose support to the anti-working-class reform was decisive for its approval. This political collaboration with the exploiters is a *betrayal* of the working class. In fact, workers affiliated to this union vividly remember that the original position of their leader was *in favor* of the bosses' proposal, and that a massive struggle at their union congress last March was required to convince him that if he wanted to keep his post he must take up, even if only in his speech, the defense of union gains. In a truly instructive episode, the general secretary affirmed: "I can't keep these people under control anymore. The (government) truly has no idea



AFP  
Mexico City, August 29: 200,000 rally in support of PRD mayor López Obrador (inset), accused of corruption by Fox government.



Reuters

countries so that their immense resources are put at the disposal of the impoverished of the whole world. The first effects such an economic system would have on health care can be seen clearly in the collectivized economy of Cuba, where, despite an inhumane blockade by imperialism, the economic isolation of the revolution and the nationalist politics and bureaucratic administration of the Castro regime, access to a quality health care system is guaranteed for even the poorest people, and their achievements in the medical field are internationally renowned. Extending this new form of property internationally to more advanced economies would be the first step toward a classless society based on abundance, a socialist society. *For a system of free, quality health care for all! Expropriate the private hospitals! Those who labor must rule!*

### For the Political Independence of the Proletariat!

A national work stoppage against the IMSS reforms would be an action without precedent in the last few decades and would display workers' immense power. However, this class-struggle program requires the political independence of the proletariat from the capitalist class, something totally alien to the perspective of the

of the dimension of the social bomb that is about to explode" (*La Jornada*, 5 August). As faithful intermediaries for the bourgeoisie in the workers movement, Vega Galina and his cohorts will do everything possible to prevent the general work stoppage that they themselves called for September 1, or in the event that they feel forced to carry it out, they will seek to minimize its impact as much as they can. The SME bureaucrats, who, in front of their membership keep priding themselves on their solidarity with the SNTSS workers, have made clear that on September 1 they will carry out a stay-away action, but will ensure electricity is provided during the 24 hours the work stoppage lasts! *A work stoppage means nobody works! For solid strike pickets!*

In the course of the struggle against the bourgeoisie the pro-capitalist union leaders must be replaced by class-struggle leaderships, which necessarily will be consciously revolutionary. Without this change, no union struggle will be capable of challenging the oppressive capitalist framework in which it takes place. Clearly, resorting to the "help" of the bourgeois state's courts to oust these misleaders is class *betrayal*. The intervention of the bosses' state can only further subordinate the leadership of the unions to

## Gloria Trevi Freed!

Flashing a victory sign, Gloria Trevi celebrates her release from prison on September 21. After nearly five years of imprisonment in Mexico and Brazil, Trevi was found not guilty of the bogus rape, kidnapping and "corruption of minors" charges she faced as part of a government anti-sex vendetta targeting the pop singer and her entourage. Congratulations, Gloria! (For more on Trevi, see "Free Gloria Trevi! Down With the Anti-Sex Witchhunt!" WV No. 780, 3 May 2002.)



Reuters

the decisions of its class enemy: Labor must clean its own house!

As Marx and Engels explained, all class struggle is a *political* struggle. For this reason, making proletarian political independence a reality requires that workers have their own political party, a socialist, revolutionary party. At union demonstrations such as on August 4, hundreds of workers affiliated to the SNTSS, justifiably angry that their leader belongs to one of the parties that supported the reform, chanted at him, "Quit the PRI!" We Spartacists solidarize with this anger, but recognize that many of these same workers see no problem with their leaders collaborating with another bourgeois party: the PRD. At different demonstrations we have attended, such as on July 23, workers have shouted slogans against voting for the PRI and PAN [Fox's National Action Party], but notably exclude the PRD. In fact, other union leaders maintain well-known ties of political solidarity with this party, such as Agustín Rodríguez of the STUNAM [UNAM workers union], who is even a PRD congressman. With the goal of keeping up the appearance of being a "friend of the workers," maintaining the political leadership of the movement and winning some working-class votes along the way, the PRD has distanced itself from the PRI and PAN in opposing the anti-working-class reform in the Senate. *Don't be fooled!* Just like the PRI and PAN, the PRD is a party committed to the maintenance of capitalism, and its defense of the rights of workers is nothing more than a hypocritical and transient posture. If the PRD had the luxury of being able to vote against the reform it was because it neither heads the federal government nor has a majority in Congress, so its vote didn't represent much. When this party is in a position to make real decisions, its posture is as furiously anti-union as that of the PAN or PRI, as evidenced by the case of the metro workers union or the SUTGDF [Mexico City public workers union], unions which Mexico City mayor López Obrador [of the PRD] has sought to destroy under the pretext of "putting an end to mafias." In the same vein, the PRD in government doesn't hesitate when it comes to repressing social struggle, as was so vividly demonstrated by the Mexico City government unleashing its riot police against the UNAM university student strikers in 1999 and 2000. *No reli-*

*ance on the bourgeois PRD!*

The ideological cement that currently keeps workers bound to their exploiters is nationalism, that is, the lie that all Mexicans, independent of their social class, share a common interest against all foreigners. This is false! In the epoch of imperialist decay in which we live, there is no wing of the national bourgeoisie (whether it be the PRI, PAN or PRD) that can in fact take the side of the popular masses and stand against imperialism, not even on democratic questions as elementary as national emancipation or land reform. It is up to the workers alone to lead the struggles for these demands, independently of the national bosses and *against them*, as part of the struggle for workers power and socialism. The imperialist system must be destroyed on a world scale, a task that demands internationalist solidarity of workers from other parts of the world, especially the imperialist countries. This understanding is the essence of the program of "permanent revolution" formulated by the Bolshevik revolutionary Leon Trotsky.

For this reason it is absolutely elementary for every socialist to explain to workers that their interests are completely antagonistic to those of the bourgeoisie and that political organizations have a *class* character, and on this basis call on them to break with the capitalist parties. This is not the case with the tendency called *Militante* (which publishes a newspaper by the same name as well as a pamphlet called *Fuerza Obrera*), which has been very active in the SNTSS protests and which falsely tries to pass itself off as Marxist. It turns out that this tendency belongs to the bourgeois PRD, having belonged to it since *Militante's* inception in the early 1990s. "Despite the state in which the PRD finds itself," says *Militante* hopefully in its June 2004 issue (which it stupidly dates "2003" in all the interior pages), the party "was an obstacle to Fox's approval of structural reforms and as the contradictions develop the workers will return again to the party and will use it against the attacks on workers..." If this newspaper were really Marxist they would know that the problem with the PRD is not "the state in which it finds itself," but its class character, and that when its "contradictions develop," this class character will place the party on the other side of

*continued on page 10*

GEM comrades march in Mexico City demonstration against U.S. invasion of Iraq, February 2003.



# Vote Yes on Measure Q! Decriminalize Prostitution!

BERKELEY—An initiative on the November 2 ballot calling for the repeal of all laws against prostitution has sparked heated controversy in the Bay Area and the national media. Measure Q states as its purpose: “The unjust laws criminalizing consensual sexual activity among adults in private whether for money or any other consideration must be repealed.” This straightforward statement of opposition to state snooping into private life has sparked hysteria from police, city government and homeowners worried about their property values, and, above all, a flock of right-wing feminists who try to disguise their anti-sex witchhunt as concern for the poor and exploited.

Measure Q—also known as “Angel’s Initiative,” in memory of Angel Lopez, a San Francisco prostitute murdered in 1993—was placed on the ballot through the energetic efforts of the Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP) and its director, Robyn Few, who recently served six months under house arrest for a prostitution-related conviction (*Daily Californian* online, 29 January). The Spartacist League calls for a “yes” vote on Measure Q as a referendum on the decriminalization of prostitution. At the same time, we note that the measure is utterly toothless, since it is California state law that makes prostitution a crime. In fact, for legalistic reasons, Measure Q’s operational conclusion is that “The City Council shall seek to ensure that the Berkeley police department gives lowest priority to the enforcement of prostitution laws.”

On September 20, Few joined five other panelists on the Berkeley campus in a spirited debate, “Human Rights and the Politics of Prostitution.” Billed as “a forum on the pros and cons of laws on prostitution and how they affect the human rights of prostitutes,” the meeting drew some 40 people and two news channels. Also speaking in favor of Measure Q were Laura Agustín, a migrant workers’ rights advocate from the Pavis Centre for Cultural Studies, Open University, UK, and Veronica Monet, author and sex worker activist. Opposing them were Norma Hotaling, founder and executive director of SAGE (Standing Against Global Exploitation), which works with the police to “rehabilitate” prostitutes; Melissa Farley, psychologist and director of Prostitution Research and Education; and Davida Coady, director of Options Recovery

Services, a drug and alcohol treatment program.

