

The

Special Supplement

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Internationalist



Marxism and the Battle Over Education



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- Marxist readings

***The* Internationalist**

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Special Supplement



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Marxism and the Battle Over Education

Introduction to the 2nd Edition

Today in the United States and internationally there is an ongoing battle over education. Ever since the tumultuous 1960s, reactionary forces have been waging “culture wars,” seeking to return to the rigid imperialist regimentation of the early Cold War. Their appetites whetted by the counterrevolution that overthrew the bureaucratically degenerated and deformed workers states of the Soviet bloc during 1989-92, hard-line Cold Warriors have since taken aim at the minimal social protections of the so-called “welfare state.” Now they are seeking to privatize public education, from pre-school up to university level.

The Internationalist Group and the League for the Fourth International, of which it is the U.S. section, have published a number of articles (reprinted in this collection) providing a Marxist analysis of the onslaught against the public schools and a communist program to fight it. In the name of “standards,” the bourgeoisie is using exclusionary “high-stakes testing” to exclude a whole layer of poor, minority and working-class students from obtaining diplomas, consigning them to low-paid “McJobs,” while concentrating educational resources on an elite (see page 4). Meanwhile, gains of the civil rights movement (see page 9) are being reversed by increasing *resegregation* of U.S. schools. The huge influx of immigrants is to be forcefully “Americanized” by abolishing bilingual education (see page 12), and youth are to be prepared as cannon fodder for the wars of U.S. imperialism in the “New World Order.” In higher education, there is the drive to eliminate any vestige of “open admissions” (see pages 49-55). And everywhere there are virulent attacks on teachers unions.

This special supplement to *The Internationalist* contains a number of articles on our activity and initiatives in New York City area schools (pages 20-48). This includes participation in the struggle over the elimination of hundreds of teaching positions in the “restructuring” of the alternative school district in 2007. Since the first edition of this bulletin was issued in 2003, the fight against imperialist war has been a key focus of our work. This second edition includes reports on successful struggles led by the IG at the City University of New York to drive military recruiters off one campus and to shut down a homeland security course at another (see pages 56-59). In addition, Marjorie Stamberg gave a presentation at national and state conferences of teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) on “Teaching ESL in a Climate of War.” (page 25).

The League for the Fourth International has also been active in struggles over education elsewhere. In Brazil, supporters of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista in the teachers union of the state of Rio de Janeiro (SEPE-RJ) sparked a state-wide work stoppage demanding freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal (see pages 60-63). Although others talk of mobilizing labor for Mumia, this was the first actual use of union power, and it was carried out in conjunction with a coast-wide ten-hour shutdown of U.S. West Coast ports by the ILWU dock union calling to free Jamal. An article translated from our Spanish-language newspaper *El Internacionalista* on the ten-month 1999-2000 strike by students

of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) documents how the privatization and elitization of the universities is being pushed by imperialist financial agencies (see page 64). A full account of the strike and the LFI intervention (including initiating the formation of worker-student defense guards) is available in the Internationalist supplement, “Mexico: The UNAM Strike and the Fight for Workers Revolution” (see ad, page 65). More recently, our comrades of the Grupo Internacionalista participated actively in the protracted struggle by teachers in the Mexican state of Oaxaca against a murderous government, including taking over the state capital for a period of six months. In the U.S., the Internationalist Group sparked solidarity demonstrations that had an impact in Oaxaca (pages 66-75).

At the same time, we Trotskyists stress that efforts at educational reform in the interests of the exploited and oppressed and the fight against capitalist reaction cannot succeed without sweeping away the imperialist system, whose increasing decay means the wholesale destruction of past democratic and social gains. Today as in the past, *the fight for education must be part of the fight for international socialist revolution*. Indeed, every epoch of social upheaval focuses public attention and political controversy on the schools, for deep-going changes in society are concentrated in the education of the coming generation. In the period leading up to the French Revolution of 1789-92, the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau prefigured the rise of bourgeois democracy and the educational system of the post-revolutionary regime.

The institution of universal public education was an outgrowth of industrial capitalism, as the captains of industry needed literate workers. (At the same time, they sought to strictly control the content of the education provided to their “wage slaves.”) In the early 20th century, a movement for “progressive education” sought to modernize antiquated practices. But radical change was restricted to isolated experiments. It was the Soviet workers republic, led by the Bolshevik Party of V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, that first undertook a genuine revolution in public education. We reprint here the essay on “The Class School” by Anatoli Lunacharsky, the first Soviet commissar of education and enlightenment, which laid out the Bolsheviks’ educational plans (pages 76-90). In addition, in the second edition of this bulletin, we have added Lunacharsky’s decree on “The Basic Principles of the Unified Labor School,” two essays by Nadezhda Krupskaya on “Public Education and Democracy” and “Concerning the Question of Socialist Schools,” plus a chapter from a book by John Dewey on his visit to the Soviet Union, “New Schools for a New Era” (see pages 91-98).

The Bolsheviks’ initial groundbreaking achievements were largely rolled back by the Stalinist bureaucracy, and eventually undone by capitalist counterrevolution. But the program of Lenin and Trotsky shows the way forward to a revolutionary educational system on the road to a classless, socialist society. ■

For a Class-Struggle Fight Against the Racist Union-Busters!

Defeat the Capitalist Onslaught Against Public Education!

The following article is reprinted from The Internationalist No. 10, June 2001.

The public school system is the focal point of an assault by key sectors of the U.S. ruling class. “Education reform” was a top issue for both Democrats and Republicans in last year’s presidential election, as it is in the New York City mayoral election this coming fall. Masked by phony pro-children rhetoric and squabbling over vouchers, there is a *“bipartisan” consensus to “reinvent” public education to reflect the demands of the capitalist market.*

As usual, teachers are portrayed as the obstacle to high standards and improving schools. The fact that education budgets have been systematically cut back for decades, spending less and less money per pupil, goes unmentioned. Not a word about how American schools are being resegregated (insofar as they were even minimally desegregated), with minority students warehoused in run-down inner-city facilities.

The *privatization offensive* includes free marketeers who push “vouchers” to subsidize private schools, conservatives and liberals who want to gut union gains with “charter schools,” and corporate execs taking over school administration to impose “accountability.” Republican right-wingers go after teachers unions as a whipping boy, while liberal Democrats want to lengthen the school day and the school year in exchange for a paltry raise.

This is the line-up facing NYC teachers today and teachers around the country. It’s not just about the need for a massive wage increase but a broader fight against a ruling-class onslaught targeting teachers and their minority, immigrant, poor and working-class students. The response of the American Federation of Teachers and National Education Association leaders is to embrace the treacherous “standards” rhetoric and try to cut a deal over “merit pay.” That is, they go along with the racist union bashers while pleading for a few dollars because of the huge teacher shortage. This is a recipe for disaster.

A few voices are raised in opposition to “market-driven reforms” and in defense of public education as a building block for classless “democracy.” Such appeals to liberal/social-democratic programs of the past will go nowhere in the face of the holy alliance of New Democrats, neo-conservatives, labor bureaucrats and corporate chiefs. The AFT/NEA tops are not merely sellouts, they are consciously serving the interests of American capitalism – as they always have. They are a road-



Parents protest plans to privatize Bronx school, March 29.

block to struggle in defense of teachers and students.

The capitalist politicians cynically pose as if they are concerned with children’s welfare. Republican George W. Bush vows to “leave no child behind,” lifting a slogan from the Children’s Defense Fund, the cheerleaders for Democrat Hillary Clinton. This has about the same relationship to reality as the U.S. Army’s jingle “Be All You Can Be” or Dow Chemical’s talk of “Living Improved Daily” (through Agent Orange!) – namely it is the opposite of the truth.

While appealing to the desires of teachers and parents to improve the quality of education, the capitalist politicians’ calls for “standards-based reform” are code words for a program to force out hundreds of thousands of students from the schools. This is the hypocritical frothing of the people who have kept schools from the South Bronx to South Texas (the two poorest Congressional districts in the country) in a state of deadening decay for decades.

Simply decreeing “standards” will not improve the schools. A New York Court of Appeals decision last January confirmed what everyone knows, that NYC schools are systematically short-changed compared to wealthy suburbs in the distribution of state aid. But this is also true within the city schools.

Ten years ago, Jonathan Kozol noted in his passionate exposé of public education in New York City that the poorest NYC districts get roughly 90 cents per pupil from legislative grants, while the richest districts get \$14 per pupil. He concludes that the present situation is “less a field of education

options than a battlefield on which a class and racial war is being acted out" (*Savage Inequality* [HarperCollins, 1991]).

Kozol also writes: "To the extent that school reforms such as 'restructuring' are advocated for the inner cities, few of these reforms have reached the schools that I have seen.... Even in those schools where some 'restructuring' has taken place, the fact of racial segregation has been, and continues to be, largely uncontested."

Today the talk is of "reinventing" the public schools. But the real meaning of this rhetoric is even worse. New York state education commissioner Richard Mills and the others (like former regent, now NYC schools chancellor Harold Levy) who decreed that all students must pass five Regents exams in order to graduate from high school knew what they were doing. The effect of this and similar reforms around the country will be to dramatically increase the tendency to a two-tier education system, with more rigorous schools for those considered "college bound" and barracks-like "academies" for those tracked to be low-wage unskilled labor.

And it's already happening, as every New York City teacher knows. In the high schools, the dropout rate has shot up by 25 percent in just two years with the introduction of compulsory Regents tests. Already more than a third of Latino and black students never graduate high school. At the current pass rate, the chancellor says that, "optimistically," at most 40 percent of the students will graduate with their class.

This could set off a social explosion, in a city where 85 percent of public school students are non-white. Denied a diploma, thousands of youths in the barrios and ghettos are thrown onto the streets with little prospect of getting a job. There they are prey to marauding cops who profile them, beat them, arrest them and shoot them down outside their homes.

A fundamental fight is posed. Like the NYPD, Republican mayor Rudolph Giuliani and his gang of racist reactionaries think they can beat up on anyone and get away with it. Already they have gotten AFSCME District 37, headed by a court-imposed leadership, to swallow "merit pay" supposedly in exchange for avoiding layoffs. Now they're gearing up to strong-arm New York City teachers. Working in tandem with the mayor, the Democrats figure they can play "soft cop" and get the union to give up hard-won gains.

The United Federation of Teachers leaders under Randi Weingarten pretend that by smart bargaining they will "get the money." In fact they are preparing to cut a deal on Giuliani's demands for "performance pay" (going along with the racist "standards" fraud) in exchange for a raise far less than what hard-pressed teachers need. Yet with a clear and present teacher shortage, the union is in a strong position. ***Now is the time to let the union-busters have it.***

This fight cannot and must not be waged by the teachers alone. They will face the strikebreaking Taylor Law, which prescribes jail for leaders of public employees unions who go on strike, huge fines on striking unions and on individual strikers. This union-busting law was used to jail UFT leaders in 1975 and against transit strikers in 1980. Weingarten is calling for lobbying in Albany to "reform" the Taylor Law. Fat chance.

The response of labor to the scab law must be to turn it into a dead letter. To do that requires the militant mobilization

of the 110,000 active duty members of the UFT (not just the 78,000 teachers but also more than 30,000 terribly underpaid staff and paraprofessionals), the largest union in New York City, along with hundreds of thousands of workers in other key unions, over a million students and millions of minority, immigrant, poor and working people in NYC.

Together, we have the power to crush the racist labor haters from City Hall to the State House and the White House and defeat their escalating drive for the privatization of "public" education. But to do so what's needed first and foremost is a class-struggle leadership.

Educational "Reform" to Serve Capital

When capitalist politicians talk of educational reform, the name of the blame game is always "pin the tail on the teacher." Bush, a board-certified racist, sneers about "the soft bigotry of low expectations" and bandies about scores from phony Texas tests. Publishers churn out books like *The Teacher Unions: How the NEA and AFT Sabotage Reform and Hold Students, Parents, Teachers and Taxpayers Hostage to Bureaucracy* (Free Press, 1997) and *Power Grab: How the National Education Association Is Betraying Our Children* (Regnery, 1999).

Mayor Giuliani, of course, is basher-in-chief. While unleashing the ghoulish Board of Ed "investigator" Stancik to frame up teachers for falsifying test scores or any other trumped-up charge, the core of Giuliani's education "program" is to tie teachers' pay to student test scores. Yet Hillary Clinton, the darling of the UFT tops, also "calls for national education standards and for linking teachers' pay with students' performance" (AP, 25 March 2000).

The fundamental fact is that the push for national "standards," "merit pay," "school choice" and the rest of the "market-driven" education "reforms" is the *common* program of the partner parties of American capitalism. Indeed, although the drive was begun by the Reagan regime in the early '80s, it was the Clintonite "New Democrats" who enacted the program under the name "Goals 2000."

The actual plan for national testing came from the Democratic Leadership Conference (DLC), the lobby led by then Arkansas governor Clinton which sought to ditch any vestige of liberalism in order to recapture the "Reagan Democrat" vote. It was embodied in President Clinton's 1997 "Voluntary National Education Standards Initiative."

"Charter schools" exempted from union contracts – another Clinton program. In 1999 the DLC's Progressive Policy Institute devised a plan for "performance-based federal education funding," to dole out funds according to student scores on standardized tests. "Merit" pay for teachers is the logical extension of this program, so it's no fluke that was embraced by "New Democrat" policy wonk Hillary Clinton.

During the mid-'90s, Congressional Republicans under the sway of the right-wing Christian Coalition railed against any national standards and called for abolition of the federal Department of Education. What was decisive in bringing Republicans "on board" was the persuasive power of big capital.

Clinton's 1996 "education summit" of 49 corporate bosses and 40 governors was held at IBM's conference center at Paliades, New York and called for "standards." Leading corporations formed the Business Coalition for Excellence in Educa-

tion to push these “reforms.” Prominent among these “reformers” were IBM chief Lou Gerstner and former Xerox CEO David Kearns. The Education Excellence Partnership spawned by the Business Roundtable and including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, National Governors Association, U.S. Department of Education *as well as the NEA and AFT*, has placed dozens of ads promoting national standards. This “unique coalition of public officials, business and teacher organizations” is the embodiment of class collaboration on education.

School Reform or Reform Schools

So what are the aims of the present education “reforms” being pushed by the White House, Congress and the Fortune 500? The purpose of all the rulers’ talk of “standards” is not to improve the chances for poor inner-city children – they don’t give a damn about that – but to *make the labor force more “competitive” globally with its imperialist rivals, to “Americanize” the new wave of immigrants, and ultimately to prepare the population for war.*

The business interest is explicit. A 1990 *New York Times* article stated: “When it comes to reforming the nation’s schools, these days the leading radicals are likely to be wearing pin-striped suits and come from oak-paneled boardrooms rather than the ivy-covered walls of academia.” The article concluded: “The impetus behind the corporate embrace of education reform is concern about the quality of the American labor pool.”

In 1989, a joint statement by President Bush and the National Governors’ Association declared: “As a nation we must have an educated work force, second to none, in order to succeed in an increasingly competitive world economy.” Although Wall Street fears of being overtaken by Japan, Inc. have given way to post-Cold War *Amerika über alles* triumphalism, the “education crisis” persists.

Under Clinton, the emphasis shifted to the needs of the “new economy” of the “Internet age.” Combined with this was the bipartisan drive to axe welfare as a drain on profits. Thus the 1994 welfare “reform,” promising to throw millions of moms and kids into dire poverty, was accompanied by the School-to-Work Act to gear education to (low-wage) job expectations.

The neo-conservatives and New Democrats who together have designed the current reforms talk as if the U.S. economy will soon consist of “symbolic analysts” and “knowledge workers,” while manufacturing is shipped off-shore to low-wage Third World (semi-colonial) countries. In this view high school graduates with vocational training will simply be out of luck, so what’s prescribed is massive retraining and regearing the schools.

The number of skilled, unionized jobs in this country has indeed been sharply slashed in recent years, and U.S. businesses are trying to turn Mexico into a giant *maquiladora* of free-trade zone plants. But the idea that the United States is going to become a giant Silicon Valley is an Internaut fantasy that will go up in smoke just as sure as wildly overpriced Nasdaq technology stocks did. No imperialist “superpower” is going to subcontract its fundamental industries. Meanwhile, along with herds of computer nerds they need unskilled pizza delivery boys and cashiers.

The masters of American capitalism are intent on creating a far more sharply polarized economy, in which there will be a

relatively highly paid technologically proficient petty bourgeois layer and a mass of low-paid service workers, while industrial wages will continue to be slashed in a “race to the bottom” in the name of “competitiveness.” It is notorious that under Reagan, Bush and Clinton, the yawning abyss between the pay of top executives and workers has dramatically widened. This is not accidental but intended.

Clintonites like former Labor Department chief Robert Reich pretend that increasing inequality will be overcome by solving the “mismatch” of skills through increased education, but in fact *the real pay even of college graduates declined* through the recent “boom” (now gone bust). The fact is that in a frenzy to push up profits, U.S. rulers are producing a more “Latin American” type of social structure, with the famous “middle class” being hollowed out. Police are becoming more paramilitary forces, with heavy weaponry (tanks, attack helicopters) and occupation tactics (patrolling in convoys, hit squads) to match. And along with this shift, a more sharply bifurcated, public-private educational system is being created.

“Standards” and Standardization

The first element of this program is *standardization* through national and state “high-stakes testing.” In New York, education authorities plan to hold back large numbers of students who fail tests after fourth and eighth grade, and to deny high school graduation to those who don’t pass a battery of Regents exams in English, math, science, U.S. history and global history. These education managers know full well that students separated from their age group and held back are far more likely to drop out of school altogether. Vituperating against “social promotion,” they are consciously creating a situation in which many students will flunk out and then drop out.

Whole batteries of education professionals are being employed to dream up the tests. The Iowa Basic Skills test was deemed inappropriate – too many questions about farming. The Texas Assessment of Academic Skills test touted by Bush turns out to measure far lower levels of competency than claimed, passing off a sixth grade math level as tenth grade. The Bush tests did solve the problem of the lack of textbooks that bedevils many New York City schools, however. For weeks before the big day, Texas teachers gather up all the books and shamelessly “teach to the test.”

As for the college entry Scholastic Aptitude Tests, John Katzman, head of the Princeton Review test coaching company which trains kids to pass the SATs, says they are an “unmitigated disaster” which “measure nothing important and are biased in favor of affluent white males,” as the *New York Times* (19 April) summed up his views.

Recently parents in affluent white Scarsdale boycotted the state eighth-grade test because they claim it leads to “dumbing down” the curriculum. But while rich suburbs may get away with gestures of protest, alternative “portfolio schools” in the New York City system are being forced to abandon their curriculum in order to teach the Regents. There should be no doubt what’s going on here: the whole movement to impose standardized tests is blatantly racist and discriminatory.

For example, this year’s English Regents exam called for

students to write an essay based on the idea that “as a frequent Internet user” they think agency grant money should be used to provide computer networking outside schools. While national statistics show that 95 percent of all schools now have Internet access, in many schools the antediluvian computers are frequently broken down or locked up; the few Internet connections are seldom (if ever) available to students; and if they do manage to log on, what students can actually see is rigidly controlled by a censorship program designed by a Christian fundamentalist in North Carolina which bans words like “breast.”

The idea that students with little or no access to computers or the Internet should be required to write such an essay (in which they must integrate information from a table of URLs!) is grotesque. But then, the year before, students were supposed to write an essay about the “power of nature” based on a story about a snowstorm. In one class in the Bronx, students from the Caribbean had never seen snow (the first snowfall occurred two days after the test). In another case they were asked to describe their feelings at seeing a Colorado desert storm. (Is that like watching smoke belching from the asthma-producing Mott Haven toxic waste incinerator?)

The purpose of such standardized tests is not to measure achievement but to enforce exclusion, from four-year college, from high school and now even from junior high. After all, there’s no point in having the tests unless someone fails, and guess who that will be. Unionized teachers should ally with parents to ***denounce the racist discrimination of high-stakes standardized testing.*** Instead, beginning with their long-time leader Al Shanker, the UFT and AFT have supported the fraud of “standards-based” educational reform as they march in lock-step with the Department of Education and the “business community.”

Forced “Americanization”

A second element of current “reform” plans is ***forced “Americanization”*** of immigrant students. U.S. capitalism has attracted millions of immigrants, both legal and “illegal,” from Latin America, Asia and Africa to provide low-wage labor. This immigration boom has meant that in New York City, *a majority* of students are foreign-born or come from first-generation immigrant families, where in most cases English is not spoken at home. While the bosses are eager to gouge workers by paying minimum and sub-minimum wages, they are worried about their ability to control millions of oppressed and exploited immigrants. Hence the “crisis” over bilingual education.

This is a totally manufactured issue. Immigrant adults and children are eager to learn English – the real problem is lack of space in courses. Only 16 percent of NYC students are enrolled in ESL (English as a second language) or bilingual classes. Those who do go through the program score *better* on standardized tests than non-native speakers who are dumped into general classes without preparation. The enthusiasm of Giuliani and other racists for sink-or-swim “total immersion” programs is purely political. In addition to denying essential social services to “illegal” immigrants, they want to break any “foreign” cultural ties. Instead of bowing to this xenophobia, the union should ***defend bilingual education against racist attacks*** and demand ***full citizenship rights for all immigrants.***

Militarization

Along with the criminalization of minority youth goes an increasing ***militarization of the schools***, particularly ghetto schools. Already police infest New York City schools, and Giuliani is pushing for the cops to take over discipline so they can carry out arrests inside the school buildings. Around the country, schools are doling out behavioral pills like Ritalin to drug undisciplined kids into submission, based on dubious diagnoses of “attention deficit disorder.” Pseudo-psychological categorizations are used to classify hundreds of thousands of troublesome youth, overwhelmingly racial minorities, as “special education” cases to be removed from the classroom.

And long before the current “security” frenzy, following the 1992 Los Angeles upheaval, General Colin Powell, then head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, now U.S. secretary of state and a multi-millionaire who sat on the boards of several leading defense contractors, set in motion a massive expansion of the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps in urban high schools. The purpose of the JROTC program is to put inner-city youth into uniform and get them used to barracks discipline. They are being trained to be cannon fodder in a future war. Any union worth its salt would demand ***cops and military out of the schools.***

Privatization

The centerpiece of the current reforms is ***privatization of school operation and corporate control of the public schools.*** Bush’s “voucher” plan may play well with the Christian Coalition, but the vast majority of students would remain in the public schools. The corporation chiefs understand this, so their thrust is to take more direct control of the “public” school system. This is symbolized by the naming of Harold Levy, an executive of the Citigroup investment firm with no educational experience, as chancellor of the New York City school system, the largest in the country. (Board of Education member Terri Thomson also works for Citigroup.)

Meanwhile, the new superintendent of the second-largest public school system, the Los Angeles Unified School District, is former Colorado governor Roy Romer. The head of the San Diego schools is the former U.S. attorney for the area. The Chicago school schools “chief executive officer” is the former budget director in Mayor Richard Daly’s administration. In all cases, these businessmen, politicians and prosecutors were backed by business interests, and in all cases they have gone after the teachers unions.

Then there is the Edison Corporation headed by Benno Schmidt, the conservative former Yale president, Giuliani pal and executor of the racist purge of CUNY (see *The Internationalist* No. 7, April-May 1999). Edison and similar outfits see the public education system as a promising new “profit platform,” just like health care was a few years ago. (They refer to themselves as “education management organizations,” or EMOs analogous to HMOs.)

Edison proposes to make millions by milking federal, state and local education budgets, just like defense contractors do with the Pentagon budget. But while it may promise more bang for the educational buck, its delivery vehicles have never lifted off. In New York, the Edison operation blew up on the launch-

ing pad. While Levy went through the motions, opponents actively organized. Parents in Harlem, Crotona Park, Flatbush, Crown Heights and Bushwick understood that their children were going to get short-changed to fill Edison's coffers. When the Board of Ed finally revealed the results, more than 80 percent of those who voted said no to privatization.

Public school privatization under any guise is a racist, union-busting plot. The "charter schools" favored by the Clintonites are at best "privatization lite." Like Edison they rip up union contracts, pay teachers miserable wages (resulting in high turnover), have high-handed administrations, select their students to jack up test scores, and frequently foster a boot-camp atmosphere.

Union-Busting

While there are many variations, the common thread to these schemes is the idea of "contracting out" public education. And just like "out-sourcing" by manufacturers, the central target is the union. This is made crystal clear by a RAND Corporation monograph by Paul Hill titled *Reinventing Public Education* (1995) produced in conjunction with the Chicago school "reform" plan. Hill writes:

"Teachers will become independent professionals selling their services to schools. Unions will become brokers who help match teachers and schools....

"Crippling teacher strikes are possible, but not inevitable. Properly introduced, contracting can gain widespread teacher support and isolate intransigent local union leaders and senior teachers who cannot or will not produce excellent work to justify high pay."

Charter schools, EMOs, merit pay (see back page) are all thinly disguised schemes to break the power of teachers unions and run the schools according to the latest "market standards." A century ago, Lancasterian schools reproduced the life of a factory. Today staffing agencies lobby in Albany for the Workforce Investment Act to expand adult education to train...temps.

The RAND study was supported by the Lilly Foundation, which is part of a web of conservative and far-right outfits including the Bechtel Foundation, Adolph Coors Foundation, Pew Freedom Trust, Heritage Foundation, American Enterprise Institute, Olin Foundation, Manhattan Institute and Hudson Institute who are funding and planning to privatize and corporatize the "public" schools. Together with IBM, Xerox et al. they have drawn up designs for "break-the-mold" schools, "New American Schools" and the like.

"Right Thinking" and Racism

In these schools they will indoctrinate students with right-thinking lessons. Diane Ravitch, former assistant secretary of education in the Bush Sr. administration and one the most prominent "theoreticians" of the anti-"progressive education" movement, was asked at a 1996 Toronto meeting on the history of education how standards would be set for history teaching. Her response: "I want the right attitudes developed by history instruction" (from Joel Spring, *Political Agendas for Education* [1997]). You can bet your bottom dollar that "right atti-

tudes" does not include a teacher presenting a rigorous and sympathetic analysis of Marxism.

Or of any other movement of the exploited and oppressed for that matter. For these would-be reinventers of the public schools are racist to the core. This is the same crowd that has opposed affirmative action to diversify the student body of law schools or medical schools, and pushed through the elimination of open admissions at New York's City University. These are the forces that sank the "Rainbow Curriculum" in the NYC public schools for being "soft on homosexuality."

The reactionary "reformers" and their right-wing financiers are also the backers and colleagues of Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein, whose book *The Bell Curve* (1994) purports to provide statistical proof of inherited intelligence and the alleged inferiority of the lower orders. Herrnstein's "research" was supported by the Pioneer Fund, set up in 1937 by an admirer of Hitler's "eugenics" (racial "cleansing"). *The Bell Curve* was also financed by the Manhattan Institute, which acts as a Giuliani think tank, with Ravitch and Schmidt among its senior fellows.

This right-wing coterie has managed to drive out tens of thousands of black, Latino and immigrant students from colleges and universities in the name of enforcing "standards." Now they are trying to do the same in the high schools. They are trying to whip up an anti-immigrant backlash, they want to regiment secondary education and their immediate target is the teachers union.

Again, the same themes of the Reagan/Bush "neo-conservatives" are repeated by the Clinton/Gore "New Democrats," who also talk of "reinventing public education," who pushed through a bipartisan welfare "reform" bill, as well as the 1994 "Effective Death Penalty and Terrorism Act," the 1996 immigration "reform" and countless other reactionary measures. Reflecting their ties to the Democratic Party and their unbreakable loyalty to capitalism, the UFT/AFT leaders go along with the privatizing onslaught, at most dragging their heels.

So long as teachers fight only for the most limited aims in the framework of pro-capitalist "business unionism," so long as each sector of the oppressed fights only for narrowly defined sectoral interests, they will fail in the face of a bourgeois front stretching from Levy and Giuliani to Clinton and Bush and backed by leading corporations. But a struggle that takes up the cause of all workers, oppressed racial and ethnic groups, immigrants and the poor has vastly greater power than the capitalists, their politicians and their state.

UFT/AFT Tops in the Service of Imperialism

The UFT in New York and the AFT nationally are run by a deeply entrenched bureaucracy irrevocably wedded to American capitalism. So much so, in fact, that when it comes to a direct conflict between the interests of capital and labor, the Shankerite bureaucrats of the AFT/UFT invariably defend the bosses. That is, after all, the role of the labor aristocracy that socialist Daniel De Leon described at the turn of the last century as the labor lieutenants of the capitalist class.

The RAND Corporation, champion of "market-driven educational reform," cites as an example of "national union leaders [who] have anticipated such changes" a 1990 article by Al



Little Rock 1957: Federal Troops Were Used Against Black Struggle

Separate Is Never Equal

In 1949, Edward Clark, a photographer for *Life* magazine, took the above photo of a school for black children in West Memphis, Arkansas. The school was located in a one-room church that had no running water and no inside toilets. Next to this the magazine ran a photo of a brand new school that had been built for white children, with gleaming water fountains and extra classrooms. The stark contrast showed the reality of Jim Crow segregation.

Following the 1954 *Brown v Topeka Board of Education* Supreme Court decision ordering desegregation, a crisis erupted in September 1957 in Little Rock, Arkansas when the state governor ordered the National Guard to block nine black students from registering at Central High School. It has become part of bourgeois mythology, repeated even by some supposedly socialist groups, that U.S. president Dwight Eisenhower sent federal troops to ensure desegregation. In reality, Eisenhower had said for months that he could not imagine “any set of circumstances that would ever induce me to send federal troops...into any area to enforce the edicts of a federal court.” For days, Washington ignored the vicious intimidation of the black students by white racist mobs. It was only after the black population of Little Rock began to mobilize that federal troops were sent in to “preserve peace.” The New York black newspaper *Amsterdam News* (28 September 1957) headlined, “Ike Moves As Negroes Hit Back.”

James Hicks, a reporter for the *Amsterdam News* (who like other black newsmen was himself viciously kicked and beaten by the racists), reported that on September 23, after the courageous black students were removed from Little Rock Central HS because of the mob, there were several clashes between black and white youths. That night a 100-car motorcade of racists was halted barely a block from the home of NAACP leader Daisy Bates. Meanwhile, the fire department sent fire engines racing through the black area with sirens blasting, in an apparent attempt to intimidate the embattled residents. Instead, Hicks wrote: “After the third run of the fire engines the entire Negro community was up and either on the streets or lurking with whatever weapons they possessed behind raised windows and drawn shades.” He found the area “alerted like a military battalion.” The very next day U.S. troops were sent in, “after a night which showed Negroes beginning to fight back in Little Rock...”

Instead of preaching confidence in the racist capitalist government, revolutionaries call for mass labor/black action against the racists and for the right of black armed self-defense.