Monet—self-described “former prostitute, current sex educator, lifetime whore”—stressed the importance of the separation of church and state, pointing out that the objections to decriminalized prostitution stem largely from religious groups and the cops. Agustín addressed



Daniel Yaffe

Above: Robyn Few, ex-prostitute and director of Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP). Right: Demonstration organized by SWOP against Ashcroft’s moral crusade.



SWOP

the conditions of migrant workers, highlighting the problems of women who leave their families and home, for whom prostitution is often the best way to pay off debts to those who got them across the border. She discussed how most women in sex work fall into a gray economic sector—vulnerable to employers and pimps—where the more sex work is criminalized, the more people are arrested. Robyn Few stated that supporters of Measure Q are up against a lot, including angry neighbors. She noted that arresting prostitutes is “big business” and said that San Francisco spends \$8 million a year on it. She pointed out that Measure Q opponents are pushing a “fear factor” of criminals, used condoms and needles on every street corner.

To justify their support for criminalizing prostitution, opponents of Measure Q, assuming the posture of self-righteous saviors of the oppressed, retailed stories of abuse and poverty, peppering their remarks with the politically loaded term “sex predator.” Arrest and imprisonment were even presented as a step forward for prostitutes! Before the meeting began their supporters demonstrated outside the building, some dressed as Death and sporting cardboard scythes, carrying signs reading “Sex Slavery Is Not a Human Right—It’s Child Abuse” and “Pimps Will Profit.” Especially grotesque was Hotaling’s verbal attack on a young man from the Cal Libertarians (which supports Measure Q), whom she denounced for being “a man” (!) and attempted to humiliate with a vulgar sexual suggestion.

It is worth noting that in 2002 SAGE received \$1.25 million from the U.S. Department of Justice, and that Hotaling is co-founder of the First Offender Prostitution Program (FOPP), which works with the San Francisco Police Department. Both FOPP and SAGE have been awarded funds by Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government and the Ford Foundation—these imperialist think tanks are their partners in “fighting” for the poor! Options Recovery Services receives funding from the Alameda County D.A.’s Office and Probation Department, the Berkeley City Council and Police Department, along

with a local Catholic parish.

During the discussion period, a transgender prostitute vehemently objected to statements by Measure Q opponents that prostitutes are “psychologically disturbed people” and their claims of acting “for your own good—we’ll force you to be afraid.” A young white woman said that becoming a prostitute was the best

tion is also a source of police corruption and individual victimization.

Prostitution is a by-product of monogamous marriage and the family, the central source of the oppression of women in class society. As we said in “Anti-Immigrant, Anti-Woman, Anti-Sex: U.S./UN Crusade Against ‘Sex Trafficking’” (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 58, Spring 2004):

*“It is the institution of the family that brings money into sexual relations. Whether it’s renting a prostitute by the hour or a wife by the lifetime, the family and the oppression of women are founded on private property, and the religious codes of morality and capitalist law are all that distinguish the wife from the prostitute in this fundamental sense....*

*“Under socialism, the family will be replaced by communal childcare and housework, enabling women to participate fully in economic, social and political life.... Birth control and abortions will be free and on demand, with free, quality health care for all. Sex will be free from the snooping of preachy busybodies and corrupt cops. The liberation of the prostitute can’t be separated from the liberation of women as a whole, and prostitution will die only as the institution of the family is replaced. For women’s liberation through socialist revolution!”*

We need to build a class-struggle workers party, independent of both the Democrats and the Republicans, that will fight for all the oppressed and exploited. Such a party will oppose state interference in all private matters. Government out of the bedroom! Vote “yes” on Measure Q! Abolish all laws against prostitution!

## “Mobilize Labor to Fight for Women’s Rights”

We print below remarks at the Berkeley debate by a Spartacist League supporter:

The government has no business interfering in people’s private lives. We oppose all laws against prostitution, against homosexuality, against any act of consensual sex—including on the part of a prostitute or her client—as so-called “crimes without victims.” We stand for the separation of church and state. Particularly vicious today are the reactionary “age of consent” laws that ban sex for teens. We advocate the concept of effective consent as the guiding principle in all sexual matters.

For this reason we call for a “yes” vote on Measure Q as a statement of opposition to the laws against prostitution. But it must be said, it is dangerous to build illusions that the police will “play fair” with prostitutes. The police, like the courts and the prisons, are the agents of the government that defends this anti-woman, anti-sex capitalist society. The police are the government’s thugs to maintain capitalist morality and “law and order.”

The persecution of prostitutes is part of the oppression of women under family and religion in capitalist society. Another is the attack on abortion rights—the anti-abortion bigots see all women as “baby machines.” As opposed to building illusions that the capitalist system can be reformed, we fight to mobilize the power of labor to fight for women’s rights.

Real progress for the oppressed only comes through hard class struggle, and women are a strategic part of the unionized working class in this country. Education, decent-paying jobs, health care, childcare—all the things that every woman needs—will only be ours through a fight for our class power. ■

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# Young Spartacus

## Black Student Alliance Suspended for Protesting Racist Frat

### Georgia State University

While on a *Workers Vanguard* subscription drive trip to Atlanta, the Spartacus Youth Club visited the multiracial Georgia State University (GSU) campus, which was still simmering from last spring's months-long clash between black students and the cretins in the Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity (Pikes). In return for jointly apologizing for the "trouble," as well as meeting other conditions, the previously suspended Black Student Alliance (BSA) and the Pikes had been reinstated shortly before we arrived two weeks ago. "Guilty" only of protesting against the racist creeps in the nearly all-white, conservative fraternity, the black students have nothing to apologize for!

It all started in late January when the Pikes hosted a racist "Straight Out of Compton" theme party, for which party-goers were encouraged to don their most "ghetto fabulous attire." Playing on every hip-hop stereotype, the frat rats showed up in "urban" clothing and fake tattoos to mock black youth (who make up one-third of GSU's student body). Two Pikes decided to add to the "fun" by wearing blackface to complete their costumes.

This party polarized the campus, sparking a series of speakouts and rallies over the next three months organized by the BSA and campus NAACP, among others outraged by the racist practices of the white fraternity "brotherhood." Hundreds of students, including some from Morehouse and Spelman colleges, came out to the protests to demand "Punt the Pikes!"

In response, the Pikes presented themselves as the innocent victims of a discriminatory campaign to brand their fraternity "racist," seeking a stamp of approval for their real bigotry. The College Republicans even held an "anti-bigotry bake sale" in late March to smear the BSA as "bigots" for protesting the Pikes! Once again in this racist country, black people who protest against racist smears are

portrayed as the source of the problem.

In fact, this frat, founded by a circle of Confederate soldiers and supporters soon after the Civil War, has a long history of racism. For instance, a photo from a 1968 yearbook shows a Pike member dressed in blackface; in the early '90s the Pikes would perform skits wearing blackface and afterward would post pictures in display cases on campus. When one

another in a Klansman's robe and the third in blackface with a noose around his neck, from an infamous Halloween party at Auburn University in 2001. Use of the photo was a device to connect the blackface incident at GSU with the many others that have occurred on college campuses in recent years.

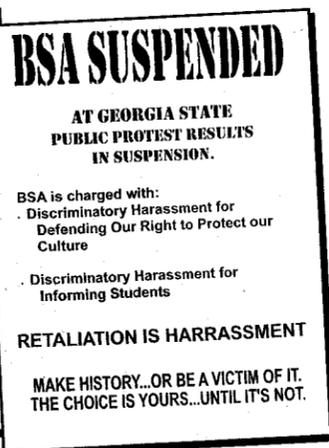
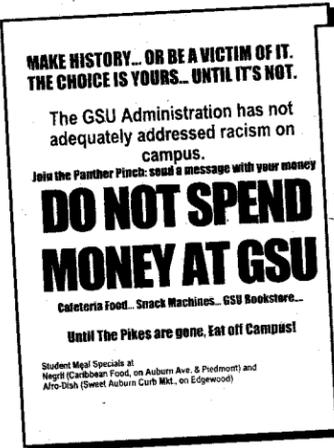
For their part, right-wingers on campuses nationwide have claimed the man-

administration—which runs the campus in the interests of the capitalist ruling class—showed it is far from neutral. For example, it declared that the actions of the frat did not pose an "immediate threat." Instead, the administration soon identified its own "threat"—the black students. At an early March "community dialogue," it posted police throughout the room to protect the vastly outnumbered Pikes in attendance. In step with the culture of suppressing dissent in post-9/11 America, the administration has used the anti-racist protests as a pretext to try to ban all "unauthorized" political expression, according to another BSA member.

It is militant, mass, integrated social struggle that would make the racists think twice about spewing their filth. When protesting racist provocations on campus—from cop terror at the University of Chicago and an anti-affirmative action "bake sale" at Columbia University last February to appearances by pro-imperialist ideologue and slavery apologist David Horowitz—the SYCs have called for students to link their struggles to the social power of the multiracial working class, such as unionized transit, health care and city workers in Atlanta. As we wrote in *WV* No. 563 (13 November 1992) at the time of the 1992 sit-in:

"In January 1989, many GSU students participated in an exemplary display of labor/black power when they responded to the Partisan Defense Committee's call to stop the KKK from parading in downtown Atlanta. A citywide action, linking students, blacks, gays and immigrants to the social power of labor, would have an electrifying impact in combatting the racist climate at GSU and beyond. *Students: Ally with labor to smash racist attacks!*"

Ultimately, it will take a revolution by working people and all the oppressed to shatter the racist capitalist order and win black liberation in a workers America. ■



**Black Student Alliance flyer protesting Jim Crow on frat row (far left). Appealing to administration, through consumer boycotts or otherwise, is a dead-end strategy; university "addressed racism on campus" by suspending BSA.**

such "performance" was followed shortly afterward by the discovery of a racial slur written by a member of another frat on a trash can in 1992, the campus boiled over. In a united action by blacks, gays and anti-racist whites, some 200 students staged a two-day sit-in, shutting down administrative offices, the cafeteria and classrooms. The Atlanta SYC actively intervened into the protests, pushing for a citywide demonstration against racist terror, as the city was still seething from savage cop violence against black Atlanta University students protesting the Rodney King verdict. The sit-in forced the administration to meet several of the protesters' demands, including padlocking shut the Pikes frat house.

In effect siding with the frat rats, the GSU administration attempted to squelch protest against racism on campus and, in April, suspended the BSA the week after it had suspended the Pikes. One BSA member said to a *WV* salesman that the suspension of the BSA is redolent of the Jim Crow era when "uppity Negroes" lost their jobs, were run out of town and not infrequently lynched by white racist mobs. The term "Jim Crow" is taken from the stage name of the popularizer of blackface, a cultural expression of white supremacist ideology dating from the 1820s.

The BSA was convicted of intending "to incite others by making a misleading flyer" and "discriminatory harassment" of a frat member after the Pikes filed formal charges against them. The Spartacus Youth Club has long warned against faith in speech codes of conduct, which are usually applied, as in this case, to discipline minorities and leftists. Tellingly, in addition to suspending the BSA, the administration ruled that its leaders had to participate in a "diversity education" program, presumably to learn to love racists!

However couched in the language of "diversity" and "tolerance," speech codes give enhanced power to university administrators and the cops to act against, for instance, anti-racist youth and leftists who want to expose the bigots on campus or protest the imperialist occupation of Iraq. At GSU, the "misleading" BSA flyer was intended to warn students about the racist Pikes. It featured a photo of three white frat members, one dressed in hunting garb,

tle of "free speech" to carry out racist provocations. So while the Pikes were raising a hue and cry over alleged "harassment" from the BSA, their lawyers were sending letters to the GSU administration invoking First Amendment protection from persecution for their blackface antics! With the assistance of outfits like the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, many frat rats expelled recently for wearing blackface have been reinstated by court order, including those at the 2001 Auburn Halloween party.

We shed no tears for the expulsions of these pigs, but neither do we rely on the administration to fight racism, as did the BSA in its repeated appeals for the university to take action. This strategy doesn't work. At every turn, the GSU

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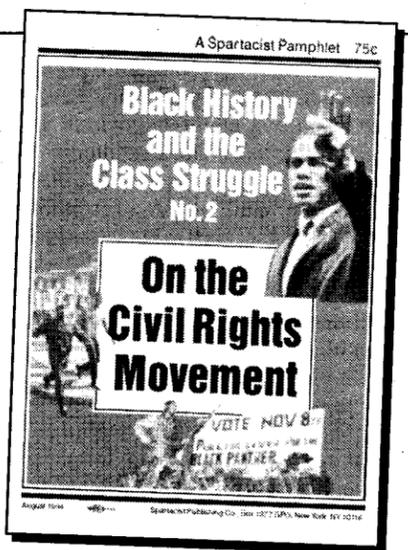
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# Workers Party...

(continued from page 1)

on September 11, and the destruction of the World Trade Center has some significance in the current election campaign. The attack on the World Trade Center was a criminal act, perpetrated against people who had done nothing wrong except to go to work. As we pointed out at the time, the people who carried out that act think approximately in the same way that imperialists do, that is, that ordinary people are guilty for the crimes of their rulers. Unlike the World Trade Center, the Pentagon is the command and administrative center of the U.S. imperialist military, and being a military installation, the possibility of getting hit comes with the territory. But as we wrote in *Workers Vanguard* (No. 830, 6 August): "That recognition does not make the attack an 'anti-imperialist' act, nor does it change the fact that terrorism almost always gets innocent people—in this case, the passengers on the plane as well as the maintenance workers, janitors and secretaries at the Pentagon."

The September 11 attacks were seized upon as the reason for the subsequent wars on Afghanistan and Iraq. The imperialist powers, when they attack smaller countries, almost always need to manufacture something as a reason. Of course, if you think about it, the idea that Afghanistan's a danger to the United States is, on the face of it, ridiculous. In this case, the act of terrorism provided U.S. rulers with what they construed to be a reason. But it's not the real reason. And then of course, Bush had to invent the "weapons of mass destruction," just like during Vietnam Lyndon Johnson invented the Gulf of Tonkin incident, and just like in the beginning of U.S. imperialism's entry on the world stage—the 1898 war against Spain—it invented the "Remember the Maine" incident. Such inventions are really rather common.

We're in a subscription drive, and so we've been asking people on campuses what they think about the elections. For the most part they're not too impressed with Kerry. On the other hand, they're scared to death of Bush. So pretty much what we hear is that although they're not sure Kerry's any good, they'll probably vote for him and against Bush, and that's understandable on both sides. Kerry really hasn't said much that's any different than what Bush has to say. On the other side, Bush does seem a little bit mad—as we've described him, oddly demented. In addition to two wars, we've had the not-so-surprising torture at Abu Ghraib. Not surprising because Bush is after all the guy who put out "Wanted Dead or Alive" contracts for Osama bin Laden and Hussein, and describes as "evil" people who were fighting the U.S. It's hardly surprising that the U.S. did evil things to those people.

Then there are his loyal supporters, the vacant-eyed, largely racist Christian fundamentalists, who give people pause. One

Oregon woman supporter of Bush, from that particular portion of the population, described the reason for her vote, that god is in the White House. Now as a Marxist, materialist and an atheist, I was actually kind of pleased to have a believer finally admit that god was a vastly ignorant, bullying and lying Texan. These types are rather scary. It's not just that they believe. But they think belief is superior to facts and reality. Thus Cheney, who knows this audience well, drones on and on about how Saddam and Osama used to play croquet every day on the palace lawn, and nuclear weapons were stacked like firewood on the streets of Baghdad. Now those things are lies, but 50 percent of the U.S. population thinks that they're true.

There are some differences between the Democrats and the Republicans. If you looked at the conventions on TV, the Democratic Convention looked a little like this room—a little of this, a little of that, a little black, a little Hispanic, a lot

held that job for a century or so until the '60s and '70s. Usually the top members of the KKK were also Democratic Party members and often elected to office as such. The Republicans tend to push America the strong, the pure, the just: jingoism. The Democrats do that normally through the vehicle of "America First" protectionism for workers, which is sold very much by the labor bureaucracy. It's the same message, but it's wrapped rather differently. So young people tend to hope perhaps that the Democrats will be less cruel than the Republicans. In this they are assisted by the anarchists and socialist groups, like the International Socialist Organization, that pander to the "anybody but Bush" campaign. You don't have to be a genius to figure out who the anybody is that they're asking you to vote for.