Shanker, "A Proposal for Using Incentives to Restructure Our Public Schools." Who can be surprised, then, when Shankerites Sandy Feldman and Randi Weingarten come out for "school-based" merit pay?

Many thousands of dedicated, anti-racist teachers desire to aid their students in gaining access to the accumulated knowledge of bourgeois society. By and large they seek "educational reform," but of a "progressive" sort counterposed to the blatantly *regressive* policies now being pushed from Washington and Wall Street. Yet they fight the capitalist offensive piecemeal, denouncing the "prison-industrial complex," "zero tolerance policies," "Eurocentric curriculum" and the like when these are only aspects of the overall capitalist society in this period of imperialist decay.

It has been widely reported that in the decade from 1988 to 1998, New York State spent \$761 million on prisons while its spending on public universities declined by \$615 million (and tuition doubled). This is presented as a matter of legislative spending priorities in Albany. The implicit program is the reformist "butter or guns," as German Social Democrats put it before World War I. But jails instead of schools is not a matter of budget "reallocation," it reflects the class interests of the bourgeoisie.

The AFT/UFT leadership proclaims itself a "partner" with its business and government "allies" in formulating the program of the bourgeoisie. In exchange for a "place at the table," they are more than willing to do the dirty work for their imperialist masters. A pamphlet by George Schmidt, *The American Federation of Teachers and the CIA* (1978) details how Al Shanker and his fellow Cold Warriors of Social Democrats U.S.A. (SDUSA) were deeply involved in union-busting operations by the U.S. spy agency even before taking the helm of the AFT.

Schmidt notes in particular the work of former AFT International Affairs secretary Denise Thiery, which "included co-operation with the U.S. government in the coup d'état that overthrew the Allende government in Chile in 1973." The staff of the AFL-CIO International Affairs Department and the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD), which acted as an arm of the Central Intelligence Agency in Latin America, was shot through with SDUSAers.

The Shanker regime was braintrusted by Max Shachtman, a renegade from Trotskyism who broke from the Fourth International in refusing to defend the Soviet Union in World War II. Shachtman subsequently went over to open support to U.S. imperialism, in the Korean War, the Bay of Pigs and the Vietnam War. Shanker hired Shachtman's wife, Yetta Barsh, as his administrative assistant in the early 1960s, and she in turn promoted SDUSAer Sandra Feldman, who eventually took over the New York operation.

Providing "socialist" cover for the dirtiest U.S. government operations, the SDUSA's paper *New America*, edited by Feldman's then-husband Paul, featured Jonas Savimbi, Angolan front man for the CIA and apartheid South Africa.

The high point of the AFT's counterrevolutionary services to American imperialism came in 1981, when the anti-Soviet Polish "union" Solidarnosc set up a U.S. office in UFT headquarters on Park Avenue South. Lech Walesa's outfit was

bankrolled by the CIA via the AFL-CIO to the tune of millions of dollars. When Trotskyists picketed the Solidarnosc press conference in September 1981, the *Wall Street Journal* ran an editorial on "Communists and the AFL-CIO" threatening: "They should not be allowed to do so easily."

That the Shanker bureaucracy aggressively defended U.S. imperialism abroad was fully in keeping with its role at home. This directly and grievously damaged the interests of teachers, notably in the 1968 teachers strike. That walkout was provoked by liberal Republican mayor John Lindsay, who embraced a "community control" scheme pushed by McGeorge Bundy, the Democratic Vietnam War architect who had gone on to head the Ford Foundation. Shanker's railing against "mob rule" and "extremism" fed into the provocation, as did his appeal to Governor Rockefeller, who was behind the "community control" scheme, and his calls for protection by the racist cops.

The immediate cause of the '68 strike was the firing of a number of local union officials by the black superintendent of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville district. When 250 teachers walked out in protest, they were transferred and non-union scabs hired. While virtually the entire left (including the Communist Party, Progressive Labor Party and International Socialists) opposed the strike and actively supported scabbing, Trotskyists defended the UFT strike against this blatant union-busting attack. But Shanker's propaganda catering to conservative and racist fears grievously inflamed the division between the union and black working people, to the delight of the ruling class.

Fight for Socialist Revolution to Emancipate All the Oppressed!

The Shankerite brand of business unionism, "professionalism," virulent anti-communism and aggressive insensitivity to the concerns and interests of black people and other oppressed groups is based on identification with imperialism. Today, *the AFT/UFT bureaucracy is the biggest obstacle* to waging the sharp fight needed to defeat the capitalist onslaught against teachers and working-class, minority and immigrant students.

New York City teachers have been working for six months without a contract. Weingarten's "Unity" team refuses to go up against Giuliani, who cultivates a mad dog image the way Nixon used to, and they didn't want to cause problems for Democrats Clinton and Gore in the 2000 elections. Now the 2001 municipal elections are under way, and the UFT tops parade Democratic candidates through the delegates assembly while short-circuiting discussion on merit pay.

As they gear up to get a contract from Giuliani by the end of the school year, they pass out armbands saying "No contract, No respect." What is that supposed to mean? We say, **"No contract, no work!" To defeat Giuliani & Co. it will take a strike.** And it can't be a walk-through, but an all-out knock-down, drag-out class battle. To win such a battle requires a class-struggle leadership that has the program and determination to mobilize the power of all labor and the oppressed to fight a ruthless enemy. Instead, various phony leftists in mildly "opposition" caucuses raise only limited contract demands.

Following in the footsteps of her predecessors Feldman and Shanker, Weingarten's program of business (as usual)

unionism and virulent anti-communism has meant that the UFT has gone along with anti-labor “reforms” from charter schools to high-stakes testing and now the introductory form of “merit pay.” Last time around, Weingarten rammed through a Giuliani two-year wage freeze by ordering a revote when the UFT membership voted it down the first time around. (Many of her cohorts in the Municipal Labor Council were even cruder, simply falsifying the ballots to secure their sellout deals.)

To prepare for the kind of powerful strike action that is needed, the UFT needs an ***elected union-wide mass strike committee***, with strike organizing committees elected by the teachers in every facility. Beyond organizational preparations for a solid strike, teachers must wage this fight by allying with doubly oppressed black, Latino and immigrant working people against the common enemy. You can’t defeat the wage gougers in City Hall and fight for quality education without dealing with the racist cop terror that minority students and youth face on the streets.

The teachers union should be in the forefront of ***mobilizing workers power against the killer cops who murdered Amadou Diallo*** and scores of other young people. Instead, as head of the Municipal Labor Coalition (which includes the cops’ PBA), Weingarten hobnobs with detectives association chief Tom Scotto. We say: ***cops out – the bosses’ gunmen are the enemies of labor, minorities and all working people!***

Every day teachers confront the all-sided oppression of this capitalist society. No real struggle can be waged without taking this on. Teachers and all labor must ***fight the racist “workfare” system, organizing WEP workers into the unions with full pay and benefits***. The fight against women’s oppression must include demanding free, 24-hour child care at school sites, which would benefit both teachers and parents.

Above all it is necessary to forge a multiracial ***revolutionary workers party*** by breaking the chains that bind labor and the oppressed to the capitalist parties, principally the Democrats who falsely pose as “friends of labor.” That means raising a class program that goes well beyond simple trade-union demands to fight for a

workers government and international socialist revolution.

Just as the bankruptcy of “business unionism” becomes manifest in a period when the bosses are ripping up union gains, a century of movements for “education reform” have repeatedly run up against the limits of capitalism. Virtually every reform has been tried – progressive schools, free schools, whole schools, no schools – to no avail. After decades of decrying “chalk and talk” – teachers standing before a blackboard and lecturing – the new “reforms” amount to “grill and drill” for standardized tests.

As Jonathan Kozol noted in *Savage Inequalities*: “Liberal critics of the Reagan era sometimes note that social policy in the United States, to the extent that it concerns black children and poor children, has been turned back several decades.... In public schooling, social policy has been turned back almost one hundred years.” To put it another way, capitalism is in decay.


The fundamental reality was pointed out by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels over a century and a half ago:

“The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas; i.e., the class, which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production....”

–*The German Ideology* (1847)

To fundamentally remake education in the interests of the working people and oppressed requires the overthrow of the capitalist system it presently serves and a socialist reconstruction of society on an international scale. Only in that way will the institutions and ideas of the present ruling class, which serve to justify exploitation and misery, be replaced by a truly liberating education that is not confined to the classroom but permeates social life and productive labor.

This is the program of the Internationalist Group, section of the League for the Fourth International. ■

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No Federal Troops, But Labor/Black Defense!

Racist Terror Shakes Boston

The Internationalist Group was founded by long-time cadres of the Spartacist League, including comrades who for many years edited Workers Vanguard, the newspaper of the then-revolutionary SL. At the time of the 1974-75 crisis in Boston, Massachusetts over court-ordered school desegregation through busing of students, the SL stood squarely for busing, arguing that it must be extended to the lily white suburbs and warning against any confidence in the racist, capitalist government. While various supposedly socialist outfits called for federal troops to Boston to put down the racist mobs, WV called in issue after issue for mobilizing the working class in labor/black defense of the black students and neighborhoods. The following article is reprinted slightly abridged from WV No. 55, 25 October 1974.



Haitian immigrant worker Jean-Louis Yvon was dragged from his car and beaten by club-wielding lynch mob in South Boston during racist riots over school busing in October 1974. Trotskyists called for labor/black defense.

BOSTON – The spectre of race war looms in this city. In the last two weeks, the tension from a month of virulently racist anti-busing marches, stonings of school buses carrying black children and mob violence in South Boston has erupted in a series of racial clashes between black and white students. The event which triggered these clashes was the near-murder of a black worker by a crowd of reactionary whites on October 7.

The response of the liberal politicians has been an elaborate buck-passing ritual, in which each tries to save his own career. Neither they nor the police have demonstrated the slightest interest in preventing deaths of black children and working people threatened by the racist lynch mobs. All are desperately trying to avoid appearing to support integration.

The crisis situation in Boston clearly cries out for the formation of integrated trade-union and black defense squads to protect the bused students. Yet black Democratic Party liberals call instead for federal troops. Their camp followers in the ostensibly revolutionary left, notably the Socialist workers Party and Communist Party, tag along obediently.

Incredibly, the Maoists of the Revolutionary Union [RU – now Revolutionary Communist Party] have lined up solidly alongside the reactionaries and the Ku Klux Klan in protesting busing. Though wholly inadequate, busing is at least a minimal step in the direction of racial integration of the schools. But in order to appeal to the poor whites now being led by racist demagogues

like [Boston city councilwoman] Louise Day Hicks, the RU supports the continued imprisonment of black people in the ghettos.

The only socialist organization which has consistently and unambiguously struggled to support busing and called for labor/black defense of the bused school children and black areas is the Spartacist League. Intervening in demonstrations and teach-ins, distributing tens of thousands of leaflets in both black and white working-class neighborhoods and housing projects and proposing united-front efforts against the racist terror, the Spartacist League has raised the need for common working-class/black mass action – the only effective means to put a stop to the mobilization of the reactionaries.

Mob Violence Mounts

Although the leaders of the anti-busing forces constantly talk of “law and order,” the mobs in South Boston have gone rapidly from stoning school buses to random attacks on defenseless blacks. On Friday, October 4, some 6,500 opponents of busing marched “peacefully” through Southie, hurling racist threats and epithets at any black person unfortunate enough to be near the line of march. The demonstration was led by members of the School Committee and Boston City Council.

The following Monday, the racists attempted to form a “human barricade,” blocking access to the Gavin School. A mob from a predominantly white South Boston housing project was dis-

persed by the Tactical Police. However, it re-formed in a short time and roamed the area attacking several blacks. A black worker on lunch break from a printing plant was chased down the street and into his shop. Fellow workers, almost all white, forced his pursuers out of the plant and locked the doors.

Another black worker did not escape so easily. Jean-Louis André Yvon, an immigrant from Haiti, was confronted by a white mob while driving to the South Boston factory where his wife works. He was dragged from his car and unmercifully beaten by the mob, which included men armed with clubs. Yvon's life was saved only by the intervention of a local resident and a cop who fired warning shots.

The lynch mob attack on Yvon was only one of many incidents of the racist terror to which Boston black people have been subjected for weeks. During this time the behavior of the Tactical Police Force has repeatedly demonstrated that the armed thugs of the capitalist state can be trusted to defend nothing save capitalist property. On the first day of school, a crowd of rock-throwing racists followed 18 school buses for many blocks while the police were nowhere in sight.

However, in the cases where cops have actually stood between the school children and the anti-busing gangs, the TPF has occasionally used the "overkill" tactics usually reserved for student and black demonstrations or picket lines. This has produced the ironic spectacle of demonstrations against police brutality by forces who are the staunchest supporters of the cops when their brutality is directed against blacks. But the counterposition of the "little people" in Boston's white ethnic neighborhoods to the "big government" liberals has produced a reactionary populist atmosphere which is only heightened by the elitist goon squad mentality of the cops.

Liberals Pass the Buck

The vote-conscious liberal politicians fear the racist frenzy above all because it threatens their careers. Boston mayor Kevin White, Massachusetts governor Francis Sargent and District Judge Arthur Garrity have engaged in an elaborate hand-washing ritual that would put Pontius Pilate to shame. Republican Sargent, in the middle of a tough race for reelection, has attempted to upstage Democrat White as the firm upholder of law and order. His opponent, liberal Michael Dukakis, has cooperated in submerging busing as a campaign issue.

White is in a more difficult position, having been elected with both black and white votes; furthermore, if race riots break out he will be, in effect, holding the bag. He has, therefore, concentrated in calling for federal intervention, initially in the form of federal marshals to replace the hated TPF in South Boston.

White's October 7 statement to Judge Garrity declared: "We can no longer maintain either the appearance or the reality of public safety and the effective implementation of the plan in South Boston.... Without additional assistance, the school buses cannot roll in South Boston, the plan cannot be implemented...." Every racist in the country took heart at this statement, a clear indication that vigilante anti-busing violence in Boston was paying off. President Ford's statement two days later opposing "forced busing" in Boston and turning down federal intervention likewise emboldened the reactionary forces.

Black Democrats Demand Federal Troops

Because the labor bureaucracy, in the best traditions of narrow business unionism, refuses to mobilize its strength in defense of the racial minorities who are under attack, the black masses see only two courses open to them: reliance on the bourgeois state or indiscriminate retaliation. The latter course was taken by many black youths in the wake of the lynch mob attack on Yvon. The next day gangs of black youths fought with whites outside several schools in Roxbury and then set off on a spree of windshield smashing attacks on innocent whites.

While communists do not defend such attacks on working people, it must be emphasized that this retaliation is in response to repeated terror attacks to which blacks have been subjected during the last month. For almost four weeks, black youths had put up with endless racist threats.

In a mass-distributed leaflet the Spartacist League warned: "The racists and the Ku Klux Klan want futile black reprisals as an excuse to launch massive terror against blacks.... Don't play the reactionaries' game, but repel all racist attacks! For Organized Self-Defense!" ("Stop the Racist Terror," 9 October 1974). If any serious attempt had been made to organize integrated defense squads of unionists and blacks to protect the buses, schools and black areas, there would be no threat of massive racial clashes today.

The self-serving careerist black liberal politicians have preferred to rely instead on the bourgeois state. Representative Mel King, NAACP head Atkins, the Black Caucus in the state legislature, Freedom House, Black Ministerial Alliance, etc., have constantly sabotaged efforts at mass mobilization of black and white supporters of busing to defend the school children. During the days before the October 12 demonstration, the Black Caucus repeatedly vacillated over whether there would be a march at all. Finally, in a stupid act of racial exclusionism, at the last minute black leaders decided to exclude whites from the march! (Whites joined black marchers at the Boston Commons.)

Federal marshals and troops do not serve the interests of oppressed minorities or the working class any more than the TPF, state troopers or National Guard! They are the armed fist of the bourgeois class. At best the presence of federal troops in Boston might mean the maintenance of "social peace" based on continued segregation of the black minority in inferior ghetto schools. As everyone from the liberal [mayor] White to the conservative Ford has made clear, they will not enforce school integration.

For Labor/Black Defense

Columbia Point residents have already seen the results of reliance on the bourgeois state as advocated by white and black liberals and various fake-socialists. When project residents appealed for police protection from racist nightriding attacks by white-sheeted vigilantes, they got military occupation instead. Racists in uniform vandalized their community center and sent a number of residents to the hospital.

In contrast to the reformists who build illusions in the neutrality of the bourgeois government, the Spartacist League has insisted that working people and oppressed minorities can rely only on their own forces for defense. As a first step in this direction the SL has called on trade unions, black and tenant

organizations and socialist groups to mobilize a mass demonstration to counter the reactionary anti-busing campaign.

The response of the liberal union leaders has been cowardly, defeatist and hypocritical. The Civil Rights Committee of the Massachusetts State Labor Council issued the most tepid policy statement imaginable, announcing: "...it is very clear that organized labor as a body is deeply committed to integrated quality education and to achievement of that principle. Obviously, the unleashing of violence and hatred, as has happened in the city of Boston, can only be deplored. The first to suffer are the children of working people."

If the labor bureaucrats were so "deeply committed" to integration, then one might expect them to do something. For example, the head of this civil rights committee, Redford Weng, is a leader of the Amalgamated Meatcutters, an integrated union whose work places are concentrated precisely in the area between white South Boston and black Roxbury. The SL has sought to direct its agitation in particular at such key unions, pointing out that they have a particular obligation and immediate interest in stopping the racist terror. However, like the black liberals, most "progressive" union leaders prefer to rely on the government.

Fake Socialists Tail After the Liberals

Having long since abandoned any semblance of revolutionary Trotskyist politics, the reformist Socialist Workers Party has dutifully applied its 'principled' line in Boston – support whatever the "black community" wants. But who is this black community? We live in a class society. Time after time the SWP makes crystal clear that the "black community" means the bourgeois "leaders" such as the NAACP, Black Caucus, et al.

And of course, since the "black community" (i.e., King and Atkins) wants federal troops, then so does the SWP: "We completely support the demands of the Black community that federal troops be sent to Boston immediately to protect Black students from the escalating rightist violence" brays the *Militant* (18 October 1974). But it is the ABC of Marxism that the armed forces of the bourgeois state are the enemies, not the allies, of working people.

The Communist Party, which has been cynically debauching Marxism for decades, naturally has the same position: "The Federal Government must act – send in Federal marshals and troops to end the racist terror" (*Daily World*, 11 October 1974). But if you are going to tail after the liberals, then at least you should do it right! The CP-backed Mass Alliance Against Racism and Repression called on those who defend busing and support the rights of black people to join the October 12 march; but when the Black Caucus decided to exclude whites, the Young Workers Liberation League (acting as marshals for the march) duly turned back a number of white parents and members of socialist organizations who showed up to demonstrate their solidarity!

Those who today preach reliance on the bosses' hired guns and abstaining from struggle for united labor/black defense are preparing the way for tragic deaths and perhaps race riots tomorrow.

– Implement the Busing Plan! Extend Busing to the Suburbs!
– No Troops! For a Labor/Black Defense!"

Union Calls for Labor/Black Defense in Boston

The Boston busing crisis sent shock waves around the country. While the labor bureaucrats predictably tried to pass the buck to the capitalist government, calls for mobilizing the power of labor did find a hearing in sectors of the working class. In Baltimore, a second shift meeting of the Industrial Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers of America Local 33 unanimously passed the following resolution:

Whereas, the present racial violence now going on in Boston and Baltimore around the school busing issue is of concern to all trade-unionists and workers; and

Whereas, the anti-busing forces' claim that they are only try to preserve "quality" education in the predominantly white schools has proved only a front for racist violence against black workers and school children; and

Whereas, the right-wing forces in Boston, led by Louise Day Hicks, the Ku Klux Klan, and the Nazis are attempting to channel rising anger of workers – not against big business and its government, which is responsible for unequal and discriminatory education, inflation and unemployment – but against racial minorities; and

Whereas, Local 33 and the national office of IUMSWA must support busing to achieve equality in education for *all* children, through integrated schools, preventing degenerating standards for blacks, Latins, and other minorities; and

Whereas, the calling of cops, the National Guard and federal troops – strikebreakers for big business – will not defend racial minorities, but will, in fact, disrupt that defense; and

Whereas, the recent case in Detroit of the United Auto Workers (UAW) providing competent defense and protection for a black family, living in a hostile white community, after the local "authorities" proved uninterested and incapable of such action, shows the way labor defense succeeds,

Therefore be it resolved, that Local 33 of IUMSWA demands:

- 1) That the national office work with Local 5 officials in Quincy [Massachusetts] and coordinate a mass rally, calling on other trade unions and black groups to join in a untied effort to defeat the Ku Klux Klan and the Nazis who are stirring racial hatred and attempting to divide the working class; and
- 2) That the national office and IUMSWA officials in Boston help initiate the mobilization of squads of IUMSWA members with other labor and black organizations to protect the children being bused – both black and white.

**Equal Language Rights for All!
Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!**

Defend Bilingual Education Against Racist Attack!

The following article is reprinted from The Internationalist No. 15, January-February 2003.

The nationwide campaign against bilingual education is escalating. This past November, two states had a reactionary referendum on the ballot outlawing programs with classroom instruction in non-English languages. In Colorado, Amendment 31 was defeated, but in Massachusetts Question 2 was passed, by a record 70 percent. The hotly debated Massachusetts initiative called for replacing the state's bilingual program with a one-year English "immersion" program. Ominously, the ballot measures called to sue teachers, even jail them, for using any language other than English in the classroom. Not only bilingual teachers but English as a Second Language (ESL) instructors are targeted, and the immigrant-bashers are also going after teachers unions. The racist attack on bilingual ed goes together with the detentions of thousands of immigrants following the 11 September 2001 World Trade Center attack, and underscores the urgent need for the workers movement to mobilize in defense of immigrants' rights.

This new offensive has nothing to do with theories on how best to educate children and everything to do with a national chauvinist onslaught against "foreigners." The referendum was financed in large part by Silicon Valley millionaire Ron Unz, the xenophobic software magnate who bankrolled the "English Only" drive against bilingual education in California (Proposition 227) and in Arizona (Proposition 203). Unz feeds on racist stereotypes and whips up nativist hysteria with articles such as his piece "California and the End of White America" in *Commentary* (November 1999). At the height of the post-9/11 anti-terrorist frenzy, Unz wrote an Internet article for the far-right *National Review* (26 October 2001)

denouncing theorists of bilingual education as "tiny groups of educational terrorists in our midst." Earlier, Unz referred to bilingual teachers as "human vampires." Now he is pushing for national legislation banning bilingual education and taking aim at New York.

While Unz is the spearhead for the drive against bilingual ed, behind him are the racists in the White House and halls of Congress. George Bush's 2001 "No Child Left Behind" Act is the major force attacking bilingual education in U.S., eliminating Title VII, which was passed in 1968 in response to pressure from minority and immigrant communities. And as James Crawford, the liberal educational reformer and former Washington editor of *Education Week*, wrote in "Obituary: The Bilingual Ed Act 1968-2002" (*Rethinking Schools*, Summer 2002): "Liberal Democrats made little effort to block the transformation of the Bilingual Education Act into the English Language Acquisition Act. Not a single member of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, once a stalwart ally of Title VII, voted against the legislation."

Behind the battle over bilingual education is the dramatic rise in immigration to the U.S. over the last two decades. In the 2000 census, 11.2 percent of the total U.S. population was foreign-born, some 30 million people, up sharply from 4.7 percent two decades earlier. If you include children of immigrants

Christina Caturano/Boston Globe



Six-year-old practices reading during bilingual class at elementary school in Framingham, Massachusetts, November 2002. Question 2 aimed at forcing her into English "immersion" program.

born in the U.S. and the considerable number of undocumented workers, the actual figures are far higher. This is possibly the highest level of immigration in modern U.S. history, and certainly the highest since the 1920s. Today there are several new elements. For one thing, there are sizeable areas of homogeneous non-English-speaking populations. In southern California, the

Southwest and most metropolitan areas, there are huge tracts where Spanish is the predominant language. Also, immigrants are now present in “heartland” areas of the Midwest and Deep South. From North Carolina to Nebraska, workers in many meatpacking and poultry plants are now predominantly Latino and Asian. Indeed, whole sectors of the U.S. economy depend on low-wage immigrant workers, and this is unlikely to change in the near future.

As in the '20s, the growth of immigration has been accompanied by anti-immigrant hysteria, from Ku Klux Klan attacks and vigilante “border patrols” to a raft of state and national legislation against immigrant rights. The xenophobes are terrified that the United States is becoming a multi-lingual country. The idea that English will no longer be the dominant language in the U.S. is a paranoid fantasy driven by racist fears. Thousands of immigrants are turned away from English classes because every slot is filled. In fact, English is the overwhelmingly predominant language internationally in commerce and every other field, reflecting the dominance of U.S. imperialism. Moreover, the U.S. capitalist economy owes much of its relative strength to this large-scale immigration, in contrast to its imperialist rivals of Europe and Japan, where the population is either stagnant or falling. But it is certainly true that with millions of new foreign-born residents, the United States is becoming more ethnically and linguistically diverse. This is a good thing. What the nativist racists fear, proletarian internationalists greet.

The Internationalist Group demands: *Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! No discrimination against any language! Defend bilingual education against racist assault! For worker-immigrant defense against racist attacks!*

Battle Lines Drawn in Massachusetts

While the anti-bilingual education referendum passed at the polls in Massachusetts, that has not ended resistance to this anti-immigrant drive. Question 2 was opposed by groups including faculty, graduate employees and campus workers unions at University of Massachusetts, teachers unions in Boston and elsewhere in the state, and activists from the Asian and Latino

Town Meeting Against Ban on Bilingual Ed (Amherst, Massachusetts, December 2002)



Packed town meeting at Amherst, Massachusetts, 9 December 2002, to demand that statewide ban on bilingual education not be applied to their schools.

communities. While the ballot question passed by a majority of nearly three-to-one in the state, a poll of Latino voters showed them virtually unanimous (92 percent) in opposition, while the Asian vote in Boston was 67 percent against Question 2. The measure failed in Boston, Cambridge, Somerville, Brookline and Newton, as well as 15 communities in western Massachusetts. In the college town of Amherst, people were up in arms over the issue and a jam-packed town meeting on December 9 voted to seek an exemption to the state law.

The implementation of some of the specific measures is now an open question. The law is not scheduled to go into effect until school starts next September. Republican governor Mitt Romney pretended during his election campaign that he would kill the “sue teachers” provisions, but now says “he opposes any effort to gut the new law” (*Standard-Times* [New Bedford], 18 December 2002). “Dozens of bills have been filed on Beacon Hill, seeking to curb or roll back the initiative,” the

Photos: Jerrey Roberts/Daily Hampshire Gazette

paper reports. Some school systems are seeking waivers and a few school administrators have said that they would defy the law. One educator remarked, “a few well-organized single-school sit-ins would alter the atmosphere considerably.” That would help, but what’s really needed is for teachers and students to take mass defiant action, and for labor to mobilize its power to defend its many immigrant members against this racist attack. *Out of the schools and into the streets, and let the state try to jail hundreds of teachers, students and trade-unionists!*

The backers of the drive against bilingual education are all-purpose reactionaries. One of the most prominent is Boston University chancellor John Silber, a notorious right-wing attack dog. His particular target is teachers unions: “The teachers union is working hard to perpetuate these jobs” and is “trapping” children in a “linguistic ghetto” (*Boston Herald*, 14 March 2002). As president of B.U. in the 1980s, Silber broke a bitter faculty strike and turned the university into a conduit for Reaganite Cold War schemes. In 1984 he was named to the Kissinger Commission on Central America, which called for funneling millions to the Nicaraguan contra terrorists. In 1986, he got hundreds of thousands of dollars from the U.S. Information Agency to train anti-Soviet Afghan *mujahedin* (holy warriors) as “journalists.” In a McCarthyite red-baiting campaign, a former Communications College dean who objected to the Afghan Media Project was accused of ties with the Communist Party and even linked to Alger Hiss. Perhaps Silber will inform us of how many of his Afghan protégés in this CIA-style disinformation scheme ended up with another former CIA “asset,” Osama bin Laden.

Pseudo-Science in the Service of Racist Attacks

To pump up their “academic” credentials, the “English only” crowd trot out pseudo-scientific research designed to serve right-wing reaction. The phrase “scientifically-based research models” is the new catchword used to bully educators into everything from high-stakes testing to phony phonics reading schemes. In Massachusetts, their favorite is Dr. Christine Rossell, who was named head of the B.U. political science department under Silber and later advised him on educational affairs when he was head of the Mass. state board of education. In a chapter in a book edited by Diane Ravitch and Joseph Viteritti, *Lessons From New York City Schools* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), Rossell writes: “Language-minority children should be taught in English.... Scientific research indicates that language minority children generally have higher achievement if they are taught in English rather than in their native tongue.” Scientific studies show nothing of the sort, and this Silberite political scientist who fancies herself an education “expert” is hardly unbiased. Rossell was co-chair of Unz’s 2002 Massachusetts Initiative Campaign.

Rossell’s dubious “scholarship” has been exposed by leading figures in the field of ESL and bilingual education. Stephen Krashen, perhaps the leading authority in the U.S. on second language acquisition and architect of California’s bilingual education program, has devastated Rossell’s claim that immersion is better than bilingual education, as suppos-



Janet Knott/Boston Globe

Ron Unz, xenophobic software millionaire at Boston media event calling to abolish bilingual ed, July 2002.

edly shown in “72 nationwide studies.” In a note to Eric Huber of the *Denver Post* (19 June 2002) on Huber’s article about the Colorado anti-bilingual ballot proposal, which quoted Rossell as a supposedly objective scientific expert, Krashen noted that “nearly every other researcher who has looked at the data has concluded that bilingual education has been successful.” “Only two studies in her lists were done in the U.S.,” he pointed out. Of those, the first only “showed that well organized bilingual education is better than bad bilingual education,” and the second involved only 16 children in the bilingual program and lacked any evidence, even test scores. Most of Rossell’s research consisted of comparisons of different versions of Canadian immersion programs, “really different versions of bilingual education,” designed for elite middle-class students.

In fact, the right-wing attack on bilingual education is part of a broader attack on public education as a whole. The book by Rossell and Keith Baker, *Bilingual Education in Massachusetts: The Emperor Has No Clothes* (1996), has frequently been cited as the “scientific” authority for axing bilingual ed. Yet this book is published by the right-wing Pioneer Institute which is spearheading efforts at privatizing education through vouchers and gutting virtually every other government service, from closing mental hospitals to raising MBTA mass transit fares. Pioneer is pushing Edison Schools, designed by former Yale University president (and union-buster) Benno Schmidt, and other for-profit corporations to take over public schools. It is modeled on the Manhattan Institute in New York, which played a leading role in eliminating the remnants of open admissions at the City University by eliminating English-language “remediation programs” (see “Right Wing Yale Cabal Targets CUNY,” on page 16). But while Edison just took over scores of Philadelphia schools, its test score results have been a miserable failure and its stock has gone through the floor.

It’s revealing that the anti-bilingual education “experts” at this right-wing think tank are also opposed to “forced bus-

ing.” Rossell and her associates recently published a treatise, *School Desegregation in the 21st Century* (Pioneer Institute, 2002), arguing, according to the publisher, that desegregation has had “serious costs – white flight and protest voting – associated with ‘forced busing’ and the use of strict racial quotas.” An earlier book by Rossell, *The Carrot or the Stick for School Desegregation Policy: Magnet Schools or Forced Busing* (Temple University Press, 1990), argued that “voluntary” integration plans with the incentives of good schools were “more effective.” That programs involving small numbers of students placed in brand-new, well-equipped and staffed schools, or like Boston’s METCO plan which bused students from Roxbury and Dorchester to schools in affluent suburbs like Newton, Lexington, Lincoln and Wellesley, produced higher grades than busing to rundown schools in hostile South Boston – what is that supposed to prove? Counterposing magnet schools to court-ordered busing is artificial. If city schools were integrated *and* funded at the levels of those in the upscale white suburbs, there would be dramatic improvements in scholastic achievement across the board.

Coming out of Boston, which was the scene of the key battle for integrating northern schools, the Rossell/Pioneer tracts are the academic voice of the racist lynch mobs in Southie that attacked black school children while screaming against “forced busing.” These pseudo-scientific studies are nothing but “respectable” apologies for the *resegregation* of U.S. schools. In Rossell’s case, it turns out that in addition to her day job at B.U., she “also works as a paid consultant to help school districts end busing” (*Standard Times*, 30 June 1996). And now they are playing the same role for the “English only” anti-immigrant racists. What was needed in the 1974 Boston busing crisis, as revolutionary Marxists demanded at the time, was to implement the busing plan, extend busing to the suburbs, eliminate the built-in discrimination of funding schools by local property taxes, and provide *integrated, free, quality public education for all*. In the face of the marauding anti-busing mobs that rampaged through Southie, while liberals and reformists looked to federal troops, the Trotskyists called for *labor/black defense of busing to crush racist attacks*. And rather than looking to the liberal Democratic Boston Brahmins, as the rad-libs did, it was necessary to build a *workers party fighting for a workers government*.

Defeat the Immigrant-Bashers with Sharp Class Struggle!

The immigrant-bashers can be fought and defeated. An article in the *Los Angeles Times* (4 January), “New Testing Ads Urgency to Bilingual Ed Battle,” quotes Unz complaining of “the stubbornness of the entrenched bilingual education bureaucracy” which has meant that many California students are still enrolled in bilingual classes five years after Proposition 227 was enacted. Teachers committed to educating their students will continue to resist these laws and regulations by using every loophole they can find. But this onslaught must be fought head-on, and in doing so they can win the support of parents and students. The article reports that at a recent heated meeting of the Placentia-Yorba Linda school board,

parents complained about the “English only” regulations. “I want my kids to understand what they are learning,” said an angry father. “*Nosotros no somos ignorantes*,” said one mother. “We are not ignorant. We know what we want for our children and we are willing to fight for our rights.”

That is not to say that bilingual education doesn’t have plenty of problems, just as the rest of the big urban education systems in racist, capitalist America: mired in mediocrity, hamstrung by bureaucracy, hobbled by lack of books, sometimes staffed with poorly trained teachers and financially strapped in every way. Bilingual ed also has its fair share of hare-brained “reform” schemes and fads. Some of the scandals publicized by Unz in California were actually the result of administrative scrambling to get around the huge across-the-board cutbacks mandated by the earlier Proposition 13, which slashed local school boards’ budgets (e.g., Chinese kids put into bilingual Spanish-language classes because these programs still existed since they were protected by a legislative mandate). Also, in Colorado the fight against Amendment 31 last fall grotesquely relied on TV ads appealing to the same anti-immigrant racism as the anti-bilingual forces, saying that if the measure passed it would cause “chaos in the classroom” as Latino students would pour into class with “our children.” As opposed to this garbage, the fight against attacks on bilingual ed must be part of an overall fight for language equality and integrated quality public education.

English “immersion” is a sink or swim program, and the obvious and predictable result is that large numbers of immigrant children will sink. The same goes for the introduction of mandatory high-stakes testing for high school diplomas, and even to get into high school (9th grade). Statistics? Try these: in New York City, where 36 percent of the population is foreign-born, where over half the students are immigrants or the children of immigrants, and where mandatory English-language tests have been imposed to get into ninth grade or to graduate, fully 31 percent of English language learners who should have graduated in June 2001 instead dropped out of school. Or more accurately, they were *forced out*. As an article in the *New York Times* (24 June 2002) reporting this figure headlined: “Critics Say Regents English Tests Push Immigrants to Drop Out.” Nationwide, a 2001 conference organized by the Civil Rights Project of Harvard University reported that in 200 to 300 of the biggest schools in the country’s 35 largest cities, *less than half* of those who enter ninth grade graduate.

Unz and his academic hacks portray bilingual education as if it’s some kind of sinecure pushed by teachers unions and Latino nationalists. Bilingual ed is an exclusively Hispanic program, they claim. This is true in some places, and emphatically not in others. In New York City there are bilingual programs in Spanish, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Russian, Korean, Bengali, Polish, Arabic, French, Urdu and Punjabi. But the fact is that the *force out* rate for Latino immigrants is staggering, 44 percent don’t graduate in NYC, according to a statistical summary by Dr. Ofelia García of Columbia Teachers College (“The Languages and Literacies of Latin American Children in New York: Implications for Schooling,” November 2002). Throwing children who do not speak,

read or write English, who live in impoverished inner city ghettos and barrios, often in precarious family situations, into classes conducted exclusively in English where they can't even understand the words of what is being taught – which is what “English immersion” amounts to – is a recipe for purging the schools. And it is not an accidental purge.

A sector of the U.S. ruling class is concerned about controlling the effects of the massive immigration of recent years. As we noted our article, “Defeat the Capitalist Onslaught Against Public Education!” (see page 4):

“The masters of American capitalism are intent on creating a far more sharply polarized economy, in which there will be a relatively highly paid technologically proficient petty-bourgeois layer and a mass of low-paid service workers, while industrial wages will continue to be slashed in a ‘race to the bottom’ in the name of competitiveness.... And along with this shift, a more sharply bifurcated, public-private educational system is being created....

“A second element of the current ‘reform’ plans is *forced* ‘Americanization’ of immigrant students. U.S. capitalism has attracted millions of immigrants, both legal and ‘illegal,’ from Latin America, Asia and Africa to provide low-wage labor.... While the bosses are eager to gouge workers by paying minimum and sub-minimum wages, they are worried about their ability to control millions of oppressed and exploited immigrants. Hence the ‘crisis’ over bilingual education.

“This is a totally manufactured issue. Immigrant adults and children are eager to learn English – the real problem is lack of space in courses.... The enthusiasm of [former New York mayor Rudy] Giuliani and other racists for sink-or-swim ‘total immersion’ programs is purely political. In addition to denying essential social services to ‘illegal’ immigrants, they want to break any ‘foreign’ cultural ties.”

Numerous studies confirm that students for whom English is not their native language stay in school longer, score higher on English and other subject matter tests and have higher graduation rates if they have had some degree of instruction in their native language. The purpose of eliminating bilingual education is not to improve the education of the students, *it is to regiment them*.

Ultimately, it is to regiment them for war. During the 1991 Persian Gulf War military recruiters scoured immigrant neighborhoods looking for recruits, promising citizenship as a carrot. Today, the same 2002 “No Child Left Behind” educational “reform” act that eliminated federal funding for bilingual education also serves as a back door to reinstating selective conscription, requiring high schools to supply names and addresses of juniors and seniors to the Pentagon. Military recruiters then put the arm on minority and working-class youth to join up, promising educational opportunities while saying little about becoming cannon fodder for the imperialist war machine. The Marine drill sergeants want the “grunts” to snap to when they bark orders at them in English, and they don’t want their recruits talking to each other in Spanish, Chinese or any other “foreign” language. Just like employers who ban Navajo Indians from speaking Navajo and Mexican workers from speaking Spanish.

Forced Americanization is the program of the ruling class. That is why the xenophobic far-right opponents of bilingual

education have the wind in their sails. The workers movement, in contrast, must champion the cause of immigrants. An increasing portion of the working class in the United States is foreign-born, including some of the most militant fighters in recent unionization drives. The Boston building service workers who recently won recognition for their SEIU union as part of the “Justice for Janitors” campaign are an example. The SEIU along with Massachusetts teachers unions opposed the Question 2 referendum against bilingual education. But lobbying the Democrats and sending postcards is a dead-end. This is typical of the mentality of pro-capitalist union bureaucrats, who focused on a failed effort to elect a Democratic Party governor, tying the workers to the bosses’ parties. Yet a radicalized workers movement, with a class-struggle leadership, would become the greatest champion of immigrants and of oppressed black, Latino and Asian minorities.

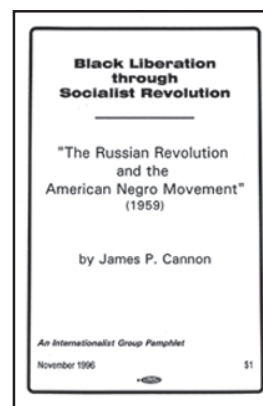
Whenever the workers movement has seriously fought the bosses, its struggles have been marked by the fighting unity of U.S.-born and foreign-born workers. Class-conscious unionists and fighters for immigrant rights in Massachusetts can look back to the example of the 1912 Lawrence textile workers’ strike, led by the syndicalist International Workers of the World (IWW). The employers had brought in Arab, Russian and East European women to toil in the Lawrence mills, and tried to keep them separated by playing on ethnic and language divisions. Women workers were in the forefront of the strike, led by the 21-year-old IWW organizer Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and strike meetings were translated into 25 languages. In the 1919 steel strike, the bosses attacked the workers as “foreigners” and “Bolsheviks,” while the workers put out leaflets in six languages calling to strike against “Czar Gary,” the head of U.S. Steel, and to defend Soviet Russia.

In the Russian empire, Lenin’s Bolshevik party won the leadership of the working class on an internationalist program calling for full equality of all languages. The young Soviet republic that arose from the 1917 October Revolution declared that all workers in the country would enjoy equal rights of citizenship. While the bourgeoisie seeks to divide the exploited and oppressed along national lines and meanwhile guts education for the mass of the working and poor people, the communists call for workers and oppressed people of all nations to unite in the struggle for international socialist revolution. ■

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Over 200 Jailed

Striking Jersey Teachers Defy Anti-Labor Laws

The following article is reprinted from the Internationalist Group pamphlet, Defend Immigrant Students, Stop CUNY's "War Purge" (December 2001).

DECEMBER 7 -- As we go to press, the news reports that striking teachers in Middletown, New Jersey have agreed to return to work. The strike lasted barely a week, but the local School Board and Jersey judges immediately brought down the hammer. By the second day of the walkout, teachers were being thrown in jail for the "crime" of defending their jobs. As the courts systematically went down the alphabet, a total of 228 strikers were put behind bars before the union leadership folded.

The Middletown strike is a textbook example of the nature of the capitalist state. Far from being any kind of "neutral arbiter," the courts are a weapon in the hands of the bosses, along with the police and armed forces. For more than a century and a half, they have systematically been used against unions, just as this machinery of government repression is routinely used against black and Latino minorities. But in Middletown it has been used with a special vengeance, as the authorities use the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center as a *carte blanche* to regiment the country. The mass jailing of teachers was reportedly the first in the U.S. since 1978.

The walkout began over the School Board's demands to impose huge takebacks in medical insurance. But already for the last two years, Middletown teachers have been working under an imposed contract. In the middle of the U.S. war on Afghanistan, right-wingers in the community are whipping up anti-union sentiment with an orgy of flag-waving.

Meanwhile, in New York City, the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) has been working for more than a year without a contract. The UFT bureaucracy under Randy Weingarten has let Mayor Giuliani walk all over the union, backing one losing Democrat after another and finally ending up with multibillionaire labor-hater Bloomberg.

A fighting leadership of labor would inevitably go against the government's straitjacket of anti-labor laws. In New York, it is the Taylor Law. A solid stand by hundreds of thousands of workers, backed up by the power of the entire union movement can turn these laws into a dead letter. A stand should have been made for the Middletown teachers by sending in hundreds of union militants to back their struggle. But the pro-capitalist union bureaucracy is incapable of fighting against the state to which they are themselves beholden.



Sue Kellogg



Sue Kellogg

IG supporters went to Middletown to show solidarity with strikers.

The Internationalist Group joined the hundreds of striking teachers in front of the Freehold, NJ courthouse as a demonstration of solidarity. The Jersey teachers showed real fighting spirit, but even their militant talking leaders were not prepared to go the course. What's urgently necessary is to oust the present bureaucratic misleaders of labor and build a class-struggle leadership with the program and determination to lead the struggle to free all the oppressed. This requires a break with all the capitalist parties – Democrats, Republicans and Greens – and a fight to build an international revolutionary workers party.

For a Class-Struggle Fight Against the Racist Union-Busters!

Teachers Should Spearhead Strike by All NYC Workers

We Have the Power — Shred the Strikebreaking Taylor Law!

We print below a leaflet by the Internationalist Group issued on 6 May 2002. More than 2,000 copies were distributed to New York City teachers and their supporters, notably at a June 4 rally at City Hall of 25,000 students and teachers. A week later a deal was cut to raise wages while lengthening the work day. Meanwhile the NY state legislature approved a law for mayoral control of the schools. The battle over NYC public schools is far from over. Egged on by racist far-right think tanks like the Manhattan Institute, the plutocrat mayor is gearing up to assert his control by ripping up vital union gains. This fight cannot be ducked, it must be won.

After more than 17 months working without a contract, the need for a strike by New York City's 100,000 teachers and school staff is posed pointblank. Mayor Michael Bloomberg won't even pretend to negotiate unless he's handed control of the schools. Democrats and Republicans in Albany are engaging in their usual spring budget rites of endless delays and horse-trading. But instead of gearing up the United Federation of Teachers for an all-out strike to defeat the plutocrat mayor and his Wall Street backers, the UFT leadership is handing out signs saying, "I don't want to strike. Don't force me!" This is no way to win a strike. *We should be preparing to give 'em hell!* And not way off in the fall. *The time to strike is now!*

The UFT tops called a delegates assembly to endorse the state arbitration board's "fact finding" report as the basis for our demands. This board is not "neutral" and no friend of the teachers. It is appointed under the anti-union Taylor Law and is part of the machinery of state control of labor. It will only find the facts the capitalist rulers want to find. The fact is, they want to saddle us with a paltry (4 percent/5 percent) raise and all talk of parity with the suburbs is dropped. The fact is, the additional "6 percent solution" is no increase at all, but a lengthening of the school day that sets a dangerous precedent — 20 minutes now, how much next time? The fact is, they are still "investigating" introducing "merit pay," a racist union-busting scheme that will penalize teachers and

students in the most run-down schools in poor areas.

And the fact is that we have the power to defeat this attack. But that power is chained to the twin capitalist parties who are responsible for the sorry state of public education today. *The key to victory is to unchain the power of the working class.*

A strike is a class battle, and it requires serious preparation. It is a test of strength, determination and program for the union as we confront the employers and their state. The UFT is the largest union in New York City. The well over 10,000 teachers and other school workers who rallied in front of the Board of Education May 1 gave a taste of the power we have. And our fight is not an isolated one. Park workers, sanitation workers, transit workers, city workers of all categories are under the gun. To win this battle we have to mobilize the strength of all of NYC labor in powerful strike action. What's needed is not only to shut down the schools, but also to prepare to strike the subways and buses and all city services, and bring Wall Street to a grinding halt.

To do that, teachers at every school should *elect strike committees* to organize solid strike action; to mount *mass picket lines of hundreds, including students and parents*, at every school from Day One; and to report back to *mass strike assemblies*. The overall running of a strike cannot be left in the hands of the UFT bureaucracy, which has done everything it can to avoid one as it hoped to wheel and deal with one losing capitalist politician after

another. There should be a citywide *delegated strike assembly*, whose delegates are recallable at any time, and which joins together with other city workers unions in struggle. There should be a daily strike newspaper, distributed in tens of thousands of copies, not only to the picket lines but throughout the city. Above all, it's necessary to build a fighting leadership whose program is based on waging hard class struggle, unlike the present *misleaders* of NYC labor whose program of class collaboration has gotten teachers in the fix we are in today.

In any strike, the ruling class will use the vicious Taylor Law to jail striking workers and impose massive fines on the union and individual members. We can't buckle under the bosses' threats of jail, and we can't let them rob us blind. We *can* turn this strikebreaking law into a dead letter through massive mobilization that shuts the city down. When transit workers struck in 1980, the



At union rally in Brooklyn on May Day.

TWU tops figured they could just sit on their haunches and hold out. Wrong. It will take mass mobilizations that bring out tremendous support from the hard-hit working people of New York City.

A strike is a battle not only against Livingston Street and City Hall, but against the masters of American capitalism whose interest in “public” education is to make sure that the next generation of their “wage slaves” has the requisite skills and “discipline.” And it must directly go up against the capitalist state itself. The police are the armed fist of that state, enforcers of the racist “law and order” of capitalism that keeps the South Bronx, Harlem and central Brooklyn in conditions of poverty and misery. As head of the Municipal Labor Coalition, UFT president Randi Weingarten works hand-in-glove with the PBA, the enforcers of the “blue wall of silence” that covers up racist cop torture and murder of minorities such as Abner Louima and Amadou Diallo and scores of other victims. Cops are not workers, they are professional strikebreakers and racist killers. In a strike, we will be facing them on the other side of the barricades, literally. We demand police out of the unions, and out of the schools – schools should not be prisons.

You can be sure that in a strike there will be massive attempts to set poor minority and immigrant communities against the union. But despite daily teacher-bashing in the media, there is a tremendous well of support for teachers throughout the city. Parents know that teachers and school staff are fighting for their kids on a daily basis. We can defeat the bosses’ labor-hating, race-baiting propaganda by actively involving the working class and minority communities in a strike – *our fight is their fight*. We must make this real by demanding smaller class sizes, replacing decrepit schools with modern facilities,

opposing high-stakes compulsory testing that denies graduation and promotion particularly to minorities and immigrants, and actively recruiting minority teachers instead of using discriminatory certification tests to drive out PPTs with many years of experience, as the Board of Ed is now doing.

More than 85 percent of the students in NYC schools are “minorities.” In 1968, the Shanker bureaucracy fell into the trap of liberal mayor John Lindsay and the Ford Foundation, who schemed to set black communities against the UFT in the name of phony “community control.” While

much of the left shamefully opposed that strike (which was sparked by the firing of local union officials) and supported scabbing, the UFT tops undermined the strike by inflaming divisions between the union and black working people.

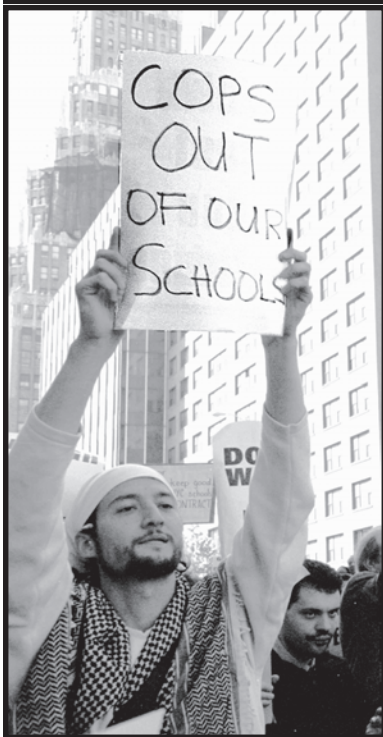
More than half the students in New York City’s public schools are foreign-born or from first-generation immigrant families. The UFT must champion the defense of these vulnerable communities. Last fall, City University officials ordered tuition more than doubled for “undocumented” immigrant students, who were grotesquely labeled a threat to “national security.” This has a direct impact on high school students. Some 2,000 immigrants, predominantly of Arab and Middle Eastern origin, have been jailed and held incommunicado following September 11. On March 23, a number of NYC unions joined in a labor solidarity march on the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn where many detainees are held. Notable for its absence was the United Federation of Teachers. The UFT should mobilize to demand full citizenship rights for all immigrants and that all the detainees be freed.

Karl Marx wrote that every class struggle is a political struggle. The UFT leadership has been chasing after one losing Democratic Party politico after another: Hevesi, followed by Ferrer, and then Green. Their real policy was to wait until Giuliani was gone. So now Giuliani’s gone, and his successor Bloomberg is just as hard-nosed. It’s not a matter of personalities. The attacks on teachers are part of a broader offensive by city rulers against all NYC workers following the September 11 World Trade Center attack. Bloomberg, who spent \$75 million buying the mayoral election, claims the city doesn’t have the money to pay for wage raises, and orders \$300 million in cuts. Meanwhile, they’re handing out multi-million dollar incentives to landlords and Wall Street firms to keep their operations in Manhattan.

The UFT and AFT national leaderships are shot through with supporters of the Social Democrats USA, an outfit which supported the Reagan Administration’s *contra* war against Nicaragua and the anti-Soviet Cold War drive, from Poland to Afghanistan. Today they support the U.S. war on Afghanistan and endorse Israel as its tanks roll through the Occupied Territories. It’s necessary to break with the Democrats, Republicans and all capitalist parties (including the Greens and the “Working Families Party,” which is simply a shill for the Democrats). It’s necessary to build a class-struggle workers party, a party that would defend the Palestinian people, as well as Afghanistan, Iraq and any other country Bush places on his “axis of evil,” and fight to mobilize working people to defeat the imperialist war.

The several opposition caucuses in the UFT are either economist or narrowly focused on internal union politics. But the problems facing teachers and students are a direct result of capitalist policy, from the drive to privatize schools (such as the Edison Corp.) to the increasing corporate control of “public” education (e.g., Citibank’s Levy as NYC schools chancellor). In contrast, the Internationalist Group puts forward a program to “Defeat the Capitalist Onslaught Against Public Education!” (*The Internationalist* No. 10, June 2001). From waging a hard-fought strike to calls for a fundamental transformation of the educational system, the battles facing teachers today must be part and parcel of the struggle for international socialist revolution. ■

Cops Out of the Unions, and Out of the Schools!



Photos: Sue Kellogg

New York City Teachers, Transit:

Mobilize Workers' Power Against the War on Iraq!

The following motion was put forward in a leaflet by the Internationalist Group at the NYC United Federation of Teachers Delegates Assembly on 4 December 2002.

Following Washington's attack on Afghanistan in the fall of 2001 and while the occupation of that country continues under a puppet government installed by the United States and its NATO allies, the U.S. government has now decided to launch a full-scale invasion of Iraq. In the face of imperialist aggression against this semi-colonial country, Iraq must be defended by the international workers movement. The war on Iraq is also a war on working people, immigrants and minorities in the United States, and it must be defeated through militant class struggle "at home" and abroad.

The ongoing war on Iraq has never stopped since the first Gulf War of 1990-91. United Nations "inspections," allegedly searching for "weapons of mass destruction," are a ploy to trigger the war. It is the United States and its Israeli ally who have vast arsenals of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and are prepared to use them, as the U.S. has done before. Saddam Hussein is an enemy of the workers movement, who was supplied by the CIA with lists of communists, union and minority group leaders to be eliminated, and by the Pentagon with chemical weapons to be used against Iran. The U.S. is directly responsible for Hussein's war crimes, which pale in comparison with the slaughter carried out by the U.S. in Vietnam, Korea, Japan and the death-squad regimes it has installed throughout Latin America.

Around the world and in the United States, hundreds of thousands have marched to protest this war. Resolutions have been passed by labor bodies lamenting the sacrifice of domestic social programs in favor of the war drive. This is not an issue of spending priorities, of "guns vs. butter," but of horrendous war crimes and the U.S. drive for total world domination. It must be fought by mobilizing powerful working-class action internationally, including labor boycotts of war material and workers strike action against the war.

In the United States, West Coast ILWU longshore workers have been forced back to work under the strike-breaking Taft-Hartley Act in the name of the "war effort." The U.S.A. Patriot Act and other "anti-terrorism" measures are spearheading a full-scale assault on civil liberties, union and minority rights, and democratic rights generally. "Racial profiling" has become rampant, thousands of immi-

grants have been held incommunicado for months without charges, while police spying on protesters has escalated sharply.

The war directly affects teachers, students and other school workers in New York City and everywhere. Under the "No Child Left Behind" Act, Pentagon recruiters are demanding lists of names, addresses and phone numbers of high school seniors so that they can be pressured into the military. But this has been met with resistance. This Assembly salutes the students of Bushwick HS and Bushwick Outreach Center in Brooklyn who have rallied against this attempt to turn students into cannon fodder, as well as school workers who have refused to turn over names. Several thousand NYC students marched against the war last month. UFT chapters should defend, and UFT legal staff should provide representation for any students victimized for participation in protests against the war.

Despite widespread opposition to the war on Iraq and protest resolutions by local and state union bodies, the national AFL-CIO and American Federation of Teachers leaders have lined up for the imperialist war. While the Republican Administration has relentlessly demanded war, the Democratic majority Senate also voted war powers to President Bush. Democrats were the first to call for the new "Homeland Security" Department, and have been in the forefront of calls to militarize the docks. Thus the fight against the war on Iraq must also be directed against the sellout labor bureaucracy and for breaking with all the capitalist parties to form a class-struggle workers party. ■



IG at November 20 New York student march against Iraq war.

FOR ACTIVE SOLIDARITY WITH A NYC TRANSIT STRIKE!

The following motion was put forward in a leaflet by the Internationalist Group at the NYC United Federation of Teachers Delegates Assembly on 4 December 2002.

WHEREAS, the government of the City of New York under Mayor Bloomberg, with the collaboration of the City Council, has ordered hundreds of millions of dollars in service cuts, which will result in several thousand lost jobs; and

WHEREAS, the city government is gearing up for a confrontation with the entire labor movement, and has chosen NYC subway and bus workers as their first targets; and

WHEREAS, the NYC Department of Education has already issued instructions to school personnel for “contingency plans” in the event of a transit strike which are aimed at undercutting the effect of such a strike; and

WHEREAS, the Transport Workers Union, like the United Federation of Teachers, is threatened with massive fines and vicious jail sentences under the anti-union Taylor Law for exercising its elementary right to strike; and

WHEREAS, amid the war already underway against Iraq, the federal government under President Bush will likely label a NYC transit strike a threat to national security, as it already did in ordering locked-out West Coast longshore workers back to work under the Taft-Hartley slave labor law; and

WHEREAS, a strike by the TWU would be a front-line defense of all city workers, deserving of our active solidarity and participation in a common fight against the anti-labor offensive;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

THAT the United Federation of Teachers urges its members to join TWU strike lines on the first and all subsequent days of a New York City transit strike, turning them into mass pickets;

THAT the UFT help initiate an immediate citywide mobilization of all NYC workers in the Wall Street or Midtown areas to demonstrate active solidarity with a transit strike;

THAT the UFT instruct its members not to use any scab transportation insti-

tuted by the city to break a transit strike, such as vans or private buses;

THAT the UFT encourage teachers to take their classes to TWU picket lines to provide students with education in the class struggle, with instructional aids such as portable blackboards and cameras to document any arrests;

THAT the UFT inform the Department of Education that the vast majority of teachers and school workers in the NYC city schools will not be able to reach their jobs in the event of a subway and bus strike for lack of public transportation caused by the refusal of the MTA to meet the transit workers’ just demands;

THAT the UFT further inform the city that if any teacher or other school worker is disciplined or dismissed for being unable to reach their job due to a strike, the union chapter at that school shall be authorized to immediately walk out in protest and to stay out until any sanctions are rescinded; and

THAT in the event that transit workers, school workers and/or union officials are jailed under the Taylor Law or other anti-labor injunction or decree, that the UFT itself strike against such scab laws demanding that all unionists be released and charges against them dropped. ■



Parents and teachers held classes on picket lines during 1997 French truckers’ strike.

Teaching English as a Second Language In a Climate of War

By Marjorie Stamberg

The following is an edited presentation given at the Annual Convention of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in Long Beach, California and at the New York State TESOL Convention in 2003.

So this talk is about Teaching English as a Second Language in a climate of war. Of course, teaching is always a matter of interaction taking place in a social context, and all the more so with ESL which is intimately connected with the question of immigration.

This is doubly true in the climate of wartime when additional demands and pressures are put both on the teachers and our students. I'm going to talk about two things. First about curriculum, lesson plans and materials for the classroom. The second deals with the effects on our students of the war climate, and the response of teachers. The two are directly connected.

On the issue of curriculum, our task in teaching, in general, is to teach students to think critically. Education should enable people to tell truth from falsification. Nowhere is that more important than in wartime, when the media is inundated with messages coming straight from the Pentagon, or filtered through their "embeds" – or in beds, as it were. The most famous statement is that of Samuel Johnson, who wrote commentaries on Shakespeare. Johnson wrote in 1758, in a piece titled "The Idler":

"Among the calamities of war may be justly numbered the diminution of the love of truth, by the falsehoods which interest dictates and credulity encourages."

Or, as a U.S. senator put it in 1917, as the United States was about to enter World War I, *the first casualty of war is the truth.*

This has been true from the very start of every war in the last century plus. Remember the battle cry for the start of the Spanish American war, "Remember the Maine" about the ship blown up in Havana Harbor in 1898. As it turns out, there's not a shred of truth that the USS *Maine* was blown up in by Spain, or by rebels fighting for independence, and there is a lot of evidence that it exploded from within, whether by accident or otherwise. But, no matter, this furnished the *cassus belli* (the cause of war) and in short order Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines were American colonies.

Or take the famous Gulf of Tonkin incident in August 1964, where the alleged North Vietnamese attack never happened –

it was a total fabrication.² But it was the pretext for launching the bombing of North Vietnam.

Currently, we have the invasion of Iraq based on... Let me quote last Sunday's London *Independent* (April 20) headline, "Where Are they, Mr. Blair?" referring to the WMDs (Weapons of Mass Destruction), which were the pretext for the current war.

In encouraging students to think critically about the news that they are bombarded with, the images on TV are particularly important. For instance, the image that was broadcast and in the tabloids of the toppling of the statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad on April 9 [2003]. This supposedly happened in front of cheering throngs, following the expected greeting of the American troops with flowers and kisses. So April 9 was proclaimed "The Day of Liberation," the "establishment of true democracy in Iraq." Here are clips from *The New York Post*, the *Daily News* and the British *Daily Mirror* from that day. [U.S. war secretary Donald] Rumsfeld said, "Watching them, one cannot help but think of the fall of the Berlin Wall" (*New York Times*, 10 April 2003).