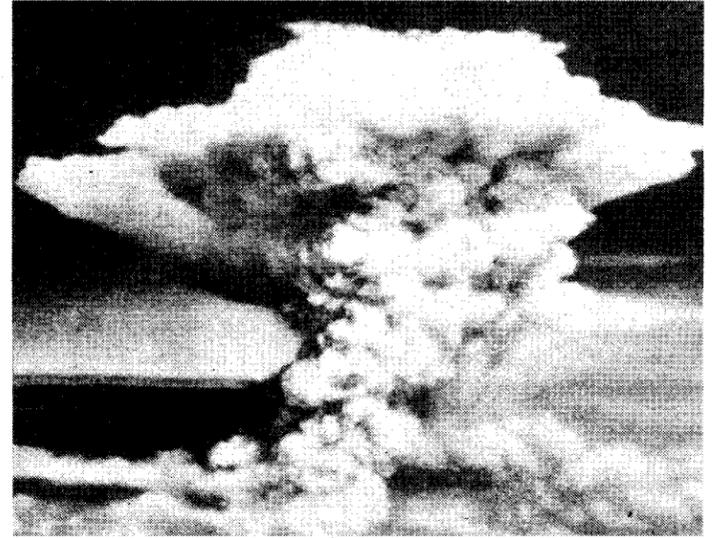
The short form of this presentation is that it's the American imperialist rulers and their capitalist system, and not particular governments, whether Republican or

appears on the scene. The Cold War, what it meant for me as a kid, was that every day I got on my knees and faced the wall of my classroom, put my head down. That's an atomic bomb drill—it was supposed to keep you safe. And as we said at the time, "and kiss your ass goodbye." Because we all were kind of aware that this was not going to defend us from atomic attack.

The red purge of the trade unions was something I didn't exactly understand, nor did I understand why it was "bad" to be a socialist. Socialism certainly seemed to me not an insane thought, and one perhaps Americans should be permitted to hold. I can't say I was a socialist myself. The Cold War seemed to me to make no sense, because after all hadn't we just been the allies of the Soviet Union, who seemed to have done a very nice job mopping up the Nazis, without much help, incidentally, from the United States. And then they put the Rosenbergs on trial under



Democratic president Truman with General MacArthur (far left) in 1948: architects of nuclear holocaust at Hiroshima (right) and Nagasaki.



of women. At the one four years ago, 28 percent of the delegates were trade unionists. It was probably as high this time. The Republican Convention was sort of "Unpleasantville": people that are kind of strange, that you may not want to know. On the one hand, the Democrats play to a base that's largely composed of liberals, working-class people, blacks; and so they tend to express concerns for things like health, jobs, education, sometimes even peace. Republicans, on the other hand, like to emphasize small government, low taxes, fiscal responsibility, no restrictions on enterprises, and tend to push the idea that if the rich are really rolling in it, everyone profits. "High tide raises all boats," as they say. And this plays well to the very wealthy. It also goes for small businessmen, who think if their employees are real frugal and watch their diet, they can get by on three or four dollars an hour just fine.

The Republican Party, in the process of history, has gone from the party that led the progressive Civil War in the middle of the 19th century to becoming the main party of racist reaction. The Democrats

Democrat, which are responsible for war, exploitation, the race-caste oppression of blacks in this country, for the shredding of our rights, for our lack of access to health care and education and, indeed, in some ways, for our lack of access to a future. So it's really the system that's got to go, and that requires a socialist revolution in this country, which means we must link the cause of black freedom to the fight against all exploitation and injustice. Note that the situation of black people probably hasn't been mentioned in the context of a presidential election in perhaps three decades now. It's just not considered polite. A vote for any one of the bourgeois candidates is a vote of confidence, in fact, in their imperialist system, a vote that says that this system can be fair and humane, and a vote against the crying need for a socialist revolution and for building the revolutionary working-class party that is necessary to have such a revolution.

## From Truman to Kennedy: From Hiroshima to Vietnam

Let me go through my experiences as I was growing up with this process. The first election I remember was Harry Truman's in 1948. I was nine years old, already a Democrat—it came with the neighborhood. If you had asked me, I would have said, sure, vote for Truman, even though I knew he just nuked Nagasaki and Hiroshima, and I didn't think that was especially charming. It seemed more like an act of terror than an act of war. But I was pleased when he was elected: it was actually a big upset. Those of you who know a little bit about history know the august *Chicago Daily Tribune* printed a headline, "Dewey Defeats Truman." Well, he didn't win, Harry did.

But then the aftermath gave me some pause. Because it was the Democrats, under Truman's leadership, who launched the Cold War, what has come to be known as McCarthyism. It's actually an inadequate description, because McCarthy was a latecomer. The Democrats drove the reds out of the trade unions by 1950, using their "America First" supporters in the unions, and that's when McCarthy

Truman. They weren't executed until 1953 when Eisenhower came into office.

Most scary for me was the Korean War, because then I was a little older, I was then 11 or 12, and I was getting close to draft age. In the Korean War, in about the same time frame that this Iraq war has gone on, 30,000 American soldiers died. It was hot, plenty hot. And no one in the country much liked it. At the time I wondered what business the United States had interfering in those affairs, which shows you I wasn't a Marxist. Now I know why the United States interferes in those affairs. Most of the country really didn't like it, except it was the McCarthy period, so you couldn't say anything, or else you'd be driven out of your job and harassed by Congressional investigating committees.

Instead, people elected Republican Dwight Eisenhower, who had a tremendous preference for golf, and who did immediately end the Korean War by simply drawing a line in the sand and not signing a peace treaty, and walking away from it. There is no peace treaty with North Korea to this day. The Republicans are supposed to be good for business. But in Eisenhower's eight years in office, there were two major recessions. I said, jeez, this doesn't make much sense. I was looking for a job in the second recession and didn't find much. Eisenhower's response to the civil rights struggles in the South was essentially to let the racist mobs be. On those occasions when the government intervened, it was usually when black people were doing something to defend themselves. So that didn't seem very promising.

Then the 1959 Cuban Revolution happened at the end of his term, and I remember being kind of pleased with that. Actually Castro came to the United States, appeared on the Jack Paar show at the time, stayed in Harlem, which was smart. And of course Eisenhower hated it, but he couldn't do anything about it because of the Korean War—too many bodies already. I mean, the reason people in the United States didn't like Korea is they just fought a major war and they didn't want another one. But Eisenhower did stonewall, and probably actually

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influenced the Cuban regime in the final steps it took, in the sense that Castro decided there was to be nothing forthcoming from the American imperialists, so he nationalized everything on the island of Cuba.

I've never voted for a bourgeois candidate of any sort. I came close once with a presidential candidate. Before I turned 21, which was both the voting and the drinking age at that time, I became in my mind a communist with the help of some friends who convinced me of the essentials of the Marxist analysis of capitalism—that is, the fundamental motor of the system is the drive for profits. The fundamental classes in capitalism are, on the one hand, the class that owns everything, the bourgeoisie, and on the other hand, the class that makes everything, the proletariat. Imperialism was in fact the exportation of this system of exploitation to backward and weak countries. Some of us had connections with the working

This guy was quite crazy. I thought, maybe in this case I should go for LBJ. And if this reminds you somewhat of the current Bush regime, this is why I bring it up. But fortunately, I had a friend in Progressive Labor Party who convinced me that "a boss is a boss." I didn't make it to the polls, though I was highly tempted.

So we know what Johnson did. There was some civil rights legislation passed in response to the mass battles for civil rights that occurred, mainly in the South, but also in the North of this country. There was a "war against poverty" that evolved out of the ghetto upheavals, in an effort to buy people off. But, it turns out, Johnson then went on and bombed the north of Vietnam. The U.S. in fact dropped more bombs on Vietnam than had been dropped in the entire European theater during the Second World War. Three million Vietnamese were dead as a result. So it goes to show you.

he had to say once he got into office, so they immediately elected Ronald Reagan. The air traffic controllers union, PATCO, went on strike, and he smashed the union. It doesn't exist today. What most people don't know is he did it with a plan devised by Jimmy Carter when he was in office, because the strike had been pending for some time. He also had a tax cut. One of the things about the PATCO strike that tells you something about the current leaders of the American trade union movement was that they let that union sink. Normally you'd think of the trade union tops as bound to the Democratic Party. But remember Reagan was in office. Some of them go Republican occasionally. But their real allegiance is to the system of capitalism. That's what's behind their allegiance to the Democrats. All they had to do was close down the airports. Period. That strike would never have failed. One week, and it would have been over. The heads of some of the

course add to those illusions, that there is a possibility for fundamental reform there.