The image was displayed on all the tabloids. It could sell well in the U.S. and Britain, although if you had the same image anywhere in the Near East or most of Europe, you would have had an opposite reaction. So then they put out this story that the U.S. flag was spontaneously raised by an "over-exuberant" American soldier, but that enlightened American generals, who did not want to appear as conquerors, had the flag taken down and replaced by the Iraqi flag, and the statue of Saddam was pulled down to the cheers of the multitude.

What really happened? First of all, let's take the flag. This was no spontaneous over-the-top action by an American GI, but the U.S. flag just happened to be a flag that had allegedly flown over the World Trade Center on 9/11 (11 September 2001), which he just happened to have in his pocket. The Iraqi flag which was then substituted, just happened to be a flag from the pre-Saddam days (which somebody else "just happened to have"?).

Second element: the official reaction. At V Corps headquarters in Kuwait, "Officers whooped and hollered on Wednesday in the Army's command center as they watched the televised

¹ "Embedded" journalists attached to U.S. military units. In order to control the flow of information from the battlefield, the Pentagon attached journalists to different military units, effectively putting them under the unit commander's orders. Several journalists who refused to be "embedded" were shot by U.S. soldiers, apparently deliberately.

² The "incident" was transparently phony from the very beginning, and ever since publication of the *Pentagon Papers* in 1971 it has been established that it was a conscious deception by the government of Lyndon Johnson. In 2001, a National Security Agency historian, Robert Hanyok, published a paper based on analysis of signals intelligence proving definitively that there was no North Vietnamese attack on the USS *Maddox*. However, Hanyok's article was classified for four years because government policymakers were afraid that it might be used to discredit the U.S. "intelligence" claims used to justify the Iraq war. See the National Security Archive "Briefing Book" on the incident at: <http://www.gwu.edu/%7Eensarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB132/press20051201.htm>.

scene of a United States Marine draping an American flag over the face of a statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad.” That’s from the *New York Times* of 10 April. Bush himself, who was reported to be watching on TV, stepped out of the Oval Office to announce “They got it down!” (*New York Times*, 14 April)

So, third element, what about those crowds? Answer: they weren’t there. The images on TV were a product of close-cropping. I’ve got here a series of photographs of that incident, from a BBC cameraman on the scene. Here you have first an empty square, when the tanks arrive, then in the second shot a few curious people come around. By the time you got the tank up there and the cable to pull it down, you had a small gathering there, and then here’s the fourth shot, the most that they ever got. The cameraman himself said there were never more than 150 people there, probably less than there are in this conference today.

The fact of the matter is, people wouldn’t know this unless they made an extremely careful reading of the written press, and had access to other materials other than the mainstream media in the U.S. or Britain. These shots came off of the Internet. One thing I think is very important is to take dramatic episodes and encourage students to think skeptically about what’s going on, and even more than that, to acquaint them with how to get alternative sources of information, and that they need to.

The case of the statue is one example. You could multiply this many times. For example, a *Times* reporter said the road to Karbala was lined with corpses. But where are the pictures of these corpses? Why aren’t they showing them? The London *Guardian* had an interview with a guy at the BBC whose job it was to censor out corpses.

Or another example. In one of my classes we discussed a *New York Times* (11 April 2003) article about many news bureaus shutting down their “embeds” and opening “independent” bureaus in Baghdad. We talked about the meaning and derivation of the words of “embeds” and “in bed.” We also talked a little bit from the grammatical perspective of the tendency in English for words to go from nouns to verbs, and in this case from verbs to nouns. And, of course, how you have to keep your eyes open when you have journalists in bed with the Pentagon. This sparked an interesting classroom discussion of where the students preferred to get their war information. American TV, the students knew, is not very reliable. A number of students were watching British sources like the BBC, and looking on the Internet, which sources they felt were more reliable, in contrast to news sources functioning purely as a wing of the American government, such as CNN, or the role of Fox TV, of British tabloids come to the U.S.

These are just a few examples. I’m sure many others in the room are developing lessons and can relate experiences. There are a number of resources available, either alternative curricula or day-by-day lesson plans. *Rethinking Schools* has a whole issue on their lesson plans. Bill Bigelow has lessons about the earlier Gulf War (1990-91) where he shows an excerpt of the video, “Toxic Sludge is Good for You,” about the public relations industry. The segment he uses is about Nayirah, a teenage Kuwaiti girl who testified in fall of 1990 before a Congressional caucus (where witnesses are not under oath) claiming

to have seen Iraqi invaders dumping babies onto the hospital floor as they stole incubators. A heart-wrenching story, the news media repeated it again and again in the run up to Gulf War I. It was totally fabricated. Nayirah was the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador to the U.S. and the entire charade was orchestrated by the U.S. PR firm Hill and Knowlton.

In teaching students to cast a skeptical eye toward the news in wartime, or any other time, you want to create a climate in the classroom where all students are comfortable to express their views, or not, if they don’t feel like it. And, of course, it’s important how you do this, so that the students understand that they are not going to be graded on their opinions. Also, I’m not mentioning these particular lesson plans because I agree with them. In fact, I happen to strongly disagree with a lot of what’s in some. I think most of these lessons don’t really explain why the war is being fought, what the real aims are, and so on. For a fuller discussion, you can read *The Internationalist* on the war, and on education questions as well.

I will say, and this has been my experience as well, that far from people not wanting to talk about this in the schools, there has been a lot of discussion. There is a lot of polarization. I think it is important to present that discussion in such a way that students have an access point, a gateway, to how to participate in and understand the discussions that are going on in society, in the schools, and everywhere, in a way that they can form their own opinion by gaining access to a variety of media. In fact, I would say that from my experience on ESL at the college level, it helps enormously in terms of grammar points, vocabulary, reading and writing to have some content to the material. I use a lot of material on the black question in the United States, which students from around the world are not very familiar with, and students feel it helps them to understand the dynamics of this country.

Having said that, not that there should be any illusions having that discussion is going to change the course of the war.

Climate of War – Effects of Attacks on Students

That’s the first part of what I wanted to deal with, in terms of curriculum. The second part concerns the pressures and even attacks on our students in the wartime situation.

As I said at the beginning, these two aspects are closely related. And reflect the general push for educational “reforms” in the U.S. Karl Marx noted that “the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas.” And the same xenophobia being reflected in the tabloids, this anti-Muslim hysteria, is having its reflection on immigrants and international students in the U.S. Society is more sharply polarized on class lines in the U.S. today, there’s a push to regiment the population for war and a shift in the economic structure leading toward a two-tiered society. Intensified class polarization is reflected in an ever more pronouncedly bifurcated educational system.

In considering how and what we teach, in the present climate we have to be aware of the big picture of how the educational system is being changed, to what ends it is being changed, and how this affects our students. What is happen-

ing now is not dissimilar to what has happened in past war-time periods. The absurdity of labeling French Fries as “Freedom Fries” was a latter-day version of what happened in World War I when sauerkraut was turned into “Liberty Cabbage.” Such semantic games may seem ridiculous, but it should be recalled at the same time bans were imposed on any teaching of the German language. This effects us directly as TESOL teachers with the escalating offensive against bilingual education but also against ESL teachers.

One of our roles as teachers is as advocates for our students. Well, there’s a lot going on today that ought to be objected to.

Let me begin with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. The whole thrust of that law – imposing high stakes testing, opening the doors to vouchers, the back-door privatization of public education – is objectionable. There is an aspect to the act, which people only realized later, that is Section 9528 of NCLB, which requires schools to grant military recruiters access to student information and to school grounds and activities. Specifically, school personnel are ordered to turn over the names of students so they can be approached by the military, unless there is a specific waiver from the parents. In the absence of military conscription, this is the way that they are trying to funnel poor and minority students into the military. They’re doing this because there has been a big drop-out in enlistment. They really put these kids under pressure. In one of the community colleges here in the CUNY system, virtually every student got calls from the army recruiters, who would start out by saying, “Hi, Rubén, how’s your engineering studies going,” (i.e., somebody has already given them information).

So what’s to be done about it? There has been a lot of opposition among guidance counselors and other personnel about what teachers are calling the “No Child Left Alive” act. They do not feel it’s their job to aid this effort, and they have refused to turn over the names. In some schools, in Bushwick High School, the students caused such an uproar that the recruiter left, and then wrote a letter to the *Wall Street Journal*, saying he didn’t want kids from that school anyway, because they just weren’t up to their standards. A totally racist comment, which thereupon caused even more commotion. Incidentally, quite a few high school student groups walked out in protest of the war. There are various flyers and palm cards available explaining students’ rights³. I’ll report to you also that in Puerto Rico, there’s been a sizeable movement to get parents to sign the waivers, saying they don’t want the military to contact their kids. Thousands of parents have signed, particularly in Puerto Rico, because that’s one of the main places they get their troops.

So here you have the role of the high school functioning as an extension of the U.S. military. And at the college level, you now have SEVIS, in which college personnel are supposed to act as part of a hugely augmented federal police apparatus.

SEVIS stands for “Student Exchange Visitor Information

Systems” and it targets international students who are here on various visas. This is not simply a computerized registration, it is part of the Immigration Control and Enforcement Division (ICE), under the Homeland Security Department. An interesting article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (7 March 2004) talks about the demands they’re placing on college personnel. They’re treating all foreign students as if they’re potential criminals. So that if a student, for personal reasons, drops below x number of credits per semester, or decides that he or she wants to switch majors, to take up, say, engineering, or, horrors, biochemistry, this information will now be passed on to SEVIS. They could find themselves threatened with deportation or a what used to be called a “third-degree” by the feds. Now I think they call it “robust interrogation.”

As to the chilling effect of SEVIS on the campus, there can be no doubt about it. A letter by a professor at the University of Idaho College of Law to SEVIS complained about a raid there in early March when the FBI flew in 120 agents, fully armed in riot gear, on 2 C-17 military transports to arrest a Saudi graduate student at 4:30 a.m. in the morning. They not only terrorized him and his family but ordered neighboring students to stay in their quarters for hours, and interrogated another 20 students over supposed visa irregularities, threatening them with deportation if they didn’t answer.

Again, there has been some opposition to this, but unfortunately not nearly enough. At City College, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Faculty Senate on March 6 adopted a resolution that “objects to federal government surveillance policies which undermine the free and open atmosphere of our campus and which create fear and intimidation among its international students.” At the U. of Hawaii, demands are being raised that the University refuse to comply with SEVIS. This is blatant racial profiling of students from Arabic and Muslim backgrounds.

There should be a campaign against SEVIS. To be effective it has to be waged on a national scale. And it has to be part of a broader response to the various aspects of attacks on civil liberties, for example the clause in the USA PATRIOT Act which allows federal agencies to inspect library records. To their credit, many librarians are responding to this by destroying lending records. There are the threatened actions against teachers and professors for their views. Currently, there is a case of a Columbia University assistant professor, Nicholas De Genova, who is on the hot seat for having said that he would like to see the defeat of the U.S. in the Iraq war.

SEVIS applies to international students on visas. There are also the many immigrant students who are not on visas, and can’t produce what the authorities consider acceptable documentation even though many of them have been working here and living here for many years.

At the City University of New York a couple of years ago, such undocumented students numbered in the thousands. In the aftermath of 9/11, at the instigation of a New York state senator, CUNY demanded that all “undocumented” immigrant students would have their tuition doubled to the non-resident rate. Now CUNY is a working-class school. The fact is that the vast majority of students, and certainly immigrant students

³ One of them is put out by the New York Civil Liberties Union, and available on the Internet at http://www.nyclu.org/files/military.palm_card_duotone.pdf, or in Spanish at http://www.nyclu.org/files/military.rec_spanish.duotone.pdf.

working in minimum wage jobs, can't afford to pay \$6,700 a semester to go to school. So this amounted to a purge. Moreover, by putting on their university registration that they did not have proper documents, and this being reported to the INS (now called ICE), made them even more vulnerable to arrest and deportation.

There was a great deal of protest, including a picket outside the Board of Trustees and in November 2001 a demonstration against this "war purge" held at Hunter College. It was initiated by the Internationalist Group and involved a united front of organizations, including Mexican, Chinese, Indian and Islamic student groups as well as immigrant workers, unions and faculty members⁴. Eventually CUNY backed down, partially, and a state law was passed saying that those who had graduated from NYC high schools would be considered residents. But that still means that those who clean the floors in this city and this university, who make the sandwiches in the cafeteria, orderlies in the hospitals, laborers in the sweatshops, have taxes deducted from the pay – but they can't go to public university!

So, we've talked about the use of the high schools as recruiters for the military, the surveillance of international students in the colleges, and the attempted *de facto* purge of thousands of undocumented immigrant students.

Another aspect of this all-sided onslaught is the offensive to impose "English Only" in the primary and secondary schools. In the 2002 elections, there were chauvinist referendums on bilingual education in Colorado and Massachusetts and there are threats to take this nationwide. In Massachusetts, where it passed, starting this September it will be ILLEGAL to use another language in the classroom and teachers can even be jailed for this "crime." I'd like to point out this has nothing to do with teaching strategies, as witnessed the fact that not only bilingual teachers are threatened with this, but also ESL teachers. Again, I've written an article on this (see page 15) going into the various ramifications.

This is closely tied in with the whole "standards-based" educational reform and mandatory high-stakes testing that are being introduced that are having a catastrophic effect on students whose native language is not English. This is a subject that would require a whole presentation in itself. But I'd like to cite the statistics that have that been compiled on this about the so-called "drop out" rate which is a *force out* rate. A June 2002 report by Advocates for Children of New York and the NY Immigrant Coalition noted that only 29 percent of English Language Learners (ELLs) graduated from high school within four years, while 40 percent were still in school and 31 percent had dropped out. Professor Ofelia Garcia at Columbia University Teachers College has done work on the crisis of education of Hispanic youth in New York City, and she cites another staggering statistic from the same studies, namely that less than 3 percent of ELLs who took

the Grade 8 English Language Arts exam met the standard. This means that they are now held back from going to the 9th grade, and will soon be part of the drop out statistics. In fact, the actual numbers who have quit school are masked by the Department of Education statistics, which create another category of "discharged" students in addition to drop outs. But behind the statistical curtain, what's going on here, in the guise of enforcing standards, they are creating a whole population, which will soon number in the hundreds of thousand in New York City alone, of minority and immigrant students who will not get a high school degree, and will be forced to the economic margins for the rest of their lives. The social consequences of this will be enormous.

And this whole development is closely related to the growing re-segregation of the schools in the U.S. A new study by the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University found that black and Latino students are now *more* isolated from their white counterparts three decades ago, before many of the desegregation orders that were a product of the civil rights movement.

So what we have is a picture of an increasingly re-segregated school system, with broad-scale attacks on immigrants, increasing militarization, widespread and shrinking civil and constitutional liberties across the board. These are all closely related and to fight them it is necessarily beyond the bounds of just educational reform. As Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote more than a century and a half ago, when they called for "free education for all children in public schools," it will take a revolution so that "In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." ■

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⁴ See articles from *The Internationalist* on this protest at <http://www.internationalist.org/intCUNYtoc.html>.

NYC Mayoral Child Abuse: Bloomberg/Klein Beat Up on 8-Year-Olds

Forced Flunk-Outs and the Assault on Public Education

What It's All About: Corporatization, Resegregation and War

The following article was distributed as a leaflet and reprinted in The Internationalist No. 18, May-June 2004.

On April 20 [2004], across New York City tens of thousands of eight-year-old school children are going to be subjected to a test that will be used by school authorities to determine whether they can go on to fourth grade. Already, billionaire mayor Michael Bloomberg and his flunkey, schools chancellor Joel Klein, have set a quota of 15,000 3rd-graders to be deliberately failed. This is child abuse on a grand scale. The racist city rulers have set out to ruin the lives of these primarily black, Latino and immigrant students in a cynical electoral ploy, and to further a bipartisan capitalist agenda of privatizing, corporatizing and resegregating public education. Moreover, this use of standardized tests goes hand in hand with the drive to undermine or break teachers unions, and unions in general, and to regiment the population for imperialist war.

The assault on 3rd-graders was so outrageous that the mayor couldn't even get his hand-picked Panel for Educational Policy to endorse it. Just hours before the policy came up for a vote on March 15, Bloomberg realized his own rubber stamps weren't going to rubber-stamp it. Some of them incredibly thought they were supposed to think about educational policy, so hizzoner did a Donald Trump and fired three of them on the spot. They were quickly replaced with a trio of more pliant flunkies. After a truncated discussion before a seething audience of several hundred parents and teachers, in which Chancellor Klein told an eight-year-old girl to shut up and sit down, the stacked panel had a farcical vote in which the hand-raisers dutifully raised their hands to flunk 15,000 kids. The whole charade was so blatant that a host of Democratic City Council members denounced the "Tuesday night massacre" (recalling Richard Nixon's "Saturday night massacre" when he fired his three top legal officials for refusing to follow orders).

The electoral ploy couldn't be missed. After repeatedly declaring that voters should judge him on his record on educa-



Sue Kelllogg

Widespread opposition to high-stakes testing of NYC third-graders did not stop mayor and schools chancellor, who simply fired dissenting bureaucrats in the "Monday night massacre," March 15.

tion, Bloomberg has only managed to throw the NYC school system into turmoil, introducing whole reading curriculums and then dumping them when Bush's Department of Education nixed them, appointing a whole layer of highly paid "management experts" who know nothing of education, naming a chief of instruction (Diana Lam) and then abruptly sacking her a year and a half later for nepotism. Bloomberg desperately wants to show "progress" on fourth-grade reading tests, so in order to get his desired statistical results he decides to get rid of the bottom 20 percent of the 75,000 3rd-graders! This is the same twisted statistical "logic" that Washington uses to disguise the true unemployment rate by reclassifying millions of jobless as "discouraged workers" who will no longer be counted as job seekers.

This is not about pedagogy. The studies show that forced grade retention does not help students learn but instead has the opposite result: reading scores drop and particularly after the eighth grade "drop out" rates soar. In the Chicago public schools, recent studies by the University of Chicago show

that “retained 6th-graders improved less in reading than a group of low-achieving peers who weren’t held back,” that a fifth of the retained 3rd and 6th graders ended up being dumped in “special education” classes, and that 8th graders held back were more likely to drop out of school (“Holding Kids Back Fails Too, Study Says,” *Chicago Tribune*, 7 April). In New York City, the Education Priorities Panel studied the experience of 27 programs of grade retention programs around the U.S. and found “a clear correlation between grade retention and the likelihood of dropping out.” This dismal result also occurred with NYC’s “Promotional Gates” program begun in 1981, and again when it was revived in 1999 (EPP letter to Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein, 20 February).

So what is it really about? The EPP points to ideology (“deeply held beliefs about individual responsibility, hard work, and promotion to higher grades based on merit”), which is certainly a factor. The onslaught against “social promotion,” like the whole emphasis on “standards-based” curriculum, is a right-wing construct aimed against proponents of “progressive education.” The whole idea that the terrible state of public schools is due to lazy eight-year-olds is a cruel joke. It is obvious that kids who are kept back become demoralized and separated from their peers; labeled “failures,” they conform to the label. Contrary to the bourgeois ideology of individualism and punishment, the fact is that children do better when they are enthusiastic about learning, and that successful education is a collective endeavor involving teachers and students as a group.

It’s also about money: blaming the children is a way of getting around the fact that New York City schools, like big city schools throughout the country, are underfunded to the tune of billions of dollars a year. Supposedly, those kids being held back will be given extra attention, with smaller classes and intensive remedial programs. As one principal remarked, they ought to give the those children the additional resources before they flunk – but that costs big bucks. In fact, the EPP showed that under Bloomberg/Klein and Giuliani/Levy, class sizes increased except in the years where tests were given (fourth and eighth grades). Meanwhile, teachers are forced to “teach to the test,” and the effect is a “dumbing-down” of the educational system. It goes together with plans to gradually privatize the school system through vouchers, handing over school management to profit-making corporations like the Edison schools, or setting up “charter” schools in which the union contract is thrown out. Since Edison schools and charter schools are failing, one after another, the emphasis is increasingly on “corporatizing” the public schools by turning them into factories.

It’s about racism: the overwhelming majority of the students being held back are black, Latino and from families where English is a second language. This accompanies the sharply increased segregation of U.S. schools over the last couple of decades. It is not an unintended result, but a deliberate effort to refashion “public” education in the U.S. to reflect a changing class structure. As the workings of capitalism lead to the slashing of union jobs, as the fabled “middle class” that used to be considered the bedrock of “American democracy” is

thinned out, there is an increasing division between the poor, minority and immigrant working-class population and a wealthy bourgeois layer. Corresponding to this shift is the drive toward a two-tier education system: well-equipped country club suburban schools and elite urban schools for the sons and daughters of the ruling class and their managers, and warehouses that push poor students out to take minimum wage McJobs and serve as cannon fodder in imperialist wars.

This is what the “No Child Left Behind Act” is all about. The 3rd grade mass flunk-out is a graphic demonstration of what a fraud this is: here is a deliberate plan to leave 15,000 children behind. Already, 40 percent of Latino students in New York City do not graduate high school in four years, and the numbers are rapidly escalating with the introduction of the 8th grade test and the elimination of regular high school diplomas in favor of Regents’ diplomas. Of course, when suburban kids get axed, as happened with last year’s Regents math test, suddenly they discover that the tests are not accurate and the scores are “adjusted.” And it’s no accident that the NCLB act included a provision demanding that the names of all high school juniors and seniors be turned over to military recruiters. This is a back door to reintroducing the draft: as the U.S. expands its imperialist wars and colonial occupations, and as battlefield deaths mount, it needs more manpower to feed the voracious military machine.

The plan to flunk 15,000 3rd-graders is an atrocity. But it cannot be defeated by pointing to the overwhelming evidence that it harms school children, or to the inherent racial and ethnic discrimination. Appealing to liberal Democrats as opposed to the Republicans Bloomberg, Pataki and Bush is no answer, for it was the Democratic Clinton administration that first seriously began pushing standardized “high stakes” testing in the public schools. Moreover, New York Democrats in the city council and state legislature have regularly voted for education budgets that subjected NYC students and teachers to intolerable conditions making education impossible. Resistance must come instead from the working-class, minority and poor who are the targets of this bipartisan capitalist assault on public education. As opposed to mayoral control, there should be a fight for teacher-worker-parent-student control of the schools. Abuses like Bloomberg’s 3rd grade flunk-out test could be stopped by a militant union leadership, yet the United Federation of Teachers under Randi Weingarten tacitly backed Pataki and had a love-in with Bloomberg, and the UFT supports the compulsory high-stakes testing.

The real answer will not come through “educational reform” under capitalism, which has been tried and failed time after time. Rather, what’s needed is a class-struggle leadership of the unions, of poor and working people, and a struggle to build a revolutionary workers party that fights for a workers government, that for the first time can provide high quality, free public education for all from primary school through the university. For education to become a right, there must be a revolution, a socialist revolution not only in the United States but internationally. Then schools can for the first time become centers of learning instead of for propagating the system of wage slavery. ■

The Sellout Hug: Why Are They Smiling?



Vote Down the Giveback Contract and Prepare to Walk Out!

What It Will Take to Win: An All-Out NYC Education Strike

**Jail 110,000 Strikers? Hell No! –
Defeat the Taylor Law with Mass Action!
No to Democrats and Republicans –
For a Revolutionary Workers Party!**

The following leaflet was issued by the Internationalist Group on 11 October 2005 and reprinted along with the articles on pages 33 and 34 in The Internationalist No. 22 (September-October 2005).

It's high noon for teachers, professors, students and staff in New York City's public schools and colleges. The racist labor haters who run this city and this country are out to gut public education and enslave those who provide it. Bush's former education secretary, Rod Paige, who got his job by fudging test scores and dropout figures, called the National Education Association a "terrorist organization." They're looking for a showdown in NYC, figuring if they can bust teachers unions here, they can do it anywhere. *But we have the power to bust the union-busters.*

Billionaire mayor Michael Bloomberg and his schools chancellor flunkie Joel Klein have been holding teachers hostage in order to ram through a raft of "reforms" that would intro-

duce salary differentials and "merit pay," abolish seniority rights, sharply increase working time – in short, gut union gains won over decades of hard struggle. Bloomberg is running for reelection taking credit for (dubious) improved test scores while sticking it to the teachers and students whose hard work were responsible for any improvements. The "management experts" they have installed at the DOE know zip about education, and have zero respect for teachers.

Now the leadership of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) under Randi Weingarten has accepted a contract that lengthens the work day, lengthens the work year, eliminates seniority transfers, eliminates the right to grieve principals' evaluations, lets principals assign teachers to hall and lunchroom monitoring and a series of other givebacks. All this in exchange for a 14 percent pay "raise" over four-plus years, which works out to a *pay cut* when inflation and the increased hours are included.

The UFT Delegates Assembly, dominated by Weingarten's Unity Caucus, is set to approve this giveback contract at the October 11 DA. But there is massive opposition to the giveback deal in the ranks, particularly in high schools. Extra security is reportedly being hired to police the members who show up at the meeting to voice their opposition. ***This sellout by the union bureaucracy should be ripped up by the UFT membership. Chapter meetings should be called to vote it down. There should be***

mass pickets by teachers and students in front of the schools.

The timid house opposition to the Weingarten regime is doing everything to avoid the “s-word.” “If I vote no, will I have to go on strike?” asks the blog of Independent Community of Educators. ICE answers: “Absolutely not! If the proposed contract does not win approval from the members, both sides will go back to the bargaining table.” Dead wrong! This buys into the fear of striking spread by the UFT tops, who talk of strikes in order to scare the membership. Thousands of “no” votes on mail ballots (which won’t be counted until after the mayoral election) will only set the stage for the inevitable test of strength.

The union must be geared up to **wage an all-out strike** against the would-be union-busters in the Department of Education, backed up by their bosses in the city, state and federal governments. Defeatists always argue that “you can’t fight City Hall,” much less the State House and the White House. They’re wrong, we can. Certainly it would be a bitter battle. They will use the strikebreaking Taylor Law, which calls for heavy fines and jailing of strikers and union leaders. Yet the UFT is the largest union in the city. They don’t have enough jail space to hold tens of thousands of strikers.

And teachers are not alone. The 74,000 primary and secondary school teachers and 34,000 paraprofessionals, secretaries, maintenance personnel represented by the UFT have been working without a contract for more than two years, since June 2003. Meanwhile, 20,000 faculty and staff of the City University of New York (CUNY) have been without a contract since 2002 and haven’t had a raise since 2001. The PSC should strike simultaneously with the UFT to produce a full-scale strike shutting down all New York City public education. And if the Taylor Law is used to jail and fine striking teachers, the subway and bus union, **Transport Workers Union Local 100, should shut down mass transit.** Even a one-day walkout would throw the city into chaos.

A real strike that deals a defeat to the capitalist rulers cannot be a narrow “labor” fight simply about wages and hours. It must centrally involve the 1.1 million students of the New York City schools, and their parents. The students are overwhelmingly black, Latino and Asian, with a majority from immigrant families. The union must make a special effort to involve them in strike preparations and on picket lines, fighting against anti-immigrant repression (such as the arrest of two Muslim young women students by the feds last spring). The union must demand an end to the vicious discrimination against schools in poor neighborhoods which have the oldest equipment, most decrepit buildings and most crowded classrooms.

The UFT should demand that small class sizes be written into the contract, emphasizing that this is a fight particularly for minority students. It should make a particular emphasis on winning higher pay for paras and staff workers. And the discrimination against new teachers, who get 6 percent smaller raises in the proposed contract, must go.

More broadly, the union must be in the forefront of the struggle against the resegregation of U.S. schools, as Jonathan Kozol documented in his recent article (“Still Separate, Still Unequal: America’s Educational Apartheid,” *Harper’s Magazine*, September 2005). Kozol pointed out that the large high schools in the Bronx are mostly more than 95 percent black and

Latino. While pushing its “small school” panacea, the Department of Education crams thousands more students into these schools, producing chaotic conditions, and then calls in police. We stand with the Dewitt Clinton students who last month protested the installation of metal detectors. And we demand: **Cops out of the schools!**

Most of the discussion about the contract has been about specific numbers and clauses, but this battle is fundamentally political. It is no accident that the contract deal came a few weeks before the mayoral election. Weingarten effectively offered the UFT’s neutrality in the contest, which would be backhanded support to the Republican mayor against Democratic challenger Freddy Ferrer. That’s why the press called it a “win-win deal” for Weinberg and Bloomberg. But it’s a “lose-lose” deal for teachers and students.

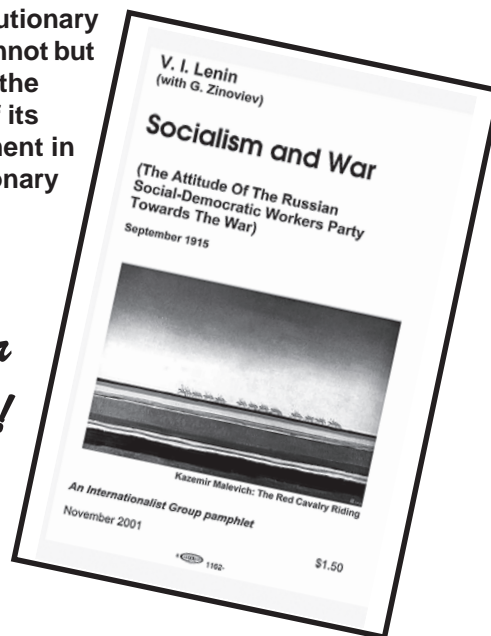
The fight is political in a broader sense as well. The anti-labor offensive here is intimately linked to the colonial occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan. The government that is waging an imperialist war in the Near East is simultaneously waging a capitalist war on working people, minorities and immigrants here. The government wants to use the schools to produce cannon fodder for its wars. We demand **military out of the schools, including recruiters and JROTC**, and that **schools must refuse to turn over information on students to the mili-**

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Leninism on Revolutionary Struggle Against Imperialist War

“A revolutionary class cannot but wish for the defeat of its government in a reactionary war.”

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NYC Teachers: Protest Arrest of Muslim High School Students!

The following leaflet was issued by the Internationalist Group on 10 April 2005.

Over the last several days, the *New York Times* has documented the outrageous arrests of two NYC high school girls who were dragged away from their homes and are now being held in an immigration jail. These two 16-year-olds are apparently accused of being “would-be suicide bombers,” although under the draconian U.S. anti-terrorist laws, no charges have been made and no evidence presented. Their real “crime” seems to be that they are Muslim.

One of the young women is a student at the Heritage High School in East Harlem, where she ran for student body president. The other girl attended the High School for Environmental Studies in Manhattan, and was receiving home schooling at the time of her arrest.

The students, both immigrants, from Guinea and Bangladesh, respectively, have been held for weeks now at an immigration jail in southern Pennsylvania, hundreds of miles away from their families, with whom they’ve only had the briefest of contact. They were seized by agents of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), a division of Homeland Security. School officials were not notified of this atrocity.

The girls are accused of having the “intention” to “become suicide bombers.” The FBI claims it has “evidence” of this, but no such evidence has been revealed to the girls, their families or anyone who represents them. Moreover, government officials in Washington and New York are dubious about the whole business and say that there is “no evidence” of any such plot (*New York Times*, 7 April 2005).

According to the paper, the girls are being terrorized in the jail and being told that they must “confess” to unknown charges



Adama Bah, 16, with the figures her classmates at the Heritage School made to protest her arrest.

or their little brothers and sisters will also be seized from their homes and immediately deported. It should also be noted that prisoners picked up on “terror” laws have been abused and even tortured in U.S. immigration jails, notably in Elizabeth, N.J., and York prison has been cited by Amnesty International for shackling children and other abuses.

These arrests drive home how the war on Iraq and Afghanistan is directly linked to attacks on the democratic rights of minorities and immigrants and the general population in this country. Thousands of immigrants were rounded-up and seized in waves of racial profiling over the last four years. A deliberate attempt to purge thousands of “undocumented” students at the City University (CUNY) in the wake of the imperialist war hysteria after September 11 was countered by a campaign of protest by faculty and students and workers, kicked off by a united-front rally at Hunter College initiated by the Internationalist Group.

Teachers and members of the UFT cannot stand by while our students are being victimized and traumatized, and denied their fundamental rights, both under the aegis of the Bush administration’s “USA PATRIOT Act” (voted for by both capitalist parties) and anti-immigrant laws previously passed under Democrat Clinton. We must demand that the students be immediately released and any secret charges against them be dropped, that they be immediately reunited with their families; that the UFT assign lawyers to assist our arrested students and their families; that they be allowed to return to school immediately, and given additional services to make up for time lost because of these abusive arrests. At chapter meetings, the Delegate Assembly and at UFT rallies, teachers should demand: “Stop Arresting Our Students.” ■



Adama Bah reading to children at Bellevue Hospital.

Racist New Orleans Cops Assault Black School Teacher



"New Orleans Police State" we headlined our September 20 [2005] article. Now we see it in action.

On Saturday night, October 8, Robert Davis, a 64-year-old retired teacher, wandered into the French Quarter of New Orleans looking to buy some cigarettes. When he asked a police officer when a curfew went into effect, he was grabbed and viciously beaten, initially by two local cops, later joined by two others (including a New York policeman) while FBI agents looked on. All the police were white, their hapless victim was black. Where have we seen this before?

A mounted cop used his horse to try to block a crew from AP-TV from filming the scene, to no avail. The videotape shows the police pummeling Davis, slugging him repeatedly in the face, slamming him into a wall, then throwing him on the ground where a third cop kicks him in the head. When the TV reporter shows his credentials and asks what is happening, the police push him against a car and manhandle him, telling him to mind his own business.

Drenched in blood, Davis was then charged with public drunkenness, resisting arrest, battery on a police officer and public intimidation. The charges are absurd: Davis, who lost his house in the Ninth Ward to the post-Katrina flooding, hasn't had a drink in 25 years and no blood or breath tests were administered. Two of the police involved have been charged, but national TV networks have been inventing excuses for them.

It was an eerie replay of the 1991 beating of Los Angeles black motorist Rodney King by a lynch mob of racist L.A.

police, shown in brutal detail in a video that has played over and over on national TV. In both cases, the whole world saw what goes on all the time as paramilitary police ride roughshod over largely black and Latino cities, treating them as militarily occupied areas.

The New Orleans Police Department is a notorious sewer of graft and murderous racist brutality. In the 1990s, some 30 N.O. cops were fired for corruption charges. One was sentenced to death for ordering a mob hitman to murder a woman who had charged him in a police brutality suit. This pattern continued in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, when up to a third of the police force simply fled and others were photographed looting CDs from Wal-Mart stores.

They also engaged in wanton murder of flood survivors. It was reported on September 4 that New Orleans police had shot and killed five "looters" who had supposedly attacked Army Corps of Engineers personnel. However, the Corps said that those killed were contractors on their way to repair a breached canal. Now the family of a young man killed by cops outside the Convention Center are charging that he was shot down in cold blood, and then run over by a police car.

The NOPD, like the LAPD, NYPD or any other big city police department in the U.S. has plenty of pathological racist thugs and killers. This is not a case of a few "bad apples," but a reflection of cops' role as the armed fist of the capitalist ruling class. The police cannot be reformed, they must be swept away by workers revolution!

NYC Education Strike...

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tary, as stipulated in the "No Child Left Behind" law.

The government's war on the poor and minority population was seen clearly with Hurricane Katrina. Not only were millions taken out of the budget for flood protection in order to fund the "war on terror" and the occupation of Iraq, not only were tens of thousands of black poor left to die in the flood, but now the U.S. is imposing racist police-state rule in New

Orleans. Last weekend retired black teacher Robert Davis was beaten bloody by cops in the French Quarter.

Both capitalist parties are the enemies of working people. It is necessary to break with Democrats and Republicans (and minor capitalist politicians such as immigrant-basher Ralph Nader) and **fight for a revolutionary workers party**. Only through socialist revolution will conditions be created in which education can serve the interests of the vast majority of working people who produce the wealth and make society run. Otherwise, talk of educational reform can only be a cruel hoax. ■

NYC Transit Workers, Teachers

Defeat Imperialist War Abroad and Bosses' War "At Home"!

For Workers' Strikes Against the War!

Throw Military Recruiters Out of the Schools!

The following leaflet was distributed at an 8 February 2006 delegates assembly of the United Federation of Teachers and reprinted in The Internationalist No. 23, April-May 2006.

After almost three years of imperialist war on and occupation of Iraq, and four and a half years of occupation of Afghanistan, the U.S. slaughter in the Near East continues. More than 100,000 Iraqis have died due to the occupation, more than 750 killed in January alone, while well over 2,000 occupation troops have been killed. The U.S. military has been unable to wipe out or even make a serious dent in the entrenched insurgency, no matter how many phony "elections" it stages to mask the reality of its brutal colonial rule. The Iraqi economy is in shambles, oil production is still below the pre-war level, and corruption is rampant, from war profiteers like the Halliburton Corp. down to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the army of "contractors" that has swarmed over the country like a plague of locusts.

Meanwhile, in the U.S., the government at all levels (federal, state and local) created a man-made disaster in New Orleans, leaving over 100,000 overwhelmingly poor and black people to die in the floods after Hurricane Katrina, deliberately blocking aid efforts, putting the city under martial law, closing down public education and now "ethnically cleansing" tens of thousands of impoverished black residents who won't be allowed to return as the rulers try to turn the city into Las Vegas on the Mississippi. This isn't "negligence" or "incompetence," it is a racist war on minorities. And it goes hand in hand with a war on labor, as the union-busting offensive continues. In the Appalachian coal fields, miners are murdered by criminal bosses and their government who don't give a damn about workers' safety.

But workers have the power to *defeat* the imperialist war abroad and the bosses' war "at home." What's required is a leadership with the program and determination to take on a rapacious ruling class.

In New York City, the billionaire mayor, billionaire head of the Metropolitan Transit Authority and multi-millionaire governor, Republicans all, denounced the hard-working under-paid transit workers as "greedy," "thugs" and "rats" for daring to strike against the MTA's takeback demands. The Democratic attorney general slapped million-dollar-a-day fines on the Transport Workers Union Local 100, and thousand-dollar fines on each member under the union-busting Taylor Law. But the TWU membership courageously voted down the giveback contract agreed to by the Local leadership under Roger Toussaint, and



Internationalist photo

"We move New York, we can stop New York." Transit workers picket bus depot in the Bronx, December 2005.

the battle is still on. The transit workers' fight is everyone's fight, and particularly teachers', as Mayor Bloomberg vows to force all city workers to pay for health care.

After themselves negotiating a giveback contract last October that among other things added 2-1/2 hours to the workweek, the United Federation of Teachers leadership claimed to be "supporting" the transit workers but pointedly refused to endorse their strike. In fact, according to behind-the-scenes reports in the bourgeois press, UFT president Randy Weingarten put the screws on Toussaint to put an end to the walkout, and was instrumental in cooking up the sellout "deal" that the TWU ranks just rejected. This reveals how hollow is Weingarten's sometime talk of maybe some day striking. Now the UFT Delegates Assembly is scheduled to hear a report from Toussaint. Instead of a lot of hot air, the UFT should initiate a labor mass demonstration against the Taylor Law, during working hours, and announce that the UFT is walking

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Liberal Racism = Education for War

New York Regents Exam Pushes Apologies for Imperialism

The following article was issued as an Internationalist Group leaflet and then reprinted in The Internationalist No. 24, Summer 2006.

17 MAY 2006—A scandal erupted this week over vile apologies for imperialism in the New York State Regents exam on global history and geography given last January. On Monday, the New York *Daily News* (15 May 2006) published an exclusive reporting on black students and educators in Bushwick who are up in arms over exam questions asking students to read outright apologies for colonial rule and then “state two ways British imperialism would benefit Africans.”

There have been innumerable outraged protests over the institutionalized discrimination of high-stakes standardized testing, and racism in the New York schools. Here we have a blatant example of the way in which the educational system pushes imperialist ideology. This is not an isolated incident but part of an international trend. It reflects the current political climate in the United States and elsewhere, in which justifications for empire have become fashionable.

This is education for imperialist war, and it must be fought tooth and nail. It goes hand in hand with the arrests last year of two Muslim high school girls who were dragged from their homes, transported hundreds of miles to be held in immigration jails without charges, because some police-state officials considered the young women “would-be suicide bombers.” We call on the United Federation of Teachers and all teachers, parents and others to denounce the racist Regents exams.

The readings on the Regents, from Frederick Lugard, an official of the British East Africa Company who helped colonize Uganda, talked of the colonizers’ “desire of civilized administration,” and claimed that “Europe is in Africa for the mutual benefit of her own industrial classes, and of the native races in their progress to a higher plane.” It praised the colonial masters for “endeavouring...to teach the native races to conduct their own affairs with justice

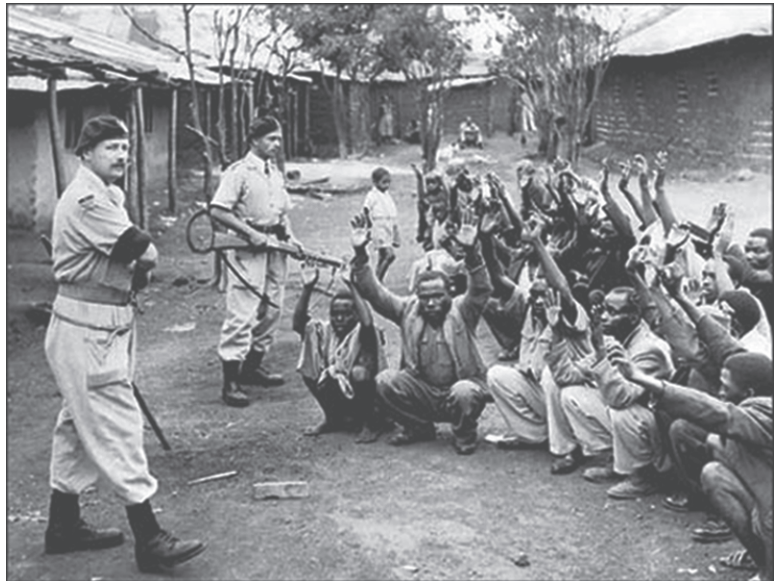


British colonial conqueror Cecil Rhodes stands astride Africa in 1892 cartoon from British magazine Punch. From preparatory materials for January 2006 Regents exam.

and humanity.” What racist filth!

This is nothing but the age-old justification for the colonial conquest and rape of Africa and Asia, Europe’s supposed “civilizing mission,” the “White Man’s Burden,” as colonial apologist Rudyard Kipling put it. Brian Favors, who teaches at Bushwick Community School, compared the test question to “asking a Jewish child to state two ways the Holocaust benefited Jews.” One student was so upset with the question that she complained to an exam proctor; she then ran out of time and never finished the exam’s final essay (on the same theme).

Initially caught off-guard, the authorities have pulled together to defend the colonialist exam. A *Daily News* (17 May 2006) editorial declares, “No offense, history exam is fine.” How so? They argue that “Based on this document [the Lugard pieces] and according to this document, students were asked to cite several ways



Kenyans rounded up by British army during 1948-52 “Mau Mau” rebellion when independence fighters were labeled “terrorists” by colonial rulers. Regents exams tells students to “state two ways British imperialism would benefit Africans.”



U.S. Marines slaughtered over 600 men, women and children at Mount Dajo (above) on Philippines island of Jolo, March 1906. President Theodore Roosevelt congratulated General Wood on “the brilliant feat of arms.” Hundreds of thousands of Filipinos were killed in the U.S. conquest of the islands. But the New York State Board of Regents banned any mention of “an example of imperialism from United States history,” and specifically anything concerning the U.S.’ “acquisition of the Philippines,” in student essays on the subject of imperialism in January 2006 Regents exam.

in which imperialism benefited Africa” (emphasis in original). And the exam included a selection criticizing imperialism from African independence leader Kwame Nkrumah. “Nowhere is there a promulgation of racism,” they claim.

Dead wrong. We read the exam, and the teachers scoring and rating guide. First of all, it’s not just a matter of a single question. There are three lengthy selections praising imperialism. No, this is not the White Citizens Council, the Nazi Party or Colonel Blimp taking over the educational system – it is *liberal* racism. The test wants students to weigh both sides of the question, you see. The essay is to discuss imperialism from the point of view of the imperialist power, and from the view of the colonized people. But from the standpoint of working people and the oppressed, there are no “two sides” to imperialism.

What’s next? Are the Regents going to have readings next year from Confederate rulers and abolitionists and then debate the “pros and cons” of slavery? Will they have students read excerpts from Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* and the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and then tell students to write essays on anti-Semitism the Holocaust from the point of view of Jewish victims and the tsarist or Nazi perpetrators, *based on their documents*? You can imagine the uproar if anyone proposed this. But if it has to do with Africa, and the holocaust of slavery which slaughtered millions of black people, the administrators who run the capitalist education system figure they can get away with “even-handed” racism.

Last year there was a similar case in France. The National Assembly passed a law praising French colonial rule in Africa. The law of 23 February 2005 mandated “educational programs

recognizing in particular the positive role of the French presence overseas, notably in North Africa.” This obscene law was voted not only by the conservative government but also most of the “socialist” opposition. Only months later when youths of African and North African origin revolted last fall against police terror in the working-class and immigrant suburbs was there an outcry over the apology for colonial rule.

The French example makes clear that what was behind this sudden drive to “reevaluate” colonialism is the capitalist rulers’ need to justify imperialist war. The February 2005 law was passed to defend France’s dirty war of torture and indiscriminate bombing in Algeria, to make it a crime to “defame” the mercenary colonial troops who fought for the French. Now French troops are again policing the Ivory Coast and propping up tinpot dictators in West and Central Africa. And the educational system is to provide the ideological justification.

In the case of the New York Regents exam, the key is the emphatic instruction: “*Do not* use an example of imperialism from United States history in your answer.” The teachers’ guide explicitly says there can be no reference to the “acquisition of the Philippines as a result of the Spanish American War,” in which millions of Filipinos were killed. On the other hand, imperialism “*providing an education as a positive effect*” in India would be an acceptable answer. So, too, would be references to the “enrichment of life (art, music) with introduction to other cultures,” and the “spread of Christianity to Africa.” But there will be no reference in school tests to Vietnam, or Iraq and Afghanistan today.

The answer to this blatant apology for empire and imperialist war will not be found in educational reform. Certainly, class-conscious teachers should do their best to counteract the ideological poisoning of their students’ minds. It is necessary to fight the racist discrimination of high-stakes standardized testing. Marxists oppose the escalating privatization and corporate control of “public” education. We call to *kick the military recruiters out of the schools* where they prowl the halls looking for cannon fodder for their imperialist war machines. We advocate abolition of the New York state Board of Regents and of the NYC Department of Education and for *teacher-student-worker-parent control of the schools*.

But as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels pointed out over a century and a half ago, in *The German Ideology* (1847): “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas; i.e., the class, which is the ruling material forces of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force.” To defeat the apologies for war it is necessary to defeat the imperialist war they justify; to sweep racist ideology into the dustbin of history it is necessary to bring down the imperialist system that spawns it.

At the present time, the racist offensive is directed particularly against immigrants. As in World War II when virulent anti-Japanese racism accompanied the locking up of tens of thousands of people of Japanese ancestry in concentration camps, today anti-immigrant racism accompanies the maraud-

ing of fascist vigilantes like the Minutemen and preparations for locking up immigrants in concentration camps. In addition to the existing “facilities,” Halliburton has the contracts to build new camps for *hundreds of thousands* more.

The Trotskyists of the Internationalist Group fight for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants*, and for labor to *defend immigrants against racist attacks*. We call on working people and oppressed minorities to break with the partner parties of U.S. capitalism, Democrats and Republicans alike (and their shills like the Greens and Working Families Party), and to join the struggle to build a *revolutionary workers party*. As Karl Marx wrote in the first volume of *Capital*: “The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of blackskins, signalized the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production.” It will take *international socialist revolution* to put an end to the holocaust of capitalist imperialism and along with it the despicable ideological justification of oppression. ■

Defeat Imperialist War...

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out if the TWU leaders are jailed.

After it was postponed at the last meeting of the UFT leadership, the February Delegates Assembly is supposed to vote on an antiwar resolution. The leadership has a motion “urging a commitment from our country’s leaders to bring our troops home rapidly” and incorporating an AFL-CIO Executive Committee resolution that “supports the brave men and women deployed in Iraq.” Of course, the UFT leaders like the AFL-CIO tops are hardly antiwar. From Vietnam to Yugoslavia and Afghanistan, they have supported the marauding U.S. imperialists. But since the occupation has bogged down in the quicksand of Iraq, some Democratic Party politicians, led off by Pennsylvania Congressman John Murtha, have decided to come out for withdrawal of U.S. troops sometime “soon.” They don’t want U.S. imperialism to suffer a humiliating defeat, as it did (in very different circumstances) in Vietnam, which would undercut Washington’s ability to threaten to nuke Iran or North Korea.

But the UFT tops are not the only ones supporting this *social-patriotic* resolution. A bloc of leftist dissidents, UFTers to Stop the War, including supporters of various would-be socialist or even communist groups, wants to *amend* the leadership motion by stiffening it a little, changing the call for a “rapid” withdrawal to “immediate” withdrawal. They want to the UFT to “publicize and provide resources for the upcoming antiwar demonstrations,” and to join U.S. Labor Against the War. Their amendments do *not* remove the repeated references to the “brave” U.S. occupation forces. Does that include the military torturers at Abu Ghraib, or the forces that laid waste to Falluja? While many poor and minority youth get seduced or induced into the military by promises of paying for college and other bribes, and although the real criminals are their commanders, from the top brass in the Pentagon to the White

House and the capitalist politicians in Congress that voted for the war, the fact remains that this is a “volunteer” army.

Yes, the government is paying tens of billions on the war while education is starved of funds. But this is not a question of budget “priorities” – what’s going on in Iraq is an imperialist slaughter. Class-conscious workers must defend the Iraqi peoples against the death and devastation being inflicted on them, and hail every blow against the colonial occupiers. Workers in the United States should fight against the war by using their class power, including launching strike action against the war. A refusal to handle war cargo by longshore unions, or a work stoppage by NYC transit workers would have many times the power of the toothless peace marches. Moreover, the various antiwar “coalitions” are once again squabbling even though they all call for “out now” and will all feed into the Democratic Party election campaigns in the fall.

Teachers and the UFT in particular should use their power to kick military recruiters out the schools, an issue the “progressive” amendments to the UFT tops’ motion doesn’t even mention.

Above all, it is urgently necessary to fight to break the working class from the stranglehold of the capitalist parties and politicians – Democrats and Republicans alike, as well as minor actors like the Greens, Nader, or shills for the Democrats like the “Working Families Party.” What the poor, minority, immigrant and working people need is a workers party fighting for a workers government. ■

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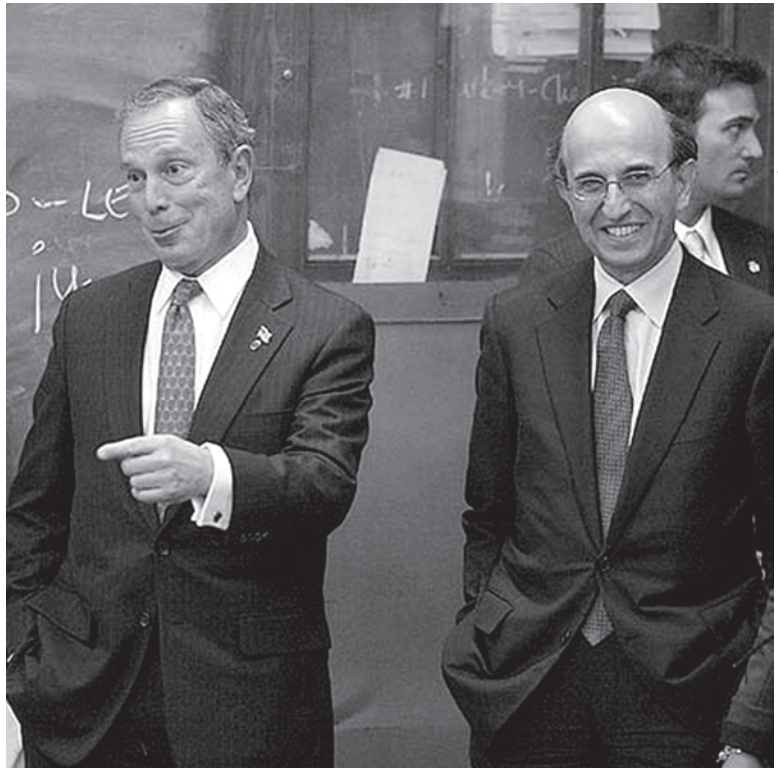
Cops Out of the Schools! Stop Racist Profiling! For Teacher-Student-Worker-Parent Control of the Schools!

NYC Department of Education

Corporatization, Repression and Union-Busting

6 JUNE 2007 – Since taking control of the New York City schools five years ago, Mayor Michael Bloomberg and his factotum Joel Klein have relentlessly pursued an agenda of corporatization of public education. This has meant top-down control by managers with little or no educational experience or knowledge; multi-million-dollar contracts for educational entrepreneurs and corporate services vendors; bullying police presence in and around the schools, including beatings and arbitrary arrests of students and teachers; massive and escalating testing, including “high stakes” tests victimizing poor, minority and immigrant students; the wholesale elimination of bilingual schools and failure to service English language learners in small schools (in a city where more than half the students come from immigrant families); the destruction of arts and music education programs; punitive measures including holding back thousands of students rather than providing more resources; forcing out tens of thousands of students every year, producing illusory statistical gains in test scores; the gutting of teachers’ seniority and tenure rights; and no discernable improvement in educational achievement.

Now the Department of Education is in the throes of its third reorganization under mayoral control, throwing the system into utter chaos. Bloomberg/Klein call their program “Children First,” like George Bush’s “No Child Left Behind” law. This is just a cover for attacking teachers unions, and blaming educators for the mess created by administrators and capitalist politicians. They like to go after faceless bureaucrats, as when former mayor Rudy Giuliani threatened to “blow up” the “Kremlin” at 110 Livingston. But far from cutting down on wasteful bureaucracy, Bloomberg/Klein have greatly expanded it, adding four and five principals in a single building, plus assistant principals and other administrative personnel to administer their multiple small schools housed in the buildings of former large high schools. An army of highly paid private sector “consultants” is brought in for greater “efficiency” and end up producing fiascos like last winter’s school bus disaster. Parents have been shoved out the door as the (often corrupt) community



Shannon Stapleton for the New York Times

What’s so funny? NYC mayor Bloomberg and schools chancellor Klein (right, at Far Rockaway High School, January 2005) push corporate school “reform,” a wrecking job on public education.

boards were shut down. The 1.1 million school children and 110,000 active teachers, plus tens of thousands of other personnel pay the price.

This onslaught has been facilitated by the repeated capitulation by the leadership of the United Federation of Teachers under Randi Weingarten. Banking on the UFT’s legendary ability to weather the endless administrative “reforms” imposed by each new management “team” at the Board of Ed and now Department of Ed, Weingarten has gone along with every new scheme in exchange for wage increases that still leave New York City teachers far below pay scales in neighboring suburban districts. This “strategy” of passive resistance has played itself out as the DOE has now created a huge financial incentive for princi-



Cops out of the schools! NYPD sweep for cellphones at middle school in Manhattan provokes parent and student protest.

pals to get rid of veteran (“high price”) teachers and replace them with inexperienced (and much cheaper) new hires. In some districts up to 50 percent of teachers will be forced out of their jobs in a “re-registration,” and many will end up as permanent substitutes. All this has only weakened the union, leaving it unprepared for the inevitable fight for its existence and to defend teachers and students against the capitalist overseers of “public” education. Instead of coyly hinting about the possibility of a strike, the union should be girding for all-out class battle alongside other key municipal unions, such as transit workers.

This means first of all defending the countless students victimized by racist cop repression in the schools. A couple of weeks ago, 30 students from Bushwick Community HS in Brooklyn were arrested in mass and held for 48 hours by the NYPD as they were going to the wake of a friend. The cops claimed they were engaged in “gang activity” even though several had notes from the principal excusing their absence. Then last week, police descended on Middle School 54 on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, seizing more than 400 cellphones out of a student population of 900, managing to infuriate white middle class parents whose kids got a taste of the heavy-handed tactics the cops routinely mete out to black, Latino, Asian and other minority students. These are not isolated incidents, as *New York Times* columnist Bob Herbert has pointed out in several recent articles. A study by the New York Civil Liberties Union and its ACLU parent, *Criminalizing the Classroom* (March 2007), recounted the case of a math teacher at the Urban Assembly Academy in Washington Heights, Adhim Deveaux, who objected last October when he saw cops slam one of his students against a car:

“In response, the police officer hit and then shoved Mr. Deveaux. Students and staff yelled, ‘He’s a teacher, he’s a teacher.’ Another officer then grabbed Mr. Deveaux from behind and slammed him onto the sidewalk, where his head hit the pavement, causing injury.”

The UFT must demand the immediate removal of all police from the schools and an end to the “racial profiling” of minority students and youth. More than a half million people were

stopped and searched by the NYPD last year, almost 1,400 a day, and far from being “random” more than half of those stopped were black. The union should demonstratively mobilize its membership in defense of the students at Bushwick Community High when their case is heard, and join with other New York City unions in a labor mobilization against racist cop attacks. The UFT should also come out in force against the arrest and deportation of NYC residents, including students, by the ICE immigration police, who have been intensifying their raids around the country in recent months. In some cases such po-

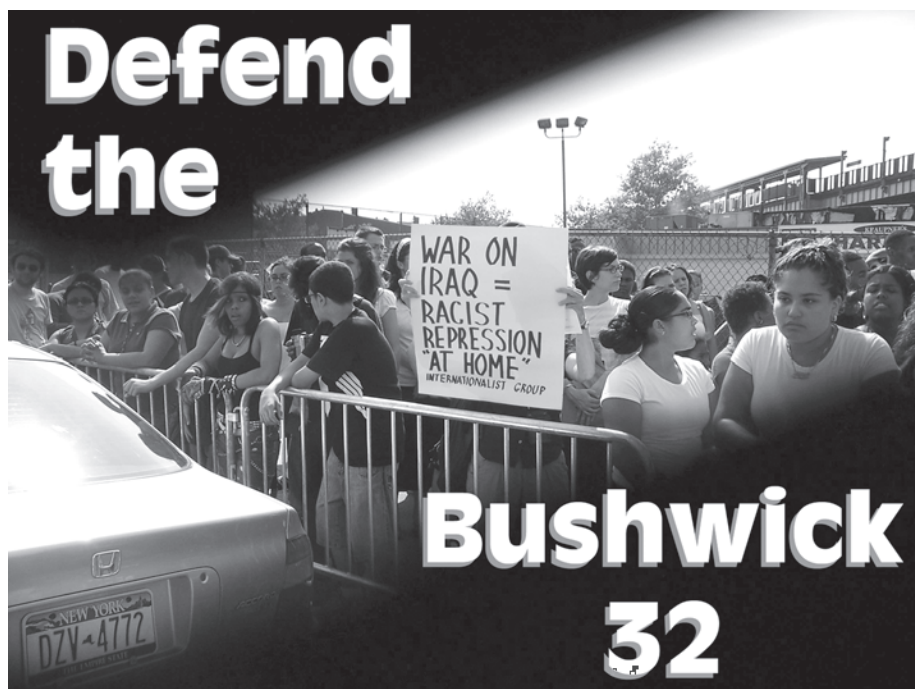
lice-state actions can be blocked by workers action if sufficient numbers turn out.

The union must also act to restore tenure and seniority rights that Weingarten & Co. bargained away in the last contract. The UFT membership must insist that any teacher “excessed” by a school be immediately given a new assignment. In the future, the union should demand that hiring of teachers be done by the union itself, and neither the school principal nor the DOE tops at Tweed must be allowed to block hiring or remove teachers at their discretion. The contracts with private sector vendors and “partners” should be canceled. And to put a stop to the destructive disorganization by the parasitic honchos at the Department of Education, under the aegis of mayoral control, we call for the DOE itself to be abolished. New York City schools should be run by elected collegial bodies of teachers, students, workers and parents, to whom all administrators would be responsible and which could remove such officials at any time.

This is the democratic educational system that was implemented in the early years of the Soviet Union, to the applause of many educational reformers in the United States who for the first time saw their proposals put into action on a large scale. Matters such as school discipline were placed in the hands of councils of older students, and decisions concerning academic programs and initiatives were resolved on a truly democratic basis by the teacher-student-worker-parent councils. It is striking that in the United States today, which claims to be “democratic,” public schools are subjected to dictatorial control by capitalist politicians and billionaires like Bloomberg (and his allies like Microsoft’s Bill Gates).

Today the ruling class seeks to reorder educational priorities to serve their profits (lower costs, eliminate “optional” programs and train workers for their employment needs, while outsourcing as much as possible to private companies). This includes both Republicans and Democrats, such as former Wal-Mart board member and Iraq war backer Hillary Clinton, who have been in the forefront of the drive to mould public education to corporate needs, as well as New York governor Eliot

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The following article is reprinted from Revolution No. 4, September 2007, published by the Internationalist Clubs at the City University of New York, in accordance with the Internationalist Group.