Now the interesting thing is, my father could have told me exactly the same story about a vastly different America than I was raised in, just as the America I was raised in is vastly different than the one that exists now. He could have told me about two presidents, both Democrats, who ran on peace platforms and then immediately went to war. He could have told me about the first war against terror in this century, which was called the Palmer Raids, which was launched under the Democratic president Woodrow Wilson, in which thousands of socialists were imprisoned and immigrants—and that's what the American working class was at that time, immigrant—were deported. Some of them went back and joined the Bolsheviks, which is quite good. He could have told you about the roaring '20s, when the working class had the boot in its back, and how the initial Roosevelt measures against the Great Depression were actually pro-boss. And that nothing really happened in this country until the giant class struggles that built the CIO, that is, from 1934 and after.

### U.S. Government: Executive Committee of the Capitalist Class

Why do I bring this all up? Imagine you're a Martian now; you're taking your course on U.S. history. You've been told what the Democratic Party says it is, and you've been told what the Republican Party says it is. And then I give you some of these incidences that I've just gone through: the Korean War, the Cold War, the destroying of PATCO. You could not guess, from the incident, which party was in power. Nor could you guess what the politics of the particular president were. Because all that, in the final analysis, is hype. It's window dressing. It's not what's involved.

What the government is, whether it's Republican or Democrat, is what Marx and Engels called "the executive committee of the ruling class." Its job is to realize the dominant program and aspirations of the American ruling class and of American imperialism. If it fails to do so, it will be replaced in one way or another. Sometimes, in some countries, this has been through military coup. Now what are these dominant aspirations of the American ruling class? Fundamentally, they're to increase profits and to increase the ability to make profits. And what that requires, of course, is a constant effort to reverse and combat the working class in its struggles against the capitalist system, and also the rest of the oppressed. And of course occasionally, when subjected to mass struggle, the ruling class gives out a few goodies. But then of course, subsequently continues to take them away. And as I said, imperialism is really just the exportation of this, in a meaner way, to countries in which people really starve to death.

Now one very important counter-manifestation to this, since the Bolshevik Revolution, is something we call the "Russian Question." In the Russian Revolution the working class took power and kicked out the capitalist exploiters. Isolated, increasingly impoverished and surrounded by hostile imperialist powers, the young Soviet workers state went through a conservatization. Stalin took the political power away from the working class by 1923-24, and went on to eventually consolidate a dictatorship based on a bureaucratic caste. The primary appetite and the task of the American imperialists since Day One, as the most powerful imperialist country on the planet, was to destroy the Russian Revolution, the most historic and fundamental gain of the working class. Secondly, they've also operated to attenuate the unions. The bourgeoisie has operated, with its willing labor lieutenants in the labor movement, to pretty much hamstring and domesticate the organized labor movement, and also simultaneously to reduce it considerably in size, so now it's about 10 percent of the workforce.

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**Democrats' dirty, losing war in Vietnam: Kennedy's escalation of the war in Vietnam set the stage for massive carpet bombing of the country by Johnson (pictured above in Vietnam in 1966).**

class, and the giant civil rights struggles were going on, beginning in about 1955 or so and escalating throughout the period. So we were very much convinced that unless you fought racism in this country, the necessary working-class revolution would not be able to occur. We did not understand the race-caste oppression of blacks in this country, but we understood that if it wasn't fought there was no way the American working class was going to be able to unite. So Kennedy didn't get my vote. And he doesn't even know it.

But those ideas compelled me then, and they compel me now. In any event, JFK didn't seem very appetizing, although he was dressed up like a Boston liberal, as is Kerry today, and was Catholic and all that. He ran to the right of Nixon. He ran on a program of rearming American imperialism, accused Eisenhower of having given the store away because of the revolution in Cuba. And I had just sort of been there, under Harry Truman, and I didn't particularly think that was very appetizing. Sure enough, Kennedy gets in office, we have the Cuban Missile Crisis, when every thinking person in the United States thought it could well be over. You had the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba before that, which was only dropped because nobody showed up for the CIA-led invasion, and Kennedy kicked up the level of the U.S. in Vietnam a little bit.

### Part of the Way with LBJ?

So Kennedy disappears, for reasons we all know, and LBJ takes his place. Now we come to the point of my weakness, the election that pitted Lyndon Baines Johnson against Barry Goldwater. LBJ was kind of a typical New Deal Democrat—but Southern, and at that time, that meant he hadn't exactly played a great role on the race question. He was better than some, but pretty much in that bloc. The essence of the campaign was about what was going to be done in Vietnam. Barry Goldwater had this very interesting idea. At that time the United States was not bombing North Vietnam. He thought it would be good to bomb them back into the Stone Age, and was even prone to consider using nuclear weapons to do it.

Johnson, unlike the myth about Democrats raising taxes, raised no taxes, which is almost impossible in a war because you have to spend. As a result, at the end of his term, the U.S. was on the ropes economically. And the reason he didn't raise taxes is that he wanted to buy off the black population with some measures—and in some sense there were some genuine progressive measures there, especially the end of *de jure* segregation—and he also wanted to buy off the working class by not making them pay for the war. Johnson figured, rightly, that raising taxes would have further inflamed antiwar sentiment. Well, since the working class didn't begin to strike until the end of this period, in that sense he was successful. In turn, what the civil rights legislation and the "war on poverty" did was give an excuse for the black Democrats, some of whom are still around today, like Jesse Jackson Sr., to return to the fold of the Democratic Party. The Panthers and others who thought social justice hadn't been achieved yet, quite correctly, but didn't quite know how to get there—they were left out there on the streets by the black Democrats who for the most part allowed them to be mowed down by the FBI without much of a protest. Over thirty members of the Black Panther Party were killed in the aftermath of that.

The next candidate of interest was Jimmy Carter, who was sort of the opposite of what you would construe as a Democrat. In fact he looked a little like George Bush does. He said people shouldn't expect justice in this society, "life is unfair," we're going to have to give up some things, we're getting a little too fat. He talked about family values and the importance of religion—all that kind of stuff. Mostly he was interested in rebuilding the strength of the United States, which had lost its ability to intervene in the world. This was the result of the fact that the Vietnamese, with justice, drove the U.S. out of Vietnam. That war wasn't very popular amongst the population. And Jimmy Carter thought this was unfortunate, and he should change this.

The people who voted for Jimmy Carter weren't very impressed with what

unions that refused to do that called themselves socialist—like Winpisinger in the machinists.

Ronald Reagan did a very uncharacteristic Republican thing—he was a fiscal conservative, small government, and all that. But he spent more money and expanded the government more than any Democrat since Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He did this because he had intensified what we describe as "Cold War Two," which started under Carter. There was immense, vast, military spending, again without taxation, which again put the U.S. in hock, so that George Bush Senior, his successor, had to suffer the consequences, and he was voted out of office.

Bush Sr. was replaced by Bill Clinton, who I think in some ways is the most amazing president of the 20th century. Anybody who watched the convention saw that they would have re-elected him, fellatio or not. If they could have done it, they would have brought him on again. I mean, they were ecstatic when he was on that stand. And there's no question he's quite personable and seems to have a certain charm; he plays the saxophone, eats bad food and gets down and talks to people. If you look at what happened during his regime—and you know, Clinton is still a big favorite among many black people—more black men went to jail during the Clinton years than has ever happened. Look what happened in Iraq during the Clinton years. More Iraqis were killed by Bill Clinton, by far, than have been killed by either of the Bushes to date. Over a million by his UN sanctions policies. All the "anti-terror" legislation, people now being deprived of their rights, immigrants being picked up on the street, etc.—all passed by Clinton.

So this guy is really a consummate political swindler. Which shows you the task we have, the obstacles to forging a revolutionary party, because there are a lot of illusions in this country. And insofar as they tend to exist among working people, they tend to exist in the favor of the Democrats. It also simultaneously shows you the disservice the rest of the left does by giving a backhanded vote to these guys, because what that does is of

# Workers Party...

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Trotsky pointed out that if you don't fight for past gains, you can't fight for future ones. Thus our position defending the Soviet Union, where the last remaining gains of the Bolshevik Revolution were overturned in 1991-92, with Yeltsin at its helm. Our position towards the remaining societies where capitalism was overthrown—North Korea, Cuba, China, Vietnam—is that we defend them against the bosses, against any attempt to restore capitalism. In the same regard we defend the trade unions from attacks by the bosses. We recognize that the political leadership in these societies does not operate in the interest of proletarian revolution, and so we are for a political revolution to overturn them, just as we are for, in this country, replacing the existing leadership of the trade unions with a class-struggle leadership.