Students, teachers and community activists rallied outside the 83rd police precinct in Brooklyn on July 9 (see photo above) to demand that all charges be dropped against the “Bushwick 32.” These black and Latino high-school and college students – some just 13 years old – were arrested while peaceably walking to the L train to attend the wake of a friend murdered in street violence. With guns drawn, cops handcuffed them and took them to the precinct house, where they were charged with “unlawful assembly.” Some were jailed for a day and a half, even denied food or water.

As usual when they want to cover up their racist profiling and brutality (remember Sean Bell!), the cops’ story keeps changing, as they try one lie after another (“suspected gang activity,” “rampaging” and so forth). Columnist Bob Herbert wrote in the *New York Times* (26 May):

“Some of the youngsters were carrying notes from school saying that they were allowed to be absent to attend the wake. There is no evidence that I’ve been able to find – other than uncorroborated statements by the police – that the teenagers were misbehaving in any way.”

A study by the New York Civil Liberties Union, *Criminalizing the Classroom* (March 2007) connects police brutality on the streets with repression in the schools. Along with corporatization and privatization of public schools come the metal detectors, the stop-and-search operations, the arrests of students and teachers who take a stand in defense of their students. “War in Iraq = Racist Repression ‘At Home’” was the sign a United Federation

of Teachers (UFT) member and Internationalist Group supporter carried at the July 9 rally. An Internationalist leaflet distributed at the rally demanded “Cops Out of the Schools! Stop Racist Profiling!”

Among those attending the rally were students from Bushwick Community High School, where last year students and teachers protested the NY Regents Social Studies exam which told students to “state two ways British imperialism would benefit Africans”! Democratic City Councilman Charles Barron was one of the main speakers at the rally, which also received “support” from a black police officers’ group. Several speakers appealed to black and Latino cops to “do the right thing” and support the students. But as NYC students experience all the time, the police (black, white, Hispanic or Asian) “protect and serve” this system of racist oppression and inequality. As for the Democrats, they keep the war on Iraq running abroad while chaining workers, minorities and youth to capitalism here. And as long as capitalism continues, so will its offspring, racism and police brutality. We need a revolution, a socialist revolution, to put a stop to it. ■

NYCDoE: Corporatization...

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Spitzer who as attorney general slapped a Taylor Law injunction and million-dollar fines on Transport Workers Union Local 100 for its powerful December 2005 strike that brought NYC to a standstill. Tomorrow, these Democrats will use the strike-breaking, union-busting laws against a teachers strike. We need a class-struggle workers party!

A key component of the “No Child Left Behind” law is to regiment the population for war, requiring schools to hand over information about their students to the Pentagon. We are not educating young people to be “cannon fodder” for imperialist war. The union should demand: No military recruiters in the schools, and no student information be released to the military. It is necessary to defeat the imperialist war abroad and the bosses’ war on working people, minorities and immigrants “at home.” But no real educational reform in the interests of the working people, the poor, minority and immigrant population is possible in the context of decaying capitalism, where everything from workers pensions to wages and working conditions are under sustained attack. It will take nothing less than a socialist revolution to make high quality, free public education a right for all, from pre-kindergarten to university, and create an education system that will allow the creative capacity of those who produce the wealth to flower. ■

Principal Purged in Censorship Frenzy

Annie Tritt for The New York Times



Defend Debbie Almontaser! Principal of only Arabic-focused school in NYC was fired after witchhunt by Zionist, union-bashing New York Post. Instead of defending her, UFT president Weingarten joined the hue and cry.

Reprinted from Revolution No. 4 (September 2007)

An outrageous campaign of censorship, smears and “guilt” by association forced the resignation in August of Debbie Almontaser, principal of the Khalil Gibran Academy, a new middle school which the New York Department of Education had announced as the first to focus on Arabic language and culture. Mayor Bloomberg himself announced the resignation on his weekly radio show, after a months-long campaign against Almontaser sparked, yet again, by the *New York Post*.

The pretext for driving Almontaser out was that she is a leader of a Yemeni American immigrant group that shares office space with an organization called Arab Women Active in Art and Media. So? It turns out this organization sells T-shirts. Horrors! And? Well, it sells a shirt reading “Intifada NYC.” The *intifada* (literally “shaking off”) is the Palestinian rebellion that began in 1987 against the brutal Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Millions of people around the world were inspired by the heroism of Palestinian youth targeted for savage reprisals for throwing rocks at Israeli tanks.

For the witch-hunt crew, any solidarity with the besieged Palestinian people must be demonized, silenced and smeared as support to “terrorism.” (Meanwhile, speaking of T-shirts, we remember the case of the Dearborn High student banned from wearing one that rightly called George Bush an “international terrorist.”) So the shirt was presented as some kind of crime,

Almontaser was declared guilty of association with the group selling it, and the foam-flecked frenzy was on.

The United Federation of Teachers should have denounced the censorship, which is a direct threat to every student and teacher in the city. Disgracefully (but predictably), UFT President Randi Weingarten piled on, adding her voice to the gang screaming for blood, saying “maybe [Almontaser] should not be a principal” because she did not jump unconditionally to condemn the shirt, which Weingarten called “warmongering.” *Warmongering* more accurately describes the political legacy of the UFT leadership, which for decades displayed an unbounded, fanatical zeal for U.S. foreign policy, from the Cold War and Vietnam to the arming and backing of Israeli-style apartheid (Zionism). Woody Allen’s movie *Sleeper* is about a man who wakes from a coma to find that “a man called Albert Shanker” – the UFT leader who mentored Weingarten – had gotten hold of atom bombs and started World War III.

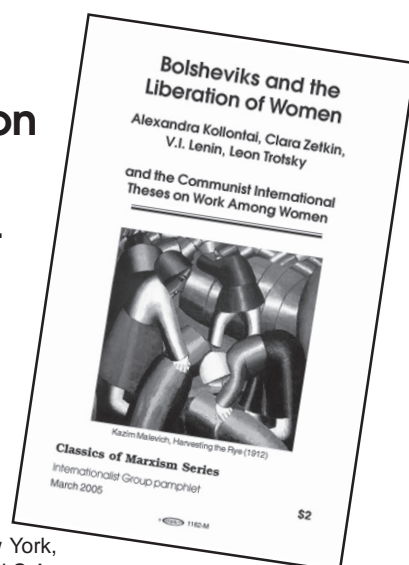
Internationalist activists remember Almontaser from the weekly protests to “Free the Detainees” that we participated in for months at Brooklyn’s Metropolitan Detention Center after the racist round-ups of Muslim, Arab and South Asian men in the wake of 9/11 2001. A leader of the Arab American Family Support Center, she spoke eloquently about the anguish and deprivation suffered by the families of the detainees (none of whom were ever even charged with involvement in the World Trade Center attack). We condemn the purge of Debbie Almontaser as a threat to the most basic rights of us all. ■

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Cops Out of the Schools! No to Mayoral Control! For Teacher-Student-Worker-Parent Control of the Schools

NYC Teachers, Students Under Attack

Chang W. Lee/The New York Times



Joel Klein, a/k/a "The Terminator," ordered hundreds of experienced teachers "excessed" as part of yet another "reorganization" of city schools. 700 teachers in alternative schools lost their positions and had to reapply for jobs. Now he wants to "terminate" teachers in name of management control.

**Close Down the "Rubber Rooms" –
Reinstate All "Excessed" Teachers!
Union Control of Hiring!**

17 OCTOBER 2007 – The opening of school this fall, said United Federation of Teachers (UFT) president Randi Weingarten at a citywide meeting of chapter chairmen, was the smoothest in years. "Only" 4,000 grievances over class size (as opposed to 6,000 the year before). Thousands of teachers "taking advantage" of "open market" transfers – having lost seniority rights under the 2005 contract and now subject to the whim of principles trying imitate the dictatorial ways of Schools Chancellor Joel Klein and his boss, Mayor Bloomberg. Just one fly in the ointment, she said: the numbers of teachers who have been thrown out of their jobs and are cooling their heels in Absent Teacher Reserves (ATR) or sitting in "rubber rooms" around the city because charges had been brought against them. We're talking about *hundreds* of experienced teachers here who have been victimized by the Bloomberg/Klein drive for "management control."

When the NYC Department of Education decided to "re-organize" District 79, the district encompassing a variety of

alternative schools and General Education Diploma (GED) programs, some 700 teachers lost their positions. They had to reapply for jobs some had held for decades. Interviews were conducted helter-skelter, many at the last minute and even over the phone, by hot-shot administrators from DOE headquarters in the Boss Tweed Courthouse. These administrators, many of whom have next to no experience teaching, flunked highly qualified teachers because they weren't up on the latest lingo and fads being pushed by Klein & Co. Some had taught in these "second chance" programs for decades. Among those "excessed" and sent to languish in ATR land were black PhDs with years in the classroom.

To justify this massacre of experienced educators, Tweed officials cooked up bogus statistics, claiming that in "some" GED programs only 17 percent graduated. But the DOE's own figures show much higher graduation rates for these students; the students are in programs for "at risk" students in the first place; and many school principals pretend that students have "transferred" to District 79 programs in order to hide their drop-out rate. UFT tops argue that at least the teachers are still drawing a paycheck. But since Weingarten gave up seniority rights for tenured teachers in the previous contract, the DOE is gearing up to eliminate tenure altogether. In an interview Klein said in response to a

question about “excessed” teachers being used as highly paid substitutes: “After a certain period, we should be able to terminate those employees” (*Daily News*, 1 September). No wonder Klein is now getting known as “the Terminator.”

On top of everything else, due to the drastic cut in teaching personnel, city schools now have far fewer classes for general education diplomas, pregnant and parenting teenagers and others. As a result there are *waiting lists* of 16-year-olds and 17-year-olds trying to get their GEDs, even though students have a constitutional *right* in the state of New York to an education up to the age of 21. So thanks to the latest reorganization by the management specialists in City Hall and Tweed, we have hundreds of students who can’t get classes while hundreds of teachers are held “in reserve.” This is no accident. The DOE has been trying to eliminate alternative education programs for several years, reducing the number of sites from 59 to six, and slashing the district budgets by many *billions* of dollars.

Behind this is a program to drastically restructure the schools as part of their program to corporatize and privatize “public” education. Instead of a quality education being a right, they want to respond to “market forces” by supplying a “two-tiered” education system with good schools for a petty-bourgeois elite and stripped down, scripted 3Rs programs for future low-skilled workers (“hamburger flippers”). This *capitalist* program represents a wholesale assault on the schools. Teachers, students and parents are blamed for the crimes of a system which has been starved of funding for decades. It is synthesized in the “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) Act which is up for renewal this fall. While George Bush wants to make this his signal “accomplishment” – since the war on Iraq, immigration “reform” and every other initiative of his administration has blown up in his face – the fact is that, like the “war on terror” and attacks on civil liberties in the United States, the Democrats are co-responsible for NCLB. So, too, is the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the UFT’s parent, which favored “principles” behind the law.

Under this draconian piece of legislation, schools are denied funds and then closed if they can’t increase scores on standardized tests which notoriously discriminate against racial and ethnic minorities, poor and immigrant students. In their place, publicly financed, privately run schools (charter schools) are introduced. The prime example is New Orleans, where the public school system has been practically wiped out by city, state and federal authorities in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Meanwhile, since total privatization has been a financial flop (witness the near-bankruptcy of Edison Schools), an “education industry” of vendors and contractors has grown up feeding off the education system financed by tax dollars. The National Education Association (NEA), which has been lukewarm about NCLB rather than flatly opposing it, dubbed this the “No Contractor Left Behind” act. Most of the big textbook, testing and tutoring outfits, not surprisingly, are big contributors to both Republican and Democratic candidates (such as Hillary Clinton, whom the UFT just endorsed for president).

Now it is revealed that the reauthorization bill for the NCLB includes a provision requiring schools to introduce “merit pay” or forfeit federal money. A motion calling for demonstrations to

oppose this aspect of the law has been put forward by the Teachers for a Just Contract opposition group in the UFT. Certainly, this attempt to undercut union contracts by allowing school officials to reward those who bow down to their diktats in the name of “merit” should be opposed. But by only focusing on this one aspect, the social-democratic opposition goes along with the UFT/AFT tops in not frontally demanding repeal of the NCLB, including its provisions for allowing military recruiters access to the schools and student data, requirements for compulsory “high stakes” testing, mandates for school closures, and the whole push toward resegregation of the schools ordered by the Supreme Court.

Meanwhile, the police are running wild in the schools. A week ago, an honors student, Isamar Gonzales, was arrested by school security guards at East Side Community High School in Manhattan for the “crime” of coming to school a few minutes early to talk to her teachers. When her principal, Mark Federman, intervened, the cops arrested him, too, on charges of obstructing government activity and resisting arrest! Both were led from school in handcuffs. New York Police Department and city officials defended this outrageous abuse, while the principals’ union complained about the criminalizing of behavior in the schools. In fact, under Bloomberg/Klein, many schools have been turned into mini-police states, and while police are not supposed to carry firearms inside the school, its only a matter of time until a student, teacher or school official is killed.

Witness what happened to Brooklyn science teacher Lester Jacob who was stopped by cops in Brownsville last June for “driving while black.” Because he was driving a white Infiniti, police put a knee in Jacobs’ back and slammed his head onto the car. When a witness said they had the wrong person, even though Jacobs was coughing uncontrollably and complained of chest pains, they left him in the street, commenting “nice acting.” After his wife rushed him to the hospital, doctors said he had suffered a heart attack. The next month he had to have open heart surgery. Jacobs is suing the city in federal court, as well he should. But *the union* should take action to put a stop to this racist cop victimization of UFT members, students, immigrants, minorities and working people generally.

The UFT should also have defended Debbie Almontaser, principal of the Khalil Gibran Academy, when she was victimized by the *New York Post* and then forced to resign by the DOE. The Gibran Academy was the first New York City school focusing on Arabic language and culture, and the attack on Almontaser is part of the assault against New Yorkers of Near Eastern and South Asian origin in the wake of the 11 September 2001 attacks. Almontaser’s supposed “crime”? Not having denounced t-shirts reading “Intifada NYC”! The *intifada* is Palestinian school children throwing rocks at Israeli tanks and sharpshooters who murder them in cold blood. In fact, any defender of democratic rights should stand with the Palestinian rebellion against the brutal Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank. The *Post* is a union-bashing Zionist rag which is always out to get the UFT. But instead of defending Almontaser, union leader Weingarten joined in the hue and cry for her resignation.

Last spring, the cops went after white students in Man-
continued on page 48

Why Bloomberg/Klein School "Reform" Flunks Out

"Merit Pay," Witchhunting and Corporatizing Public Education

26 NOVEMBER 2007 – New York City teachers and students are under mounting attack by the schools chancellor Joel Klein and his boss, billionaire mayor Michael Bloomberg. But this is only the tip of the iceberg of a full-scale war on public education being waged by the Republican White House, the Democratic state house and leading capitalists such as Microsoft mogul Bill Gates. They are out to reshape the workforce to “compete in a global economy,” and for that they want to “overhaul” the schools by putting them under private control, push most students out by the 10th grade, bust teachers unions and slash spending.

Behind the talk of “standards” is a plan to standardize and dumb down education for the masses. Democrats and Republicans back the “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) law which really means No Corporation Left Behind. Under their two-tier system, they want to Wal-Martize the public schools and provide gold-plated Nieman Marcus education for the elite. But despite their ballyhooed “data-driven” educational reform, the data, in the form of batteries of high-stakes tests, shows that the education bosses have *flunked*. “Charter schools,” for-profit schools, small schools, theme schools – despite all the pressure to teach to the test, none of this has produced higher test scores. But Bloomberg/Klein and the rest of the bourgeoisie don’t give a damn.

Why not? Because their purpose is not to improve the public schools – they want to shut them down. And they are doing so by targeting teachers first. The day before national test results were announced showing that New York City schools failed to improve 8th grade math and reading scores, Chancellor Klein announced that the NYC Department of Education had set up a “Teacher Performance Unit,” headed by a former prosecutor and staffed by former principals, to drive out teachers they want to get rid of, particularly experienced teachers. The job of these professional witchhunters is to “amass the documentation necessary to oust them” (*New York Times*, 15 November). The DOE is treating its employees like *criminals*.

The United Federation of Teachers (UFT) has called a “candlelight vigil” outside DOE headquarters in the Boss Tweed Courthouse for today, November 26, calling to “End the ‘Gotcha’ Squad” and “Respect Teachers.” UFT members



John Marshall Mantel for The New York Times

United Federation of Teachers president Randi Weingarten after negotiating “merit” pay deal with mayor Michael Bloomberg (right) and schools chancellor Joel Klein, October 17. “I am a capitalist and in favor of incentives” says billionaire mayor, while setting up hit squad to fire teachers.

should certainly turn out in strength to protest this abomination, but holding up some flickering candles is not going to stop the drive to criminalize teachers. What’s more, the UFT tops say “There is a RIGHT way and a WRONG way to ensure that teachers are doing a good job.” This buys into the LIE that poor teachers are responsible for the poor state of public education. Instead, the union should be pointing to the scandalous class sizes that Klein has done *nothing* to reduce, the lack of equipment, inadequate facilities and pervasive harassment of teachers by hot-shot administrators.

The only way teachers will get respect is by fighting for their rights, which requires building a strong union. And the only way the union can put an end to the victimization of teachers is by *defeating* the drive to corporatize and privatize public education, of which this is the spearhead. Instead, UFT leader Randi Weingarten last month negotiated a “deal” to introduce “school-based” *merit pay* in exchange for spiced up pension provisions (full pension with 25 years on the job at age 55). Bloomberg & Co. went for the 25/55 deal because they figure the city will save “tens of millions” by getting rid of higher-paid experienced teachers. And for the billionaire mayor, getting the UFT to agree to “performance pay” in any form is “historic and unique.”

At the Delegates Assembly, Weingarten made a big deal

about how this would be “school-based,” that distribution would be decided by “compensation committees” including teachers and administrators, that schools could opt out, etc. But the bottom line is that teachers’ pay will be partly determined by student scores on standardized tests. That is a body blow against the principle of equal pay for equal work. It is the equivalent of introducing piece work instead of an hourly wage. On top of which, teachers are educators helping other *people* to learn, not producing widgets on a production line. At a City Hall news conference Bloomberg remarked, “I am a capitalist and I am in favor of incentives for individual people.” So he has to bend a little to get the UFT tops to sign on, he says, the important thing is the principle.

And that is a threat to the existence of the union. Imagine the kind of tensions that will be created as some teachers decide on how much a “bonus” others will get! The potential for corruption is enormous. And when all is said and done, whether you call it “merit” or “performance,” it will mean kissing up to the boss. Just watch and see what happens. Moreover, it is racist, and not only because the tests themselves have a notorious racial bias. It will encourage teachers to avoid schools in poor and minority areas which are notoriously starved of resources, making it difficult for students to prepare for tests. Oh, yes, Tweed claims the report card system takes that into account. But when elite schools like Stuyvesant High and Bard High School Early College were about to get “C” grade on their “report cards,” they got their ratings raised to an “A.” On the other hand, when teachers at Central Park East in Harlem complain about a “D” rating, although their elementary school has been highlighted as one of the best in the city, they get zip. Guess why.

The “Teacher Performance Unit,” with a name right out of George Orwell’s 1984 newspeak, is Big Brother incarnate. A whole unit specializing in scapegoating teachers! What’s next, the “loyalty review boards” that fired NYC teachers wholesale during the McCarthyite witchhunts? Teachers and all school personnel should demand that this “Gotcha” Squad, as Randi Weingarten accurately dubbed it, be abolished. But even that won’t stop the witchhunters at Tweed. They’re on a crusade. Last August, Klein spent an entire segment on the Charlie Rose show on “public” television bashing teachers. And when teachers in District 79 complained about the reckless “reorganization” of GED and other alternative programs, which “excessed” hundreds into the limbo of ATR (Absentee Teacher Reserve) status, turning many excellent tenured educators into substitute teachers, Klein told the *Daily News* (3 September), “we should be able to terminate those employees.” Now the would-be Terminator has his termination squad.

What to do about it? Obviously holding candles is no answer. The Independent Community of Educators (ICE), an opposition group in the UFT opposing Weingarten’s Unity Caucus, has dissected the threat of “merit” pay and the “gotcha squad,” but its response is to use the grievance procedure and to plead “ICE To Randi: Fight Back for Real This Time.” Won’t happen. From “No Child Left Behind” to “merit pay,” the UFT/AFT leadership has gone along with the bipartisan drive for corporatizing the schools. The AFT leaders don’t call for abolishing NCLB, as even the NEA does, but only to “get it right”

by amending the law (which they helped write). So why do they go along? Because the union leadership is beholden to the capitalist system, and in particular to the Democratic Party (although this didn’t stop the UFT from giving a John Dewey award to Republican Pataki).

The AFT has endorsed Democrat Hillary Clinton for president, who has long supported the corporate school “reform” agenda, including “school-based” “merit” pay. The UFT endorsed Democratic Eliot Spitzer for New York State governor, who as attorney general slapped a multi-million dollar fine on Transport Workers Union Local 100 for daring to strike in the face of the union-busting Taylor Law. Since getting elected, Spitzer pushed through a budget with a big increase in funding of charter schools, another anti-union device. Weingarten is rumored to have ambitions for higher office if the Democrats win next year. But whether or not that is the case, from long-time UFT/AFT leader Albert Shanker on, the union has played a key role in carrying out the policies of U.S. imperialism, including supporting the Vietnam War and helping fund Polish Solidarność, Ronald Reagan’s favorite “union.”

The “merit pay” scheme is initially supposed to be funded by private money, to be provided in particular by one Eli Broad. This southern California real estate mogul has made it his mission to run public schools according to “the classic American business model in which a powerful chief executive runs roughshod over a weak governing board” (“Eli’s Experiment,” *East Bay Express*, 10 October). He has taken as his laboratory the Oakland, California school district, which is under state control despite overwhelming community opposition. Broad, with his assets estimated at \$5.8 billion, making him the 42nd richest person on the planet according to *Forbes* magazine (19 September), is a major donor to the Democrats and Clinton in particular. He is also a partner of Microsoft magnate Bill Gates and other top U.S. executives in the Business Roundtable, who have cooked up a program to run public schools by private contractors. It was designed by Gates’ Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, which includes Klein as well as CEOs of Viacom and Lucent Technologies, the head of the National Association of Manufacturers and other business bigwigs.

To defeat the corporate onslaught against teachers, students and public education in general, the Internationalist Group emphasizes that it is necessary to oust the pro-capitalist bureaucrats and forge a new leadership of the unions. Such a leadership must base itself on the class struggle, not class collaboration. It must break with the Democrats and Republicans (as well as minor bourgeois parties such as the Greens and the Working Families Party which act as shills for the Democrats) to build a workers party that fights for a workers government. Class-conscious teachers should understand that the attack on them is part of the *bipartisan* war program which goes from Afghanistan and Iraq to the looming trade war with the U.S.’ imperialist allies and rivals. It is for that clash that Bloomberg, Broad, Gates and their fellow tycoons are preparing, by regimenting public education for war, whether it is sending military recruiters into the schools, arresting students and even school administrators, and setting up a “gotcha squad” to get teachers. We must defeat the imperialist war abroad and the bosses’ war “at home.” ■

A FACT SHEET

The Broad Foundation, “Merit Pay” and the Privatization of Public Education

By Marjorie Stamberg

JANUARY 2008 – Teachers have asked for information on the Eli Broad Foundation and its connection to NYC schools.

Here are some information points, with references.

The “School Wide Bonus Pay” is being funded by private funds. The major contributor is the Broad Foundation. Most people have never heard of it. Eli Broad is a California billionaire real estate mogul described by the *New York Times* as a long-time “prodigious donor to Democrats.” He was also, in 1972, vice-chairman of Democrats for Nixon. But that’s another story

Broad’s agenda, along with others on the “Business Roundtable” is the charterization and privatization of public schools, and for teacher pay linked to student tests scores. Last April, Broad and Bill Gates bankrolled a \$60 million effort to influence the 2008 presidential election, called “Strong American Schools.” A main thrust is to push for “merit pay” for teachers.

A press release from Mayor Bloomberg (17 October 2007) announcing the school wide bonus plan says the first year there will be about \$20 million in bonuses. “These moneys are being raised privately, and so far, commitments have been made by The Eli and Edythe Broad foundation, the Robertson Foundation and the Partnership for New York City.”

Why is private money being used the first year, to be followed with “public funds” later? According to the influential financial weekly, *The Economist* (November 10, 2007):

“Mr. Klein says that this private source of funds was crucial in paying for experiments that might have involved huge political battles if they had been paid for out of public funds. The hope is that in the future, such reforms might be widely supported.”

Mr Bloomberg “has avoided inflammatory political terms – ‘merit pay’ and ‘vouchers’ are red rags to teachers’ unions,” says *The Economist*. Instead, “by using the carrot of pay rises to extract performance concessions from principals and teachers, and by persuading philanthropists such as Bill Gates to pay for innovations that might be hard to sell to the public” he is putting his agenda in place.

With assets valued at \$5.8 billion, Eli Broad is the 42nd richest person on the planet, according to “Forbes” magazine. Broad believes “the best way to fix troubled urban school districts is to employ the classic American business model in which a powerful chief executive runs roughshod over a weak governing board” (*East Bay Express* [California], 10 October 2007). The *East Bay Express* goes on to say:

“Many Broad Foundation watchers around the country say the real purpose of this group is to diminish the power of school boards for an incremental and eventual takeover of public education by the corporate sector. There are concerns that Broad is carrying out the goals and education



Diane Bondareff/AP

Tycoons plan corporatization of public education. NYC mayor Bloomberg (left) meets with real estate magnate Eli Broad, November 2007.

agenda of the Business Roundtable, made up of the CEO’s of the nation’s biggest companies, one of which Eli Broad headed. [Bloomberg is a member of the Business Roundtable, which has called to privatize all NYC schools and to cut off public education at the 10th grade (!)]

An article in a Oregon community paper (*Willamette Week*, 3 May 2006) was titled “L.A. Foundation’s Role in Portland Schools Alarms Teachers, Some Parents.” The article states:

“They’re troubled by how entrenched billionaire Eli Broad’s Los Angeles foundation, which is devoted to making schools more businesslike, has become in Portland schools....”

Eli Broad says “urban public schools are failing and must adopt methods from business to succeed, such as competition, accountability based on ‘measurables’ and unhampered management authority – all focusing on the bottom line of student achievement, as measured by standardized tests.”

“Broad wants to create competition by starting publicly funded, privately run charter schools, to enforce accountability by linking teacher pay to student test scores, and to limit teachers’ say in curriculum and transfer decisions.” “In Portland, the foundation has flown all seven school board members since 2003 to Park City, Utah for weeklong all-expense-paid training.”

[Note: at our UFT/NYCDOE informational meetings on “school wide bonus pay,” the representative from Tweed tried to downplay the contribution of Eli Broad to the fund for performance pay. However, a DOE statement (12/18/07) states that “The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation and the Robertson Foundation have each committed \$5 million to the City’s school-wide bonus program. This is the largest amount that the Broad Foundation has contributed to teacher performance pay initiative.”]

Al Shanker, Max Shachtman and “Merit Pay”



There they all are in the photo: real estate magnate Eli Broad, George Bush's education secretary Margaret Spellings and New York City schools chancellor Joel Klein, once more hugging United Federation of Teachers president Randi Weingarten. It was last September 17, on the occasion of the awarding of the \$500,000 Broad Prize for Urban Education to the NYC schools. A month later, Broad plunked down \$5 million to fund the program for “school-based bonus pay” negotiated by Klein, Weingarten and Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Meanwhile, Broad has donated \$1 million to help finance the UFT's charter school.

Eli Broad wants to privatize public education and he's willing to pay to get it. But what is union leader Weingarten doing going along with this anti-union plan? Above all, she is heiress to the legacy of long-time UFT leader Albert Shanker. Back in 1983, when a commission appointed by union-bashing president Ronald Reagan first called for teachers' salaries that are “market-sensitive, and performance-based,” while the Na-

tional Education Association said “no,” Shanker (by then head of the American Federation of Teachers) called on teachers not to reject so-called merit pay “out of hand.” Shanker also supported the Minnesota AFT chapter in forming a charter school.

It's no accident that Bush's first education secretary Rod Paige, who called the NEA “terrorists,” has praised Weingarten for showing “leadership.” In his book lambasting teacher unions (*The War Against Hope* [2006]), Paige starts off with a quote from Shanker claiming that “public education operates like a planned economy, a bureaucratic system” that “more resembles the communist economy than our own market economy.” Shanker was a foam-flecked anti-communist who enlisted the AFT to actively support the bloody Pinochet coup that overthrew the left-wing government of Salvador Allende in Chile in 1973, and helped funnel millions of CIA dollars to the anti-Soviet, Polish-nationalist Solidarność in the 1980s.

Shanker's chief political advisor for many years was Yetta Barsch, the wife of Max Shachtman, who broke with Trotskyism in 1940, refusing to defend the Soviet Union against the Nazi-fascist German imperialist attack in World War II. Shachtman went on to become a virulent supporter of U.S. imperialism in the Korean war. Shanker, like his mentor, supported the U.S. in the Vietnam War, as did the Shachtmanite Social Democrats U.S.A. Many SDUSAers later joined the Reagan administration, like Jeane Kirkpatrick, who became U.N. ambassador. The SDUSA ran the International Affairs Department of the AFL-CIO for years and the CIA conduit National Endowment for Democracy (NED) to this day. It's a tight circle.

And Eli Broad? A son of socialist parents, in 1972 he was co-chairman of Democrats for Nixon along with the Leo Cherne, who became head of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board under Reagan.

NYC Teachers, Students...

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hattan for carrying cellphones and arrested more than 30 black students from Bushwick Community HS in Brooklyn as they were going to a funeral (with permission of the principal). Now they are arresting honors students, arresting and firing principals and “excessing” hundreds of teachers while “wait-listing” students. We say: *cops and military (recruiters and JROTC) out of the schools! For teacher-student-worker-parent control of the schools! For reinstatement of all dismissed teachers and union control of hiring!*

The whole system of mayoral control has gone hand in hand with a program for regimentation of secondary education. This, in turn, is part and parcel of the war drive. The link between the war on Iraq and Afghanistan and the war on public education in the U.S. is undeniable. Many reformist groups claiming to be socialist call for “books, not bombs,” as if it was all a matter of budget priorities. But when the capitalist politicians cut back programs saying the choice is “guns or butter,”

we say that teachers, students, poor, minority and working people generally should fight to *defeat* the war because it is an *imperialist war for colonial occupation*, and because it is part of a *bosses' war on working people, minorities, immigrants and democratic rights “at home.”*

The attacks on public education are political, and they must be fought politically. The fact that the unions in general, and teachers unions in particular, are beholden to the Democratic Party makes the UFT/AFT, NEA et al. co-responsible for the corporate educational “reform,” war and regimentation of the population as a whole. It is urgently necessary to break with the Democrats, as well the “Working Families Party” (a surrogate outfit for those who want to vote for Democratic candidates while holding their nose) and minor capitalist parties like the Greens and their erstwhile candidate, the populist immigrant-basher Ralph Nader. We need a class-struggle workers party to fight for a workers government, the precondition to the necessary *revolution* in education so that it serves the interests of those who are exploited and oppressed by this system of production for profit, not to fill social needs. ■

Students: Ally with the Working Class

Smash Racist Purge of CUNY— Fight for Open Admissions, Free Tuition!

The following article was issued as a leaflet by the Internationalist Group in February 1999 and reprinted in The Internationalist No. 7, April-May 1999.

In his annual “state of the city” speech last year, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani launched a campaign to exclude *more than half* of all incoming students from the City University of New York (CUNY). This year in his report the mayor ranted against CUNY, saying “that’s a system we would blow up.” A blatantly *racist purge* is being carried out in the name of “standards.” The door is to be slammed in the face of all those who fail even one of three entrance exams. Remedial courses for incoming students are to be eliminated, first from the four-year colleges and then from the two-year community colleges. Particularly targeted for exclusion are racial minorities, immigrants and women. As one student protester’s sign proclaimed at a January 4 hearing on CUNY, the aim of this purge is to introduce “educational apartheid.”

Last May the CUNY Board of Trustees rammed through the new policy in a closed-door meeting after police cleared out the public, arresting more than two dozen. When that was challenged under a state “open meetings” law, this past January 25 the Board voted the exclusion resolution again, this time with several hundred protesting students and faculty shouting their opposition after navigating through a maze of police barricades, metal detectors, bag searches and pat-downs. With a majority of the trustees appointed by Giuliani and Governor George Pataki, the result was foreordained. But that does not end the struggle. It means that defenders of open admissions must escalate the fight and wage it not in bogus “hearings” but on the terrain of mass working-class action.

The government of the city and state of New York have *declared war on CUNY*. This not a local issue but part of the broader attack on the minority and working people of NYC and around the country and the world. Schools fall into disrepair



Students protesting motion to eliminate open admissions at CUNY Board of Trustees meeting, La Guardia College, January 25.

while billions go into new prisons. Meanwhile, the strongarm tactics of CUNY’s campus cops reflect the methods of the New York Police, who work hand in hand with CUNY’s gun-toting “SAFE” cops. The Board of Trustees meeting at LaGuardia College on January 25 was barricaded in the same way the NYPD locked down central Harlem last September when a court ordered the city to permit the Million Youth March. And barely a week after the NYPD Street Crimes Unit gunned down black African immigrant Amadou Diallo in the doorway to his Bronx home, four people were arrested at City College in Washington Heights at a conference demanding freedom for black radical death row prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

The aim of the war on CUNY is to *eliminate what remains of “open admissions”* in this huge institution of 200,000 students on 20 campuses. Open admissions was a gain of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. In 1969 the student population of CUNY’s senior colleges was 96 percent white. The next year, after an explosive student strike that demanded the *right* to a university education for every high school graduate, under the new guidelines the number of black, Latino and Asian freshmen increased *seven times*. It is no accident that the drive to purge this public university began just as the CUNY student body became majority non-white. Particularly targetted are those whose native language is not English. In May 1997, the regents denied degrees to

Lynn Mayekawa/The Envoy

over 500 prospective CUNY graduates, including more than 100 at the bilingual (Spanish-English) Hostos campus, by springing a punitive exam on them at the last minute. At Hunter College, for 55 percent of the students English is a second language.

The assault on open admissions at CUNY has national implications. Since 1970 close to half a million students have earned degrees from the City University, and over this period *the CUNY system has graduated more black and Latino students than any other university in the history of the United States*. It's not surprising, therefore, that open admissions at CUNY has been the target of racist attacks from the outset. Today Giuliani sneers, "By eliminating any meaningful standards of admission and continually defining down standards for continuation, the entire meaning and value of a college education has been put in jeopardy." In 1971, Nixon's Vice President Spiro Agnew said the same, denouncing the CUNY plan as a giveaway of "100,000 devalued diplomas." A study by CUNY professors David E. Lavin and David Hyllegard, *Changing the Odds: Open Admissions and the Life Chances of the Disadvantaged* (Yale University Press, 1996) notes that open admissions more than tripled the number of bachelor's degrees for blacks and doubled the number for Hispanics. It is this that has the racists incensed.

In fact, the purge at CUNY is an attack on the entire working class, aiming to exclude working people from the student body. Open admissions at CUNY opened the door for working-class white students as well: the number of white freshmen went from 16,000 in 1969 to an average of 26,000 over the next three years. Now, in his 1999 state budget, Governor Pataki has announced plans to eliminate TAP (Tuition Assistance Program) grants for all students who take less than 15 credits (five courses) per semester. Tuition for the four-year colleges is already over \$3,600 a year, and \$3,200 for the two-year colleges—making them about the most expensive community colleges in the country. Already in the last three years more than 18,000 CUNY students receiving welfare have been driven out as the city implements the slave labor "workfare" program. Now anyone who isn't a full-time student is to be denied state tuition aid. And since a huge percentage of CUNY students are working people who scrimp together enough to take a couple of courses a semester—almost 150,000 out of 350,000 CUNY students are part time—this new regulation will eliminate thousands more.

Giuliani makes no secret of his aim. "Open enrollment is a

mistake," he declared last year. "Its consequences have been cruel." And what is "cruel" about allowing hundreds of thousands of poor, minority and working-class students to gain a university education? According to the mayor, "It has created in CUNY students false expectations which the realities of life inevitably leave unfulfilled." The mayor echoes those who declared that it was cruel to teach slaves to read and write. A newsletter of the United Literacy Workers at CUNY (*In From the Margins*, April 1998) quoted Frederick Douglass' description of the outburst of the slavemaster who caught his wife teaching a young slave to write: not only would this "spoil" the slaves and make them "unmanageable," but "it could do him no good...it would make him discontented and unhappy." These are exactly the sentiments of the modern slavedriver Giuliani as he forces unpaid labor on welfare recipients and bars tens of thousands of wage slaves (as Karl Marx described "free" workers) from CUNY. Enforced ignorance is always the gospel of the oppressor.

A revolutionary civil war was fought to abolish chattel slavery, yet a century later the descendants of the slavemasters were still vowing massive resistance to school integration. Today Republican NYC mayor Rudolph Giuliani imitates Dixiecrat Alabama governor George Wallace, standing in the doorway of CUNY vowing to kick out minorities, immigrants, women in rolling back the minimal gains of the civil rights movement. It took a stormy struggle to win open admissions at CUNY as a partial corrective to the segregated and grossly unequal high schools and the virtual ex-



Bill Moore photo

Student protester being arrested outside CUNY Board of Trustees meeting, January 25.

clusion of minorities from the colleges. It will take no less today to stop the resegregation of higher education everywhere from UCal Berkeley (where eliminating "affirmative action" has decimated minority enrollment) to CUNY (where the last vestiges of open admissions are being scrapped).

Across the U.S. there is an onslaught against enrollment of minorities in universities, particularly of blacks, and more particularly of black men. Over the last two and a half decades, the proportion of expenditure on public education at all levels has sharply dropped. Internationally, as well, there are mounting attacks on public higher education as the capitalists seek to slash "unproductive" (not profitable) government expenditure on welfare, pensions health care and schools. This all-out capitalist attack has escalated in the wake of the counterrevolution that destroyed the Soviet bureaucratically degenerated workers state and toppled the deformed workers states of East Europe.

The privatizers feel they have the wind in their sails and are laying waste to one social program after another. Certainly this drive is spearheaded by a hard right wing, but it is the program of the entire bourgeoisie. Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives have all supported the cutbacks, only “differing” on how much to slice off. They all join hands in voting to deny food stamps to immigrants, to throw moms and kids off welfare, to replace schools with prisons, to extend the barbaric, racist death pen-

alty and speed up the machinery of state murder. And while feuding over the impeachment spectacle in Washington, they unanimously support war criminal Clinton in raining bombs on Iraq. This is, after all, the era of imperialist decay, in which the bogus “American dream” (which was always a nightmare for black people) is seen as an anachronism, “unrealistic expectations” that must be done away with.

In New York state, according to a December 1998 study by the Justice Policy Institute, annual spending on prisons has gone up by \$761 million over the last decade (to \$1.6 billion), while funding of the State University of New York (SUNY) and CUNY is down \$615 million (to \$1.3 billion)—an almost perfect dollar-for-dollar match. Liberals and reformist pseudo socialists often argue for “butter vs. guns” (although in this case the biggest increases in prison funding came under liberal Democrat Cuomo). But this is not about a trade-off, it’s about the capitalist state. For the capitalist ruling class, its military hardware is for use against its perceived enemies, including the “enemy within.” And the prisons are an essential part of the increasingly paramilitary policing of America’s inner cities, particularly as part of the racist “war on drugs” which is really a war on the ghettos and barrios.

Today the capitalists and their politicians are slashing away at public education at every level. Tens and hundreds of thousands of young people who want to study are being told, “Forget it, you’re not wanted.” That alone is a stark indictment of this society and the entire capitalist system, where the drive for profits is *counterposed* to the most basic human needs. The fight to make decent education available to all can only go forward as part of the struggle against the irrational and decaying profit system of racism and class oppression. It is necessary to build a workers party to lead the fight for *socialist revolution*, which is what it will take to secure genuine access to free, quality public education from preschool to university.

The Battle for Open Admissions at CUNY

Open admissions at CUNY was legislated in 1969 in response to a strike and building takeover at City College, initially by a

Abolish the Board of Trustees and CUNY Administration! For Student/Teacher/Worker Control of the Universities!



Lynn Mayekawa/The Envy

Board of Trustees votes under massive police protection to eliminate open admissions.

couple of hundred black and Puerto Rican students. The student strikers’ demands were focused on raising black and Puerto Rican enrollment and instituting black and Puerto Rican studies. But the powerful city unions pushed for opening admissions to all high school graduates, and this was eventually adopted. The next freshman class grew by 75 percent, with significantly more white students as well as dramatically increased numbers of minorities. It was still not full open admissions, for the university was stratified into community colleges (today enrolling 160,000 students) and “senior” colleges (currently 40,000 students), with “placement” decided by rather arbitrary tests. Extensive “remediation” was introduced with non-credit courses preparing students to pass the exams.

Already a century and a half ago, the 1848 *Communist Manifesto* called for “free education for all children in public schools.” Communists fight for freely available public education at all levels as a gain for the working class, even as the content of that education under capitalism inevitably reflects the dominant bourgeois ideology. Marxism is based on the highest scientific achievements of capitalist society, and we demand that the exploited and oppressed have access to those achievements as necessary tools in their fight for emancipation. Open admissions in higher education is a basic democratic right. By itself, it is hardly incompatible with capitalism, any more than public primary and secondary schools are. (Some U.S. states had opened universities to all high school graduates in the 1930s, then with minimal or no tuition.) Even that is not enough to overcome poverty and the effects of entrenched educational segregation, which is as bad (or even worse) today in much of the North as it was before school integration was ordered by the Supreme Court in 1954.

In the struggle against the war on CUNY, the Internationalist Group calls for *open admissions and no tuition*, as well as for a *state-paid living stipend for all students* and *special programs* to overcome the effects of years of educational deprivation suffered by students in run-down, understaffed, underfunded inner-city schools. The whole history of the fight to win and defend even an approximation of open admissions

demonstrates that it is crucial that *students must ally with the working class* in struggle against the cutbacks and takebacks that affect all poor, minority and working people. A student strike can be a spark of militancy; a *citywide strike by New York workers* can stop Giuliani cold.

We fight for full and free access to public education at all levels, against tracking and elite secondary schools, and against stratified (two- or three-tier) college systems which are inherently discriminatory. As for “remediation,” the very term reflects an ideology that puts the blame on the student, as if they are the problem. Yet students from Bushwick, East New York, Harlem and the South Bronx are taught in schools where classes are held on gym floors, in bathrooms and often in “temporary” trailers which occupy playgrounds for years. Forget about computers in the classroom, there is often no chalk for the blackboard and no books for students to take home. This state of affairs is a result of systematic discrimination against city schools. According to statistics presented by a member of the NY Board of Regents at a recent weekend meeting sponsored by the Black and Puerto Rican/Hispanic Caucus of the state legislature, New York City spends an annual average of \$8,213 per pupil in public schools, compared to \$12,052 per pupil in affluent districts—that is, one-third less. Not only does the funding of education by local property taxes mean that poor districts have less money, New York state contributes \$2,000

less per pupil to NYC schools than to other districts.

In order to ram through the attack on the remnants of open admissions, Giuliani and his flunkies on the Board of Trustees (first and foremost Herman Badillo, who like his boss seems to derive sadistic pleasure out of keeping Latinos, blacks and Asians out of the City University) spread a lot of lies. The first concerns graduation rates, with the claim that only 1 percent of community college students graduate “on time” in two years. Yet almost no community college students attend school full time (only 47 students out of 16,000 new admissions in 1995)! And the average age of CUNY students is 25, far older than the average nationally. The fact is that CUNY is a university for working people, in which the vast majority go to school while also holding down a job, struggling to make ends meet. Some 72 percent of community college students at CUNY are from households earning less than \$25,000 a year, compared to 29 percent of community college students nationally.

Giuliani’s smears are particularly cynical as the city is legally required to pay one-third of the community college budget, but instead it is only paying 23 percent, putting it tens of millions of dollars in arrears. Concerning remediation, a fact sheet put together by Professor Bill Crain noted that “nearly two thirds of associate degree [community college] students and three quarters of bachelor’s degree students complete remediation in one year, and most of the rest do in

War on CUNY an Attack on the Working Class

What the cancellation of “remediation” will mean can be predicted with considerable precision, since all entering students already take the admissions exams. (Previously these tests were to determine whether students went to community colleges or to the four-year “senior” colleges, and to determine the need for remedial classes; now these already skewed and discriminatory *placement* exams will be used to keep students out.) A flyer distributed by students at the January Board of Trustees meeting listed figures drawn from a study by David Lavin and Elliot Weininger (“Proposed New Admissions Criteria at the City University of New York: Ethnic and Enrollment Consequences,” March 1998). Under the new standard (failure to pass any of the three tests is a bar to admission) those excluded from the senior colleges will include:

- 60% of all incoming freshmen
- 65% of Black freshman
- 66% of Asian freshmen
- 68% of Latino freshmen
- 56% of women
- 75% of welfare (AFDC) recipients
- 81% of low-income women
- 82% of single mothers.

The City University of New York will be a very different place with these entrance criteria. The working class, poor and minorities educated in the city’s public schools will be overwhelmingly excluded and CUNY will become a somewhat cheaper “public” university for part of the white middle

class. This is not the unintended consequence of enforcing “standards” but the intended purpose of the cuts. In line with this, in Giuliani’s 1999 “state of the city” speech he called for the creation of elite “flagship” colleges, singling out Queens College as a prime candidate. And he proposed giving “vouchers” for remediation—a back-door way of *privatizing* post-secondary school education, placing in the hands of profit-minded companies the task of “weeding out” those with “unrealistic expectations.” Simultaneously, the state Board of Regents is now requiring that all high school students take stiffened Regents exams in English, math, American history, global studies and science in order to get a diploma. Since only 18 percent of NYC students passed the Regents exam in biology in 1997, thousands more won’t have to be stopped at the CUNY door *because they won’t even graduate from secondary school*.

Behind the war on CUNY there is an unmistakable racist electoral calculation. As he has done in two successful mayoral campaigns, “crime-buster” Giuliani is now trying to build support for a bid for state or national office by whipping up a white backlash against gains for minorities and immigrants. A line-up of sinister right-wing forces wants to use the fight against open admissions at CUNY to launch an attack on public higher education throughout the U.S. But the offensive against public education and social services for the working people has received *bipartisan* support from the twin parties of American capital, Democrats and Republicans.

three terms.” As for graduation rates, “after 5 years, the graduation rates at our community colleges exceed the national average for public institutions (28 percent vs. 24 percent). After 8 years, CUNY bachelor’s degree students graduate at a higher rate than the national average for public institutions (45 percent to about 40 percent).”

Moreover, some 78 percent of all colleges in the United States (and 81 percent of all public colleges) offer remedial courses. But no longer at CUNY, decrees the Board of Trustees. At the January 25 Board meeting, one trustee (George Rios) argued that by eliminating remediation CUNY would be setting the trend for the rest of U.S. higher education. The ruling class enemies of CUNY students, teachers and workers are conscious of their aim of sharply “downsizing” (gutting) public higher education, particularly for minorities, immigrants and working people. To defeat them, it is necessary for their intended victims to be fully conscious of the nature of the threat they face, and the revolutionary program needed to combat it.

A Communist Program for Free, Quality Public Higher Education for All

How can the onslaught against open admissions and the racist purge of CUNY be defeated? Various lame proposals have been floated ranging from setting up a counter-commission to the Schmidt/Giuliani operation, appealing to alumni,

going on talk shows, appealing to Democrats in Albany like Attorney General Spitzer (who first made a name for himself as a supporter of the death penalty). The “Friends of CUNY” and “CUNY Is Our Future” coalitions call for writing letters to the state Board of Regents will step in to block the end of remediation. Yet this is the same Board that is proposing to cancel diplomas for 80 percent of NYC high school students!

All these schemes are based on the illusion that there is some kind of “dialogue” about educational policy going on, when the reality is an unadorned class war. The New Caucus of the Professional Staff Congress (the AFT-affiliated teachers union at CUNY) has collected testimony given before the Schmidt Commission. Yet it’s worse than useless to try to “reason” with this wrecking crew. Giuliani’s “task force,” is on a search and destroy mission to drive minority and immigrant students out of CUNY! We say the Schmidt Commission should be *driven off campus through protest and exposure of their reactionary program!*

A leaflet put out by SLAM includes the program of the CUNY Coalition for Open Admissions calling for “democratic election of CUNY trustees.” But the Board of Trustees and CUNY administration are the representatives of the ruling class whose task is to keep students, teachers and campus workers in check. Communists call for *abolishing the Board of Trustees and CUNY administration*. We fight for *student/teacher/*

It was Democrat Bill Clinton who legislated and signed the “welfare” reform which has thrown *five million women and children* off public assistance in the last half decade. Now the same operation is being performed on higher education. Today it is the Republicans Giuliani and Pataki who are leading the charge. Yet the slash-and-burn offensive against CUNY has been going on for more than two decades. The first attack on open admissions was the introduction of tuition in 1976 during the “fiscal crisis” provoked by Wall Street bankers with Democratic mayor Abe Beame acting as hatchet man: as many as 50,000 CUNY students were forced out then. Over the last decade, the number of full-time faculty has fallen from 10,000 to 5,200! Today some 60 percent of CUNY classes are taught by part-time, low-paid adjuncts. In 1990/91 tens of thousands of CUNY students took to the streets against cutbacks ordered by liberal Democratic governor Mario Cuomo and black Democratic mayor David Dinkins. Today Dinkins testifies against the elimination of remediation, but his administration slashed the CUNY budget while hiring thousands more cops.

The elimination of open admissions at CUNY is a part of a *war* against working people and minorities. It should be no surprise, then, that the capitalist rulers mobilize their state apparatus to ruthlessly squelch opposition or render it harmless through cop repression. Giuliani, Pataki & Co. may think they have already won the war, but that is only because their opponents have been playing by the rules of the ruling class.

There has been a lot of hand-wringing among liberal academics about how the students haven’t mobilized. There have been sporadic demonstrations of several hundred, but

these have indeed been smaller than in past years. Why? For one thing, in the past CUNY student protests have been largely organized through student governments, often in conjunction with faculty and even administration discontent over budget cuts. Whether sitting down in the streets or lobbying in Albany, this amounted to bourgeois pressure politics. Today in the face of a concerted offensive by the bourgeois rulers, liberal bleatings about “priorities” go nowhere. This assault can only be defeated by mobilizing the power of the working class, and what is centrally lacking is a leadership with a program to mobilize that power in revolutionary struggle against the capitalist system itself.

Purging tens of thousands of CUNY students will inevitably mean layoffs of campus workers and eliminating more full-time faculty, possibly shutting down whole campuses. Meanwhile, more than 30,000 welfare recipients have been turned into slave laborers, toiling without wages in what the city cynically calls a “Work Experience Program.” And several thousand city hospital workers’ jobs have been slashed in the last year, with hundreds of layoffs planned for 1999. The battle to save CUNY can be a focal point for a common struggle uniting students, professors, campus workers and city workers against a common enemy.

The battle over CUNY is not just a “student issue,” it is an assault on all working people, minorities and particularly immigrants. What’s needed to defeat this attack is to bring out the power of the working class, the black ghettos, the Latino barrios and the Asian communities in a united struggle *against City Hall and Wall Street, against the State House in Albany and the White House in Washington*.

worker control of the universities. Against those who would further privatize higher education, we call for *expropriation of private colleges, universities and technological institutes.*

Meanwhile, CUNY's highly paid (more than professors) campus police go about arresting faculty members, strip-searching student protesters and turning campus facilities into police pens. Last June, students were tipped off to a surveillance camera disguised as a smoke detector outside the main office for political activists at City College. In response to their exposure of this atrocity, the Graduate Student Council and its newspaper, the *Messenger*, were suspended. The "SAFE" unit was formed as a little red squad, compiling lists of campus activists, videotaping student activities. When students protested tuition increases in 1995, scores were arrested and brutalized by these grotesquely named "peace officers." The biggest threat to "peace" at CUNY are these provocative thugs. Students, faculty and campus workers should demand *all cops off campus—abolish "SAFE"!*

The CUNY trustees, administration and cops are stand-ins for the bourgeoisie, and any serious struggle against the racist purge plans will quickly face the concentrated power of the capitalist state. To fight this battle, it is necessary to mobilize a greater force, namely the power of the working class. There are hundreds of thousands of organized union members in New York City, who make the city run and who can also make it stop. There

is an awareness among those fighting the attack on CUNY of the need for broader "labor and community support." But this usually amounts to appeals for empty declarations by union bureaucrats. Some hailed the recent formation of a "New Century Movement" by the SEIU, Local 1199 and the United Federation of Teachers. Yet the present misleaders of labor supplied phone banks for the Democrats to elect welfare-slasher Clinton and rammed through wage freezes for Giuliani, rigging membership votes to squelch opposition, while the "dissidents" bring in the feds and courts who subject union after union to capitalist government control in the bogus claim of "fighting corruption."

Opponents of the racist purge at CUNY are not powerless. There are millions of poor, minority, immigrant and working people who will find their educational opportunities or those of their children canceled by the drive to slam the door on public higher education. They can be mobilized in struggle when they see that their interests are at stake, but that will take a leadership with a program to fight and win this class struggle. That poses above all a political task, to oust the present pro-capitalist misleaders of labor and break the ties with the Democrats and Republicans, to undertake the *forging of a revolutionary workers party*. "Education is a right—fight, fight, fight!" goes one of the student chants. Yes, free public higher education is a democratic right, but this fight must be part of the

Right Wing Yale Cabal Targets CUNY

The current attack on the City University did not originate with Giuliani. It is the brainchild of a clot of ultra-rightists centered around the Manhattan Institute, usually described as a conservative "think tank." Many of Giuliani's policies were first put forward in the Institute's *City Journal*. The Winter 1998 issue of the *City Journal* was dedicated to "An Agenda for Giuliani II." Among the articles is a foam-flecked diatribe by Heather McDonald ("CUNY Could Be Great Again") that makes explicit the racist aims of the battle plan against CUNY.

A blurb gives the message: "The sixties turned the once-proud city University into a backwater of remediation and race politics." Actually, prior to 1969 CUNY was a rigidly segregated enclave awash in anticommunist witchhunting, loyalty oaths and the like. McDonald ascribes its fall from grace to "educated adults cowering before know-nothing adolescents and outside agitators." She accuses liberal Republican mayor John Lindsay of "racial pacification" for undertaking a "college construction campaign in minority neighborhoods," as if there were "a huge pool of college-prepared students in those or other neighborhoods," she sneers. Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn and Hostos Community College in the Bronx should be shut down, she writes, accusing them of "ethnic separatism." The CUNY law school should also be closed because of its "1960s-style curriculum in political organizing and consciousness-raising."

The heart of McDonald's agenda is the total elimination of remedial programs, allegedly run by "theory-besotted post-Marxists." As for the half of all CUNY students for whom

English is a second language, she declares: "students who need an interpreter to register for classes should not be registering in the first place." The University should "mow down the costly multicultural institutes...and declare that the classic texts of Western culture are the basis of a CUNY education." Summing up, she writes, "CUNY can cut its size by half."

The verbal violence of McDonald's American nativist, immigrant-bashing, racist diatribe is almost fascistic in content, sounding like the ravings of a member of the John Birch Society. But rather than some Bircher yahoo, this is an elitist yearning for the "good old days" when the undeserving poor "knew their place" at the bottom of the heap. It draws its inspiration from William F. Buckley, Jr., the CIA spy who looked to Franco's Spain as his model.

Leading the charge in the Board of Trustees for the assault on CUNY has been its chairman, Ann Paolucci. Her late husband was once the candidate for New York governor of the Conservative Party, which acts as a rightist pressure group on the Republicans, pushing anti-abortion and virulent "English-only" chauvinism. Paolucci's equivalent on the Board of Trustees of the State University is Candace de Russy, described by the *Village Voice* (21 April 1998) education supplement on "Enemies of Public Education" as an "antitax, antisex, pro-God pundit." De Russy, a member of the arch-conservative National Association of Scholars (NAS), has called for eliminating English as a Second Language courses at SUNY, slashing state funding, closing down the schools of law and medicine, and imposing a "core curriculum" of Western civilization studies.

struggle to sweep away the capitalist system that in its epoch of decline is waging relentless war on the rights and gains of working people. The marauding cops who murdered Amadou Diallo, tortured Abner Louima and patrol CUNY are the symbol of a system that is flailing about in its death agony.

Above all, it is necessary also to understand that the battle at CUNY is not just against Giuliani and his cohorts. Democratic state assemblyman Ed Sullivan speaks today against the elimination of remediation at CUNY, but the fact remains (as cynically pointed out by Schmidt commission member and former Republican state senator Manfred Ohrenstein at the January hearing) that Sullivan has long headed the assembly committee on higher education and thus he—along with his fellow Democratic assemblymen and women—is co-responsible for approving the cutback budgets which have steadily slashed CUNY budgets and raised CUNY tuition for years. In fact, according to statistics of the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development), public expenditure on education in the United States has dropped from 5.7 percent of the gross domestic product in 1975 to 4.9 percent 20 years later. As capitalists push to drive up profit rates and slash spending on social programs, this trend is accelerating.

In recent years there have been sharp struggles waged in a number of countries against attacks on public education,

and not just from governments of the right. In semi-colonial countries, the International Monetary Fund and local bourgeois rulers have sought to implement sharp increases on student fees and tuition while imposing restrictions to admissions. A battle is looming over this in Mexico. Currently, Greek university students are fighting pitched battles with the police, protesting against government plans to restrict access to higher education by imposing exclusionary exams. In Europe as well as the U.S., influential capitalist circles see education (on which OECD governments spend a trillion dollars a year) as a profitable new “market” to be milked. Social-democratic education minister Claude Allègre in France declared last year that it was necessary to “instill a spirit of enterprise” and that educational services constitute “the great market of the 21st century” (*Le Monde Diplomatique*, June 1998). In response, French secondary school teachers and students mobilized in more than a dozen marches against Allègre’s educational counter-reform, demanding increased resources for poor regions. But their struggles were hamstrung by the fact that teachers union leaders are tied to the same popular-front government that is carrying out this “reform.”

In the rising period of capitalism, the U.S. was a pioneer in mass public education, with free public libraries, land-grant col-

continued on page 66

When the Board of Trustees initial vote last May to eliminate remediation set off an uproar, Giuliani formed a Mayor’s Advisory Task Force to study the City University. The commission is headed by Benno Schmidt, who was president of Yale University from 1986 until 1992, when he left it to head up the Edison Project whose aim is to set up a national network of hundreds of private secondary schools. While at Yale, Schmidt broke a walkout by graduate student teaching assistants and clerical workers unions, and slashed departmental budgets with abandon. Schmidt’s Edison Project has hardly been a stunning success, so far totalling 95 schools. The Hartford School Board protested its decision to lay off 300 teachers and sharply increase class sizes to pay for computers. Baltimore schools canceled its contract due to Edison’s failure to deliver on its promise of higher student test scores.

It is striking how many in this coterie of purgers and privatizers have common ties to Yale University, where William F. Buckley, Jr. wrote his McCarthyite diatribe against liberalism, *God and Man at Yale*. Before becoming university president, Schmidt headed the Yale Law School, alma mater of rightist Supreme Court justice Clarence Thomas (a beneficiary of affirmative action who denounced his sister as a welfare queen), as well as of “centrist” Democrats Bill and Hillary Clinton who have taken over most of the right-wing Republicans’ programs. The Manhattan Institute was set up in 1978 by President Bush’s CIA director William Casey, like Buckley another Yale man out of the Skull and Bones Society that produced the leadership core of the U.S. spy agency. A Manhattan Institute trustee, Thomas Rhodes, is the president of Buckley’s far-right *National Review*.

These are some of the ideologists of the war on CUNY. They take their ammunition from a 1997 study by the RAND Corporation on “Breaking the Social Contract: The Fiscal Crisis in Higher Education.” In the Schmidt Commission hearings in early January, a CUNY professor who worked for RAND during the Vietnam War related how this premier think tank for the “military-industrial complex” systematically cooked the data, upping the body count of Viet Cong casualties in order to please the Air Force, just as the mayor’s stacked task force would be cooking the data to please the mayor. The RAND study emphasizes “greater mission differentiation” for institutions of higher education in the U.S. It wants to “lower costs” by “the kind of restructuring and streamlining that successful businesses have implemented.”

In particular, the RAND study denounces the “mission creep” of community colleges becoming full colleges. Instead, according to RAND, community colleges should become glorified vocational schools, focusing on “workforce preparation” and closely linked to employers. State colleges should concentrate on teacher training, while graduate education and research should be restricted to a few elite universities. This is precisely the program put forward by McDonald of the Manhattan Institute in advocating that CUNY’s community colleges should closed down remedial education and redirect resources to technical programs. (McDonald is a member of the Schmidt Commission.) In the 1960s and ‘70s, RAND’s “whiz kid” technocrats advocated bombing Vietnamese villages to “save” them from Communism. Today Giuliani and his Manhattan Institute advisers, following RAND’s recommendations, want to “blow up” CUNY in order to “return it to greatness”!

CUNY Internationalist Clubs Call for United-Front Action

Drive Military Recruiters Off Campus!

—reprinted from *Revolution* (No. 3, November 2005), the newspaper of the Internationalist Clubs at the City University of New York (CUNY).