Our socialist opponents are rather different in that regard. They didn't defend the Soviet Union, in fact they rather cheered when it fell apart. The immediate effects of counterrevolution on the population in those areas have been devastating. But also that counterrevolution is responsible for what the U.S. is able to do to the world right now—war after war after war. It wouldn't have happened if the Soviet Union was still around. Not in that way, at least—because the USSR was a military counterweight against the U.S. But the fake-Marxists all cheered. Now they tend to hide that. And they did not defend Iraq or Afghanistan against imperialist attack. They didn't call for what is sort of elementary, that is the defense of the victims. The absence of such defense on the part of the working class signifies that the working class is still tied to the program of its imperialist masters. And unless that tie is broken, the working class cannot proceed to try to realize its historic aspirations, which are to liberate humanity from all forms of constraints except those imposed by biology and the pursuit of sex. Or, as some would say, love.

## Fight for Socialism!

Now, Kerry. He's for increasing the U.S. military, for increasing the war



**A New Beginning**  
Welfare to Work

Political swindler Bill Clinton signs bill to "end welfare as we know it" in 1996, consigning multitudes to even greater poverty and deprivation.

against terror, which I assume will eventually lead to cavity searches at the El stops. As we've noted, in the recent period, under Bush and under Bill Clinton before him, and evidently under Kerry and the Democrats, who are really worried that Bush hasn't made us "safe" enough, the government has operated in such a manner as to essentially assert that citizens have no rights that the government is bound to respect. Like most Democrats, Kerry is interested in increasing pressure on North Korea, as part and parcel of what the Democrats consider to be the appropriate role for U.S. imperialism, which is to drive off the map any societies that have expropriated capitalism. He's very much for what the Israelis are doing to the Palestinians, which is potentially genocidal in nature. He wrote a little tract called "The Cause of Israel Is the Cause of America." The good thing, he says, is "help is on the way"; there's a light at the end of the tunnel. Well, unfortunately it is a train, I believe.

There'll be no substantive change in the condition of working people unless there is class struggle in this country. Wages will go up and down. Some more will be hired or not hired. But the general direction is down, unless there's struggle in the factories and struggle in the streets.

Eighty percent of the delegates at the Democratic Convention were against the Iraq war. And yet Kerry isn't. Why? The reason is the American imperialists cannot abide the idea of giving up their position in the Near East, which has both geopolitical and oil resources of untold importance. And so they can't, in any meaningful way, pull out. They might end the military hostilities in some way, although it's still a mystery how they're going to do that. But they cannot really give up their influence in that part of the world. This could happen through a couple of mechanisms: either proletarian revolution in the area, or if they lost it to their imperialist competitors. And this the American imperialists are not going to abide. No bourgeois candidate could promise, in fact, to get out of the Near East, and indeed Kerry doesn't.

Nor does Ralph Nader, for that matter. He says he'll leave expeditiously. I have to admit I have trouble seeing what people find in Nader. He's in many ways a typical small businessman. He doesn't like unions in his business, doesn't like Chinese imports, not a word about black people, worries about immigration, too many people coming in, supports capitalism but thinks the big corporations are unfair. I mean, this is not very exciting, and his main purpose for running, as he states it, is to pressure the Democrats. Nevertheless, there are a couple groups, the International Socialist Organization and Socialist Alternative, that are hyping him in the elections, which reveals, I think, their reformist core. That is, what they really stand for is not socialism, but a reform of the capitalist order. Socialist Alternative describes this as "critical support." Now sometimes in fact we, the Spartacist League, have given critical support to working-class parties. Nothing wrong with that. But what is critical support of a capitalist? It can only be construed as critical support of capitalism. Moreover, Socialist Alternative calls on Nader to build a workers party in the country. As my daughter would say, "what have these guys been smoking?" How can somebody who's not fond of trade unions form a workers party in this country?

Elections and voting can be good for some things. But the government is the executive committee of the ruling class,

and the core of capitalist class rule is the cops, the army and the courts. In the final analysis, it's the gun. Guns don't respond to votes. The cops and the army, those class institutions, have to be smashed if there's going to be a socialist revolution.

If there was such a party in power, the immediate effects would be: Free health care for everyone, next day. Free education at all levels for everyone, next day. A move to end the forced segregation of blacks in this society, next day. A move to employ everybody in this society, next day. Everybody's wage is livable. That's easy. And then we begin to build for real, for a real socialist future.

Now we're not that party. Our numbers are too modest, our influence in the working class is too small. But we do have elements: we have the program and we have the will. We have the program for socialist revolution, which comes from Marx, Lenin and Trotsky, applied to these circumstances. And we have the necessary will to fight to forge that party, and never to cave in to one liberal or bourgeois fad or another, as do our opponents. Our opponents generally accuse us of not doing much. Actually, if you were to join us, you would do more than you wanted to. There are leaflets to write. There are things to be learned about socialism, about the history and structure of the thought of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky. There are demonstrations to be had. There are interventions to make, to expose the people who prop up this system through their illusions.

So there's lots of work. We built demonstrations against the Klan, in the urban centers, a couple around Chicago. We built a demonstration out in Oakland several months after September 11, which called for "Down with the war on immigrants! Down with the Patriot Act!" In proportion to our size and abilities, we carry out such actions as we can, around a program that is for the working class. So, to those of you who burn, I guess that would be the word, at the current injustice, oppression and slaughter that we have been offered by the capitalist system, you can of course continue to vote and hope that things don't get worse. The odds are they will. Or, you can join us and consider fighting for the end of injustice, oppression and exploitation for all time. And that's not a bad deal. ■

# Mexico...

(continued from page 5)

social struggle, as has happened before. The occasional criticisms that *Militante* makes of the bourgeois politics of the PRD are directed toward pressuring its leadership to adopt policies that, according to *Militante*, would better serve the function of the PRD as a "left" bourgeois party, that is, as an escape valve to contain social discontent within the framework of bourgeois politics. Political support to a bourgeois party necessarily means support to the continuation of capitalism.

## Against All Manifestations of Oppression and Backwardness!

As clearly exemplified by the SNTSS with its important component of women workers, the integration of women into production and service demands that working-class women play a leading role in the struggles of their class. Furthermore, the full emancipation of all women requires the destruction of the capitalist system and its replacement with a planned economy. In this sense, the fight against their special oppression constitutes an indispensable motor force for revolutionary struggle in general. The workers movement must combat the prevalent machismo among its own members and present broader demands than those of the current economic struggle. Free abortion on demand! Free, quality, 24-hour dining halls, laundries and childcare! Equal pay for equal work! For women's liberation through socialist revolution!

A particularly grotesque expression of

bourgeois nationalism among workers has been the emergence of fairly widespread anti-Semitic prejudices, generally directed against the bourgeois politician who runs the IMSS, Santiago Levy. This individual is certainly a leech and enemy of all workers, but this has absolutely nothing to do with his ethnic or religious origins. In reality, anti-Semitism is a stupid and reactionary ideology that the bourgeoisie uses to deflect social discontent and confuse more backward workers as to who their real enemy is, that is, the bourgeoisie as a class. That is why anti-Semitism is known as the "socialism of fools." On more than one occasion, our comrades have had to combat anti-Semitic prejudices at SNTSS rallies and marches. What is incredible is that there are organizations that claim to be "leftist" that not only tolerate these prejudices, but sometimes even participate in them. So, for example, the widely distributed "leftist" newspaper *Machetearte* published in its 12-13 April issue a disgusting article on the IMSS which blamed the anti-working-class attacks on a "new world order run by the international Jewry." The false identification of a particular ethnic group with the exploiters and bankers was a central component of the ideology of the Nazis, who assassinated six million Jews in the Holocaust. No decent worker, and much less a genuine leftist, should tolerate this garbage! As Trotsky explained on the eve of World War II:

"Before exhausting or drowning mankind in blood, capitalism befools the world atmosphere with the poisonous vapors of national and race hatred. *Anti-Semitism* today is one of the more malignant convulsions of capitalism's death agony.

"An uncompromising disclosure of the roots of race prejudice and all forms and shades of national arrogance and chauvinism, particularly anti-Semitism, should become part of the daily work of all sections of the Fourth International, as the most important part of the struggle against imperialism and war. Our basic slogan remains: Workers of the World Unite!"

—"The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International" (1938)

The workers cause requires the forging of a party that is not only capable of representing the interests of the workers

against all the capitalist parties, but that can also unite all the oppressed who fight against the brutality of the capitalist system behind the workers movement, whether they be women, peasants, students, homosexuals or indigenous people—in other words, a party capable of leading a workers revolution. The struggle to build such a party is the reason why the Grupo Espartaquista de México exists. We invite all thoughtful workers who are considering how to advance the working-class cause to read our press and discuss with us. ■

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Toronto, ON M5W 1X8  
(416) 593-4138

### Vancouver

Box 2717, Main P.O.  
Vancouver, BC V6B 3X2  
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# Black...

(continued from page 12)

Department of Law Enforcement has sent armed state troopers into elderly black voters' homes on an "investigation" of voter fraud—despite the department having decided in May that the charges were baseless! The president of the Florida Voters League (a group that works to increase black electoral turnout), Eugene Poole, stated:

"These guys are using these intimidating methods to try and get these folks to stay away from the polls in the future. And you know what? It's working. One woman said, 'My God, they're going to put us in jail for nothing.' I said, 'That's not true.'"

—New York Times, 20 August

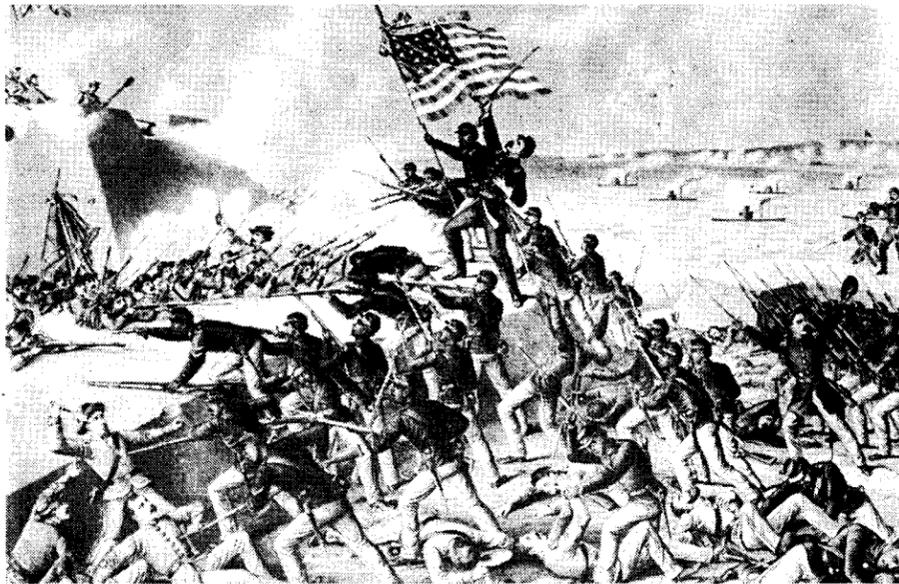
"Not true"? In 1985, longtime Alabama civil rights activist Spiver Gordon was convicted of "voter fraud" for the "crime" of assisting elderly black people to file absentee ballots, which allowed blacks to vote without fear or intimidation in the privacy of their own homes. The prosecution and conviction of Gordon were part of a concerted campaign by the Reagan administration to disenfranchise black voters, particularly in the South.

Today, a national law, ironically named the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA), has significantly tightened ID requirements for those newly registering and voters across the country, making it easier to turn voters away. In a test run of these requirements in Chicago, 95 percent of the provisional ballots cast by those whose "identity" was in question were invalidated. In an amusing twist, Senator Kit Bond of Missouri, who pushed through the HAVA, found himself struck from the rolls in his hometown and had to go through a tedious rigmarole to vote for himself. The Spartacist League stands opposed to any and all restrictions on the rights of citizens to vote and for the right of all immigrants (documented or not) to full citizenship rights—including the right of franchise.

Many states are moving toward electronic balloting. The companies that provide these machines have close links to the Republican Party: Election Systems and Software (its predecessor company was headed by current Republican Senator Chuck Hagel), Sequoia Voting Systems (whose products were rejected as insecure against fraud in the 1990s by New York City), Hart InterCivic (one of whose main investors was an early financial backer of Bush's business schemes) and Diebold Election Systems (also linked to the GOP). These systems eliminate any paper trail and, as the *Nation* (16 August) put it, could be used "to invisibly falsify the outcomes" of elections. With a little finagling with the software, these "innovations" could render old methods of stealing an election, like leaving dead people on the rolls and stuffing ballots, superfluous. And there would be no gravestones to check.

Stealing elections is nothing new, and it's hardly limited to the Republicans. In fact, one could say that this old American "art" was perfected by Democratic Party machines in cities like New York (Tammany Hall) and Chicago (the Daley machine—"vote early, vote often").

Beyond dicey electronic voting systems and police intimidation, though, and far more instrumental in the purge of black people from the rolls, is the racist "war on drugs." We have long declared that this "war" is a war against black people. Over **two million** people are in state and federal prisons, largely on drug charges. This attack focuses on black people, whether through cop rampages through the ghettos of the inner cities or through the depredations of regional narcotics task forces, like the one in rural Texas that framed up 46 people in 1999 (see "Tulia Victims Freed, Finally," *WV* No. 813, 7 November 2003). While the white population in prison for drug offenses increased by 306 percent between 1985 and 1995, the number of black people incarcerated for the same period shot up by **707 percent** under mandatory sentencing schemes supported by both Republicans and Democrats—



Library of Congress

Massachusetts 54th, first black regiment, charging Fort Wagner, July 1863. Civil War smashed slavery and won the franchise for black men.

including John Kerry. We are for the decriminalization of drugs.

The war on drugs has a direct effect on who votes and who doesn't. Five states permanently ban felons and ex-felons from voting (including Florida), while only two states allow prisoners to vote (Maine and Vermont—both of which have tiny black populations), and the rest have policies that to one degree or another fall between these two poles. The result is clear. Felony convictions bar 4.6 million Americans from voting (some 2.3 percent of the electorate), of whom over a third are black men. Indeed, **13 percent** of black men are currently barred from voting, and many more felons who could vote believe they cannot.

All of this emphasizes the tenuousness of basic democratic rights in capitalist America—especially for black people. The Republicans know that they are not going to get the black vote; they are a party of plutocrats, racist bigots and bible-thumping yahoos and make no bones about it. But what of the Democrats, the party that stands to lose from the purge of black voters? At first blush, one would think that they would vigorously defend black voting rights, if only for the obvious electoral advantage.

But no. Even after their betrayal of the black masses following Reconstruction, the Republicans, guaranteed the black vote given that the Democrats were the party of choice for the KKK, were quite willing to let the Democrats terrorize and disenfranchise the black populace—which generally voted Republican until the era of the New Deal, an alliance between Northern liberals and Southern Dixiecrats that did nothing to enfranchise the majority of black people, most of whom then lived in the Jim Crow South. In the aftermath of the civil rights legislation of the 1960s, and with the Republicans' strategic drive to become identified as the party of right-wing reaction, the Democrats have been guaranteed the lion's share of the black vote.

Democrats have been at most tepid in their defense of the franchise for black people. According to the *New York Times* (26 September), there has been a big increase in the registration of new voters, mainly black and minority, in swing states. But the key thing here is **swing states**. In states where a Democratic victory is all but assured, black disenfranchisement continues apace. For example, more than 40 percent of black men in several neighborhoods in south Providence, Rhode Island are barred from voting because of felony convictions.

One of the most striking scenes in Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* showed Al Gore, as President of the Senate, ruling a series of black Congressmen out of order as they contested the 2000 presidential election results due to the events in Florida—the very events that almost certainly cost him the presidency. Because of the black constituencies that these Congressmen represented (or misrepresented), they felt even more robbed by the election outcome than the man from whom the election was actually stolen. But in ruling out these Congress-

men, Al Gore was not acting out of faint-heartedness. Rather, it was due to the class nature of the Democratic Party. As a capitalist party, the Democrats are every bit as committed to the maintenance of the racist, capitalist order as the Republicans. They merely argue over the details.

The overriding factor for Gore and the Democratic establishment was that the "sanctity" of the imperial American presidency not be blemished by a dispute over who won. In urging Gore to back down, for example, the *New York Times* (9 November 2000) wrote: "This is a time for both presidential candidates, their advisers and their parties to proceed with extreme caution—a caution merited by the danger that events could lurch suddenly toward political or constitutional crisis. The tradition of regular, reliable elections and orderly transition of power is one of the glories of American democracy."

Another "one of the glories of American democracy" is the oppression of black people, which forms a key structural component of American capitalism;

# Hotel...

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on an industrial basis. On top of this, Local 11 workers continue to work in the Wilshire Grand while their sisters and brothers are locked out! The *Los Angeles Times* (17 September) noted, "Maria Elena Durazo, president of Unite Here Local 11, said its 2,800 workers would strike if asked" by Local 52. "Asked"? It is scandalous that workers are continuing to work a hotel where other workers are locked out! Meanwhile, Local 52 is passing around leaflets that lamely ask Wilshire Grand customers if they are "having **Problems** with your **Linen Service**," while making clear that the union does not intend "that anyone should refuse to deliver or provide goods or services or stop work"! These developments are a stinging indictment of the UNITE HERE bureaucrats.

The potential hotel workers strike in L.A., San Francisco and D.C. is aimed at securing common hotel contract expiration dates in 2006 with six other cities and Hawaii to present a solid union front against the major national and international hotel chains. As we wrote in "For a Solid Strike! For a National Contract! Hotel Workers Confront Bosses' Union Busting (*WV* No. 832, 17 September): "The bosses' strong-arm unity must be met with the strong, united determination of the labor movement, **a solid hotel workers strike shutting down the hotels with mass pickets that no one crosses!**" **Organize the hotels on an industrial basis!**

In Queens, the workers are striking for union recognition and against miserable working conditions and humiliating treatment by the bosses. A young black woman told *Workers Vanguard*, "I work seven days a week, 365 days a year, on call. I have to call at 7 o'clock every morning. I have two small children to worry about. I barely make enough money to pay the babysitter. I'm only mak-

the ruling class wields racism to maintain a pernicious division in the working class. Whether it be "ending welfare as we know it" under Clinton, consigning already poverty-stricken families to greater privation, lining up behind the racist "war on drugs" or throwing themselves foursquare in support of the "war on terror," the Democrats have proven, and every day continue to prove, that they are no friends to black and working people. Even a longtime hustler for the Democrats (and sometime wire for the FBI), Al Sharpton, faced a barrage of hostility when he attempted to simply address the racism black people face in the United States at the Democratic National Convention in Boston this summer. (The speech of the current black Democratic rising star, Barack Obama, which whitewashed the bitter reality of racist oppression in America, went over much better.)

But while the ballot is a fundamental right, a right we tenaciously defend, fundamental change will not come through voting. It was not by the ballot that slavery met its demise; it was not by the ballot that Jim Crow was ended. Union rights did not come from Congress or the president. All the gains working people and black people have made came through their seizing them, by mass struggles on the battlefields, in the factories and on the streets, from the racist rulers.

These gains, though real, are also, as one can see from the erosion of black voting rights, reversible, and the racist, warmongering Democratic Party is no defense against the racist, warmongering Republican Party. Working people need their own party, a revolutionary party that recognizes that the fight for black freedom and the fight for the emancipation of labor are inextricably linked. We in the Spartacist League seek to build such a party to do away with the capitalist order and create an egalitarian socialist society in which the perfidies of the past shall be relegated to the history books and expunged from the lives of future generations. ■

ing \$10 an hour, not even 40 hours. I've never made five days." She explained that workers qualify for medical after three months, and many, like her, cannot afford the \$65 per week for benefits. Another worker told *WV*, "The workers that are for the union, they get harassed. They treat us like children. They want to write you up if you punch in a minute too late or [out] a minute early. They want to assign a time for us to go to the cafeteria and eat like little kids in school." Indeed, the bosses' attitude was most despicably expressed by one Martin Fields, owner of the New York City airport motels, who said, "I feel like my children are rebelling" (*New York Times*, 23 September)! He went on to describe the union as a "cult," blathering on, "Think of Jim Jones. You just get them to drink the Kool-Aid," referring to the mass cult suicide in Guyana in 1978!

UNITE HERE is attempting to establish common contract expiration dates nationally for hotel workers, as well as common expiration dates for casino workers, while conducting organizing drives. To win, the union has to rely on its own power and the mobilization of its allies in labor. Given the composition of this workforce, the struggle to organize the hotel industry is also a struggle for immigrant, black and women's rights.

In order for the working class to fight for its interests, it has to be independent of and in opposition to the capitalist rulers. The labor movement must oppose U.S. imperialist adventures abroad and the capitalists' drive to increase the exploitation of workers at home, as well as the "war on terror," which means increased attacks on immigrants, black people and the working class. This means a fight to build a new class-struggle leadership in the unions to replace the pro-capitalist union bureaucracy that keeps working people chained to their capitalist enemies, most often through support to the Democratic Party. **Victory to the hotel workers!** ■

# WORKERS VANGUARD



1965: In Selma, Alabama state troopers attack black civil rights demonstrators marching against racist voter registration procedures. 2000: Protesters against racist intimidation of black voters in Florida.

## Black Disenfranchisement and American "Democracy"

In the 2000 elections, Florida made headlines across the globe as its electoral machinery worked to spit out a result favorable to George W. Bush—an outcome subsequently assured by the blatantly partisan intervention of the U.S. Supreme Court, whose chief justice, William Rehnquist, launched his career 40 years ago by purging blacks from Arizona's voter rolls. While confusing ballots that led many old Jewish women to vote for sinister rightist Patrick Buchanan dominated the news, black people were the target of a concerted effort to rob them of their right to vote. Police roadblocks barred the ways to polling places, and many black people who managed to get through found themselves barred from voting even if they carried a voter registration card.

Nearly 140,000 black men in Florida were denied suffrage in the last presidential election due to felony convictions, many of them resulting from the racist, bipartisan "war on drugs." In Jacksonville, an astounding 9 percent of ballots cast were invalidated, over a third of

**Finish the Civil War!  
For Black Liberation Through  
Socialist Revolution!**

them cast by black people. Meanwhile, over in Missouri, the corpse of Democrat Mel Carnahan beat the still breathing John Ashcroft, now Bush's Attorney General, for a seat in the U.S. Senate in a stinging repudiation of Ashcroft's fanatical conservatism—and with a heavy turnout of black voters.

Florida was not alone. In many black precincts in Chicago, as many as one in six ballots were tossed out. The Republicans have forgotten none of this and are hatching new plans to prevent black people, who overwhelmingly vote Dem-

ocrat, from voting. A Republican state legislator in the bitterly contested state of Michigan, John Pappageorge, has stated bluntly, "If we do not suppress the Detroit vote [in a city that is over 80 percent black], we're going to have a tough time in this election" (*New York Times*, 13 September). Florida election officials drafted a list of those disqualified due to past felony convictions; of some 48,000 felons, roughly 22,000 were blacks. Strikingly, the list included only 61 Hispanics, who in southern Florida are largely anti-Castro *gusano* reactionaries,

a key Republican constituency.

These are nothing less than a frontal attack on the basic democratic right of blacks to vote. While there is not a candidate in this election who represents the interests of workers, black people and other oppressed minorities, we are intransigent defenders of the hard-won right to vote. The bloody Civil War that smashed chattel slavery won black men the right of the franchise, which was then largely stripped from them in the South during the Jim Crow era. Black people in the South regained voting rights through the courageous struggles of the civil rights movement—struggles that faced brutal police repression and KKK nightriding terror. Civil rights activists Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner and James Chaney, whose bodies were dredged from a muddy dam in Neshoba County, Mississippi in 1964, were among those lynched for fighting for black people's right to the franchise.

In a throwback to that era, Florida's

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## Victory to NYC Airport Hotel Workers Strike! Fight L.A. Hotel Laundry Worker Lockout!

In September 22, 150 hotel workers in Queens, New York went on strike against three airport hotels—the Holiday Inn and the Hampton Inn near Kennedy and the Crowne Plaza near La Guardia—after management fired ten workers active in union organizing. Led by the New York Hotel Trades Council, an umbrella organization for the area locals of UNITE HERE hotel workers union, the strikers are rightly calling on pilots, flight attendants and others who normally patronize the hotels not to use them during the strike. Meanwhile, on September 16, just two days after 10,000 union hotel workers in Los Angeles, San Francisco and Washington, D.C. overwhelmingly voted to authorize a strike, the Wilshire Grand hotel staged a provocation by locking out 17 laundry workers in UNITE HERE Local 52, which has been in negotiations with the hotel.

With no warning, the laundry workers, reporting for work at 6:00 a.m., just hours after their contract

expired, were summarily handed the following notice by management: "You Are Hereby **LOCKED OUT** Until Further Notice. Do Not Attempt To Enter The Facilities." Many of these workers have worked at the hotel for decades. The laundry workers' lockout is an explicit challenge to UNITE HERE to strike. John Stoddard, Wilshire Grand general manager and outspoken member of the Hotel Employers Council, said he took the action knowing it could prompt a strike, bragging, "We brought in replacement workers. We had them all lined up in case this happened" (*Los Angeles Times*, 17 September).

These workers were easily targeted because the union tops did not merge the laundry workers in Local 52 (formerly a UNITE local) into the general hotel workers UNITE HERE Local 11 in July when the national merger of UNITE and HERE took place, so that all hotel workers would be organized

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September 25: Striking hotel workers in Queens demand union recognition.