While the United States of American Imperialism continues its occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, the manpower for its colonial “crusade” is being stretched to the limit. Because of the mounting opposition to the slaughter the U.S. is carrying out in Iraq, the volunteer army is running short of volunteers. For four months in a row this spring, the Army failed to meet its recruiting quota. In May, even after lowering the quota by 17 percent, it still missed its reduced goal by 25 percent. The Army Reserve, meanwhile, has been missing its monthly quota since last October of 2004.

To get around the trouble it is having getting its targets (mainly minorities and working-class youth) to sign up for the slaughter in Iraq, the military has raised the age limit (to 39) and lowered educational requirements (10 percent of recruits have dropped out of high school). Meanwhile, recruiters are adopting desperate tactics, even more deceitful than their usual pitch (“we’ll pay for your college education”). Potential recruits are shown how to mask drug tests and fake a high school diploma; according to CBS News, one recruiter threatened a young man with arrest if he didn’t show up at the induction center.

It got to the point that the Army held a “values stand-down” for a day of lectures about ethics May 20, which many dismissed as a public relations stunt. But even so, the “hard sell” is reportedly taking a “hard toll” on the pitchmen themselves. Since October 2002, at least 37 members of the Army Recruiting Command have gone AWOL. A recruiter in New York said he was having “stomach problems and searing back pain,” in addition to “bouts of depression” and had even “considered suicide” (*New York Times*, March 27). Raking in cannon fodder for the imperialist war machine just ain’t what it used to be, it seems.

The government is making up for the shortfall with even more aggressive measures spying on high school and college students. It turns out that the Pentagon’s “Joint Advertising Market Research Studies” division and a private contractor have secretly established a data base of 30 million 16-to-25-year-olds, including height, weight, Social Security numbers, grade-point averages, e-mail addresses and phone numbers! This is a blatant violation of



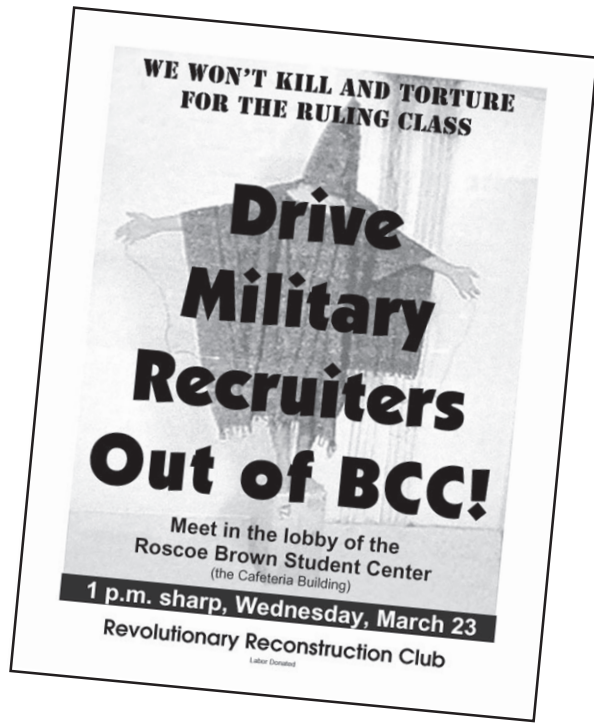
Internationalist photo

Revolutionary Reconstruction Club sparked protests that ran military recruiters out of Bronx Community College every week for more than a month. Above, 17 March 2005 demonstration.

the federal Privacy Act. In addition to such illegal tactics, the No Child Left Behind “educational reform” law orders schools to turn over information on all high school students, unless their parents sign a waiver.

The main problem the military faces in filling its quotas is that the brutal reality of the Iraq war is sinking in. With the death toll of U.S. soldiers now over 1,700 (compared to *tens of thousands of Iraqis* killed during the invasion and two years of colonial occupation), it’s becoming clear that instead of “see the world” and “be all that you can be,” enlisting means “go to Iraq and die.” On top of this, mounting opposition to the war is being expressed in protests against military recruiters in schools and on campuses around the country.

On January 20, Inauguration Day, while George Bush was being coronated with imperial trappings in Washington, there were protests ranging from a “jazz funeral for democracy” in New Orleans’ French Quarter (with a coffin bearing the Constitution and the USA Patriot Act) to a walkout by over 1,000 students at the University of Washington and Seattle Central Community College. At SCC, protesters chased military recruiters off campus. Calling them a “mob,” the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* (4 February) reported: “The students hurled in-



Left: RRC poster took a class position rather than the pacifism of the reformists. Above: 21 April 2005 rally at BCC.

sults and water bottles, according to witnesses, forcing the recruiters to flee under the protection of campus security officers.”

As the protests spread, college authorities began responding with repression of the protesters. On March 9 and 10, students at San Francisco State University and City College of New York protested the presence of military recruiters at campus job fairs. At SFSU over 100 people surrounded the Army and Air Force tables and after 90 minutes drove them out. This led to the arrest and suspension of three students and a staff worker at CCNY, and the suspension of several students at SFSU as well as sanctions against the International Socialist Organization and Students Against the War, affiliated with the ISO-led Campus Antiwar Network.

Despite the arrests and threats, protests have continued to mount. In Seattle, a walkout by 150 students on May 23 shut down three recruiting centers, while high school parent-teacher-student associations voted to ban military recruiters in the schools (*Seattle Weekly*, 15 June). Many of the protests have been at community colleges and state universities, as the Pentagon seeks to recruit its officer corps from the elite private universities. But at Columbia University in New York, the university senate voted overwhelmingly against reinstating the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC), which was terminated during the anti-Vietnam War protests three decades ago.

At the City University of New York, student clubs which publish *Revolution* newspaper (in accordance with the Internationalist Group) have been organizing to drive the military recruiters off campus. The same day antiwar protesters were arrested at CCNY, the Revolutionary Reconstruction Club at Bronx Community College held the first of several protests that ran the recruiters off campus every week for more than a month. A May 5 leaflet by the Internationalist Club at Hostos Community College reported:

“When the Army showed up in camouflage fatigues at BCC on March 17, students in the cafeteria took up the chant, ‘Military recruiters off campus now!’ One called out, ‘I’m not going to die for their army.’ As students yelled, ‘Out, out, out!’ the recruiters disappeared. On March 23, the Army showed up again, did an about face and headed for the door. On April 7, the Air Force exited as students chanted, ‘Bye, bye, bye, military off campus.’ On April 14, the Marines came and went, and when a united-front protest was called on April 21, the military didn’t even try to show their faces.”

Most left groups protesting the Iraq war and military recruiters carefully tailor their appeals to “democratic” demands that are acceptable to liberals, seeking to build a “broad” (class-collaborationist) antiwar movement. The Campus Antiwar Network, for example, says “Only the immediate withdrawal of US troops can bring any real possibility of democracy in the Middle East.” CAN and other groups such as the “Troops Out Coalition” led by the Workers World Party call to “bring the troops home,” and for different “priorities” (“education, not occupation,” “books, not bombs”).

In contrast to this fundamentally social-patriotic and pacifist appeal, the RRC and CUNY Internationalist Clubs took a revolutionary *class* position, calling to *defeat* the imperialist war and to break with all the capitalist parties (Democrats, Republicans, Greens, Nader). We point out how the colonial occupation is linked to racist repression in the U.S., and call for working-class action against the bosses’ war, “at home” and abroad. Our flyers proclaimed, loud and clear, “We Won’t Kill and Torture for the Ruling Class.” A March 23 leaflet by the Revolutionary Reconstruction Club at BCC described the successful protest the week before when recruiters showed up in the campus cafeteria:

“The recruiters were unable to go about their deadly ‘business’ of preying on students there. They kept making

calls on their cell phones, evidently seeking orders. At one point they were escorted down the hall by campus cops. FINALLY, OUR PROTEST DROVE THE RECRUITERS OUT OF THE BUILDING. As students yelled 'Out, out, out!' they disappeared.

"Club members and others marched across campus chanting 'Military recruiters off campus now,' 'Defeat U.S. imperialism!' and 'Workers strikes against the war!' We gathered in front of the Career Development building. One young woman spoke about how the military convinced her 17-year-old brother to sign up; he will be sent to Iraq in August. Her cousin is already in Iraq, and her godsister has also been sent to Iraq.

"Another young woman who joined the protest spoke about a co-worker who was killed in Iraq, leaving six brothers and sisters. She told how the military recruiters descend on Lehman High School, in her neighborhood, 'every time there's a graduation.' A young man active in the RRC told how his step-sister in the National Guard had to drop out of school. After coming back from one stint in Iraq, she was sent back again.

"During the protest, speakers from the RRC and CUNY Internationalist Clubs stressed that the real interest of working-class, poor and minority people in the U.S. is to side with the Iraqi people's struggle to drive out the colonial occupation. We linked the torture and occupation in Iraq to racist killings by cops in the Bronx, like that of Amadou Diallo. The Democrats and Republicans are responsible for the war and the cops, we explained – we need a workers party! Speakers pointed out how tuition hikes and TAP [financial aid] cuts drive poor students into the arms of the military. One poster demanded: No Tuition - Open Admissions.

"A speaker compared the military recruiters to the slave catchers who before Abolition made money by seizing escaped slaves and returning them to their masters. Frederick Douglass and other radical abolitionists organized mass mobilizations to drive the slave catchers and bounty hunters out."

The BCC protests demanded that all charges against the CCNY Four be dropped, and the Internationalist Group distributed a leaflet (see below) at several CUNY campuses calling to shut down CCNY over the arrests and for united-front action by students, faculty and campus workers to drive all military and cop recruiters out of City University. ■



Internationalist photo

RRC and CUNY Internationalist Clubs kept up agitation for six weeks, building support for protests that drove military out of the heavily black and Latino Bronx Community College. Above: March 23 march through campus. Below: March 17 speak-out in the cafeteria. Speakers compared recruiters to slave catchers, denouncing both capitalist war parties, Democrats and Republicans.



Revolution

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Militant Protest Sinks BMCC “Homeland Security” Program

—reprinted from *The Internationalist*
No. 21, Summer 2005

At “CUNY Day” on March 23, Borough of Manhattan Community College students and faculty celebrated the demise of the “Homeland Security” program planned by the downtown Manhattan campus of the City University of New York. The sinister program was dropped because of the campaign of protest and exposure initiated by the CUNY Internationalist Clubs last fall.

To the strains of a trumpet playing a funeral dirge, members of the BMCC Student Government Association and the faculty union, the Professional Staff Congress, kicked off the CUNY Day events by marching into the campus cafeteria with a coffin bearing a sign saying: “SGA - PSC Say: R.I.P. Homeland Security Program.” SGA president Jason Negron noted, “Normally a funeral is a sad event. This is a happy occasion. We killed the Homeland Security program, and now we’re burying it. We’re proud of that.”

Following the revelations published last October in *Revolution*, the newspaper of the CUNY Internationalist Clubs, students and professors angrily reacted to the attempt by the school administration to sneak in this program.* Planned courses included “interrogation techniques” and “technology for surveillance.” On December 9, a spirited protest marched through BMCC chanting “No ‘Homeland Security’ at BMCC.” Posters of the infamous photo of an Iraqi torture victim of U.S. “interrogation” at the Abu Ghraib prison asked, “Interrogation 101, Coming Soon to BMCC?” Two weeks later, a meeting of the BMCC Faculty Council erupted in what the right-wing *New York Sun* called a “firestorm” of protest, in which 15 students and professors indignantly denounced the program.

“‘Homeland Security’ Certificate Plan Is Dropped,” reported the *Clarion* (February 2005), newspaper of the CUNY faculty union, the Professional Staff Congress. This victory was also featured on the front page of the CUNY Graduate Center *Advocate*, which reported that BMCC President Anthony Perez told the paper “the college is no longer moving forward with the proposed certificate program” while extensively quoting the Internationalist Group on the fight against it.

* See “‘Fatherland Security’ Hits CUNY,” *The Internationalist* No. 20, January-February 2005



A memo by CUNY University Student Senate chair Lauren Fasano reported that Perez had formally told her the “BMCC administration would not be moving forward with the implementation of this program” and that reconsideration of the program “was very unlikely.” As Fasano notes, “both students and faculty were adamantly against the program being implemented.”

Perez’ slippery phrase about “not moving forward” with the program is certainly deliberate, leaving the door open to trying to resuscitate it later when no one is looking. So BMCC students and faculty held a funeral ceremony to drive the last nails into the coffin of the “Fatherland Security” program and to make sure it stays dead and buried.

Vigilance and energetic protest were able to defeat this brazen attempt to draft CUNY into the U.S.’ imperialist “war on terror,” which is really an attempt to terrorize the world’s population into submission. Students and faculty at the BMCC campus of 19,000 students, located less than a mile from the World Trade Center, were not intimidated by the government-sponsored war hysteria. As speakers at the March 23 event noted, the war on Iraq is also a war on working people, students, minorities and immigrants here.

After the victory of shutting down the “Homeland Security” program, the CUNY Internationalist Clubs call on opponents of imperialism and the militarization of the universities to redouble efforts and mount a university-wide action to drive military recruiters off campus!

Brazilian Workers Mobilize for Freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal

The following article is reprinted from The Internationalist No. 8, June 2000.

In a stirring demonstration of international working-class solidarity, Brazilian workers have repeatedly mobilized to demand freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal. This series of strikes and marches marks a vital step forward in the struggle to save the radical black journalist on Pennsylvania's death row for the last 17 years. It also poses a challenge to labor worldwide to use its tremendous power to abolish the racist death penalty.



Vanguarda Operária

LQB supporters at 22 November march in Rio de Janeiro call to mobilize workers power to free Mumia Abu-Jamal, proclaiming "Down with capitalist justice!"

- 10 November 1999: the CUT labor federation in Rio de Janeiro raised the call for freeing Mumia as one of the demands of a day-long work stoppage by unions throughout the state.
- November 22: a labor-centered demonstration in Rio on the "Day of Black Consciousness" made freedom for Jamal one of its central demands.
- November 25: a one-day strike by bank workers in the state of Rio de Janeiro included the demand "*Liberdade para Mumia Abu-Jamal!*"
- December 7: the Rio teachers union (SEPE) struck for half a day, including freedom for Mumia as one of its central demands.

This was the second time that Rio teachers had undertaken work stoppages demanding freedom for Jamal. On 23 April 1999, the SEPE held a two-hour statewide work stoppage and protest meetings for Mumia's freedom. That action was carried out along with the action by ILWU dock workers in the U.S., who shut down every port on the West Coast for ten hours on April 24 demanding: "Stop the Execution! Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!"

The League for the Fourth International has been in the forefront of recent efforts to mobilize the power of the working

class to stop the machinery of capitalist state murder. The comrades of our Brazilian section, the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, initiated the 23 April 1999 teachers work stoppage as well as the subsequent actions by Rio unions demanding Jamal's immediate release. Around the world, unions representing millions of workers have come out for Mumia's freedom. The key is to turn these calls into powerful labor action, as Brazilian workers have begun to do. Time is pressing. In October, Pennsylvania governor Tom Ridge for the second time signed a death warrant for Jamal. The *habeas corpus* appeal by Mumia's lawyers to the federal district court won a stay of execution until a decision is handed down. But that only gains a little time, and we must use that time effectively to mobilize international working-class defense of Mumia.

During the November 10 national work stoppage protesting the anti-working-class "austerity" policies of Brazilian president Fernando Henrique Cardoso, journalists in the capital of Brasilia carried signs with Mumia's picture calling for his freedom. The strongest showing by unions in Rio de Janeiro came from the teachers (which shut down 61 of 89 schools in Rio), bank workers, social security workers and oil workers – the same unions which prominently championed the cause of

**Smash the Racist Death Penalty!
Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!**

Mumia. During the Rio march, the sound truck of the Central Única dos Trabalhadores carried a CUT banner declaring: "Workers of Brazil Also Demand in the General Strike: FREEDOM for Mumia Abu-Jamal! Long live Zumbi and João Cândido!" Zumbi was the leader of the *quilombo* (community of escaped slaves) of Palmares who was murdered by colonial mercenary troops on 20 November 1695. A march is held yearly to commemorate the death of this champion of black freedom. João Cândido was the leader of the *Revolta da Chibata* (whipping revolt) by black sailors in the Brazilian navy, which broke out on 22 November 1910.

Following the November 10 work-stoppage, a meeting of the Conexão Zumbi (Zumbi Connection) at the CUT offices in Rio de Janeiro voted to include the demand for Mumia's freedom as a focus of the "black consciousness" march on November 22. A Conexão Zumbi leaflet announced that the struggle was against racism, sexism, Cardoso's economic policies and "for the liberation of the great black African American leader Abu-Jamal." In its daily bulletin (*Rápido*, 16 November), the CUT called attention to the fact that the march in honor of Zumbi was also demanding "the freedom of the American journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal, who is on death row. A couple of weeks ago, Mumia's lawyers won from Philadelphia judge William Yohn a stay of execution, which had been set for December 2. This will keep him alive until March, but still under the death threat."

In the following days, CUT bulletins repeatedly highlighted the demand for Jamal's freedom, and the November issue of its newspaper *Conquista* headlined: "CUT Wants Freedom for Abu-Jamal." The article noted: "The black movement in Rio de Janeiro and the Rio CUT are involved in a campaign for freedom for Abu-Jamal. This was in fact one of the axes of the national day of work stoppages and protests on November 10." After noting the political character of the death sentence against Mumia and the countless "irregularities" in his 1982 trial, *Conquista* concluded: "In these cases it is always worth recalling the martyrs of Chicago, who were later found to be innocent after they had been executed," referring to the labor militants sentenced to death after the Haymarket Square bomb provocation in 1886, who are commemorated every May Day.

The November 22 march in Rio drew some 500 participants, including João Cândido's son and daughter (who gave a speech at the closing rally). A letter was read from Mumia to the Brazilian workers thanking them for their November 10 work stoppage and underlining the importance of such actions of international solidarity. Among the unions present, several highlighted the call for Mumia's freedom. The Rio bank workers' daily, *Diário Bancário* (16 November), included a box on "Abu-Jamal: Black Journalist Condemned to Death in the Land of Uncle Sam." The oil refinery workers union (Sindipetro) bulletin *Surgente* (18 November) article announcing the march ran a photo of Mumia underlining the call for freeing the "anti-racist militant condemned to death." The

DIÁRIO
BANCÁRIO

Diário dos Bancários e Financários do Município do Rio de Janeiro
Ano LXIV - Quarta-feira, 24 de novembro de 1999 - Nº 4775



BANCÁRIOS - RIO
CUT

Reunião da Cassi é amanhã

A Cassi convocou seus associados para uma reunião amanhã, às 18h, no auditório do Centro de Leitura do JLI (R. Primeiro de Março, 66, 2º andar - CUBA). Serão discutidos o pagamento da transição dos descontos mensais do Plano de Assistência para a população. A proposta será submetida à votação entre 10 e 21 de dezembro.

BANCOS PÚBLICOS

É greve ou nada!

Assembléias, hoje, decidem se paralisam suas atividades a partir de amanhã no BB e na CEF.



"It's Strike or Nothing": Rio de Janeiro bank workers vote to include demand for freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal in strike on November 25.

postal workers union also called for Mumia's freedom in the November issue of its union paper, *O Grito Ecetista*, as did the social security workers union (Sindiprevi).

In addition, supporters of the United Black Movement, the Commission for Proletarian Culture, Anarchists Against Racism, the PSTU (United Socialist Workers Party – followers of the late Nahuel Moreno) and Ação Socialista (a split from the Morenonites) had leaflets, signs or banners calling for freedom for Mumia.

The Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil had a contingent of some two dozen supporters wearing T-shirts reproducing our multilingual poster calling to "Mobilize the Power of the Working Class to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!" Militants of the LQB and the Internationalist Group (U.S.) spoke from the union sound truck during the march and again at the concluding rally on the need for powerful workers action to win Mumia's freedom. The LFI spokesmen also emphasized the LQB's fight to expel the police ("the armed fist of the bourgeoisie") from the labor movement, warning against illusions in bourgeois "justice" and calling for sharp class struggle against the popular front of class collaboration. The LQB spokesman stressed that the fight for Mumia's freedom is part of the struggle for black liberation through socialist revolution. Hundreds of copies of LQB *Vanguarda Operária* leaflets on Mumia, and calling for a revolutionary workers party built in struggle against the popular front around Lula's social-democratic Workers Party (PT) and the reformist CUT tops were distributed to the participants.

The fight to mobilize the working class to win freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal was a central focus of the November 22 march,



CUT union federation banner on November 22. LQB signs read: “Capitalism = Racism” and “Strikes and Work Stoppages to Free Mumia!”

and the struggle continues. On November 24, some 600 Rio bank workers in two union assemblies enthusiastically voted to include the call to free Jamal as one of the official demands of their strike the next day. *Diário Bancário* (26 November) noted that “Banco do Brasil workers approved at their Wednesday union assembly the inclusion of freedom for black American Journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal as one of the demands of the strike movement.” On November 25, the Agricultural School in Pinheiral, part of the Fluminense Federal University, held a forum sponsored by the LQB on Mumia’s case which drew more than 50 students. The school shut down both in the 23 April 1999 teachers work stoppage and again on November 10 in solidarity with Mumia.

On Saturday, November 27, the SEPE teachers union began its educational conference with a special agenda point on Mumia. At the end of the day, the more than 400 delegates voted to hold a half-day strike December 7, in the middle of exam period, protesting the privatization and layoffs policies of the popular-front state government and demanding freedom for Jamal. The Rio teachers’ strike was held

the same day that Mumia’s lawyers handed in legal papers to the federal district court in Philadelphia for his *habeas corpus* appeal.

Over the last decade, the fight to save Mumia from the executioner has become the focus of the struggle against the barbaric death penalty internationally. The determination of U.S. rulers to silence Jamal is a continuation of the bourgeoisie’s drive to banish the spectre of black revolutionaries, from the assassination of Malcolm X and scores of Black



© Lou Jones

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT OF THE WORK STOPPAGE IN BRAZIL By Mumia Abu-Jamal, November 1999

Sisters, brothers, friends and comrades in Brazil: *Ona Move!*

I thank you for your principled and courageous stand in support of life, freedom and justice.

I write to you from a nation that many of you may know of, but that you don’t really know about. Did you know that over 3,000 men and women, mostly black, await extermination on American Death Rows? That over 1 million people are held in jails and prisons in America? Or that over 30 million people live in dire poverty in the richest nation on earth?

Death Row, and prison, is a province reserved for the poor.

That your work is suspended on behalf of one person from such a vile place is a testament to the power of human solidarity in the face of state repression, and a reflection of our commonality. I thank you, and applaud you; and will see you in Freedom! *Ona Move! Long Live John Africa!*

Rio de Janeiro Teachers' Work Stoppage to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal

23 April 1999



Teachers in the city and state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil carried out work stoppages on 23 April 1999 to demand freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal, the former Black Panther and radical journalist on Pennsylvania's death row. The action, carried out for one hour on day and evening shifts, was called by the State Teachers and Education Workers Union (SEPE), which also co-sponsored a demonstration outside the American consulate that afternoon demanding Jamal be freed.

This important step in mobilizing international workers action against the racist death penalty followed the adoption of a resolution for Jamal's freedom at the January 1999 congress of Brazil's National Confederation of Education Workers (see *The Internationalist* No. 7, April-May 1999). Like the motion for the work stoppages, it was put forward by the Class Struggle Caucus (CLC – affiliated with the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, section of the League for the Fourth International).

The April 23 teachers' action was held the day before U.S. longshoremen shut down all West Coast ports to demand freedom for Jamal. For more, see our leaflet "Brazil

Education Workers Stop Work Demanding: Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!" (available by writing to the IG or on our Web site, www.internationalist.org).

Above, at Rio de Janeiro's Education Institute, banner of teachers' unions and CUT labor federation demands "Freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal!" Right: SEPE union bulletins on the work stoppage for Jamal's freedom. May 1999 bulletin headlines: "Rio Schools and U.S. Port Workers Stop Work to Demand Freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal."



Panthers under the FBI's COINTELPRO provocation and extermination program in the 1960s to the decades-long attempt to murder former Philadelphia Panther leader Jamal. Thus it is crucially important that this struggle for his freedom be correctly focused against the racist, capitalist injustice system, which particularly targets minorities, immigrants and working people. Various reformist leftists have called for a "new trial" for Jamal, hoping to appeal to liberals who believe that his death sentence was an aberration. Against this, the LFI has insisted the fight must be for "freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal," and that the working class and oppressed must have no illusions in bourgeois "justice."

In the Brazilian workers protests, supporters of the social-democratic current led by the French Parti des Travailleurs (Workers Party) of pseudo-Trotskyist Pierre Lambert initially proposed that the November 10 work stoppage call for a "new trial" for Mumia. At a meeting of the Conexão Zumbi movement linked to the CUT, LQB spokesman Cerezo objected that this would represent a step backwards from the April 23 Rio teachers work stop-

page which unambiguously called for Mumia's freedom. Moreover, the call for a new trial would inevitably foster illusions in the capitalist courts, which from the beginning have sought to silence the "voice of the voiceless" through state murder. The issue was posed sharply in a vote counterposing "new trial" to "freedom" for Mumia, and the call to free him won. Two days later at a November 6 CUT meeting the issue was again debated, and again the motion for Jamal's freedom won out.

The events in Brazil must be a spur to even more powerful workers action in the spirit of the International Red Aid in the 1920s. The internationalist spirit of the Brazilian workers mobilizing in solidarity with Jamal, and the political battle waged by the LQB/LFI for independent labor action to win freedom now for Mumia Abu-Jamal, should serve as an inspiration to class-conscious workers around the world, from South Africa, where the death penalty was a key component of enforcing apartheid slavery, to Europe and the very heartland of Yankee imperialism. ■

Educational “Reform” of the World Bank and Mexican Government

Fight “Maquilazation” of the University!

In 1999-2000, students at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) waged a massive ten-month strike against an attempt by the government to impose tuition disguised as student registration “fees,” which would have had the effect of excluding untold numbers of poor and working-class students from higher education. Tens of thousands of students demonstrated repeatedly and up to 15,000 occupied the sprawling University City in Mexico City throughout the strike. The strike won broad support from the unions and in impoverished neighborhoods and was reviled by the middle class and bourgeoisie. At the height of the strike, the Grupo Internacionalista was instrumental in sparking the formation of workers defense guards, involving hundreds of union militants of the electrical workers and university workers unions, who together with student strikers mounted round-the-clock guards against the threat of an invasion by army troops and riot police (see “Worker-Student Defense Guards Formed,” *The Internationalist* No. 8, June 2000).

Although the government finally broke the strike with mass arrests, locking up a thousand student activists including several of our comrades, the students’ determined struggle managed to block the exclusionary student “fees.” (For the story of this key mass struggle see the *Internationalist Group* pamphlet, *Mexico: The UNAM Strike and the Fight for Workers Revolution* [March 2000].) The Spanish-language version of that pamphlet includes an article on the “maquilazation” of the university, i.e., the efforts of the bourgeoisie to turn “public” universities into an educational version of the maquiladoras (“free trade zone” factories). They want a “profit platform” providing limited technical training to petty-bourgeois students tracked for low-level administrative positions in an economy geared to production for the North American market on the basis of the “comparative advantage” of low wages. The article shows how this attempted transformation, which lay behind the move to impose tuition on the National University, was in response to initiatives coming straight from leading imperialist financial agencies, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Against the creeping privatization of higher education, the Grupo Internacionalista fought for open admissions, no tuition, provision of a living stipend for all students, abolition of the university administration and institution of student-teacher-worker government of the university.



John Moore/AP

Thousands of strikers march on Mexico City’s main plaza, the Zócalo, on 4 February 2000, demanding freedom of hundreds of UNAM students arrested by the federal police.

“One of these bourgeois hypocrisies is the belief that the school can stand aloof from politics.... The bourgeoisie themselves, who advocated this principle, made their own bourgeois politics the cornerstone of the school system, and tried to reduce schooling to the training of docile and efficient servants of the bourgeoisie, of slaves and tools of capital.”

– V.I. Lenin, Speech at the Second All-Russian Conference of Internationalist Teachers (January 1919)

The introduction of hefty registration fees at the National Autonomous University of Mexico is the result, in part, of applying plans thought up by the top financial spheres of imperialism. Several international banking institutions have been pushing for the last decade to introduce a “market-driven educational system” and to do away with the conception of higher education as a civil right. In an interview with *Proceso* magazine (9 May 1999), the leading specialist of the World Bank on Latin American education, Jamkil Salmi, said plainly: “Free higher education is not a positive thing.”

In a recent speech at the Autonomous University of Zacatecas, former UNAM rector Pablo González Casanova reported that in 1990, then education secretary Manuel Bartlett contracted with a U.S. research office to evaluate public higher education establishments in Mexico. According to *La Jornada* (5 March 2000), González Casanova related that the U.S. specialists “‘suggested’ to the Mexican government that it reduce the numbers of students in public higher education, that it reduce its subsidy and that it *weaken* the university teachers and workers unions, out of fear of union problems,” and they felt that Mexi-

can universities “are too autonomous.” They also proposed “the creation of a government body to evaluate the institutions of higher learning.” This is the plan behind everything that then took place in subsequent years: the repeated attempts to raise fees, the reduction in the size of the student body at the UNAM, the government harassment of the university unions and the introduction of standardized exams under the Ceneval (Centro Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación Superior, a private agency run by top officials in the education ministry, public universities and private organizations).

This was not just the opinion of one or another researcher. A document of the World Bank written for a “World Conference of Higher Education” (October 1998) states that “The reform agenda of the 90s, and almost certainly extending well into the next century, is oriented to the market rather than to public ownership or to governmental planning and regulation. Underlying the market orientation of tertiary education is the ascendancy, almost worldwide, of market capitalism and the principles of neo-liberal economics” (“The Financing and Management of Higher Education: A Status Report on Worldwide Reforms”). The same report indicates what this can mean in practice: “Radical change, or restructuring, of an institution of higher education means either fewer and/or different faculty, professional staff, and support workers. This means lay-offs, forced early retirements, or major retraining and reassignment, as in: the closure of inefficient or ineffective institutions....”

Not only do imperialist financial institutions advocate such “reforms,” but the Mexican government has formally committed itself to introduce them. The World Bank financial project MXPE49895, involving a loan of some US\$180 million, drawn



Workers defense guards of the Mexican Electrical Workers Union (SME) at the National University, July 1999.

up in 1997 to be implemented in 1999, states: “The increase in coverage can only be accomplished if the institutions of higher education are able to generate additional income, and if the private universities are able to absorb an increasing share of higher education enrollment (currently 25%).” It adds that “the Mexican government is anxious to promote the development and strengthening of student loan programs.” Since Mexican banks haven’t made loans to *anyone* since the crisis of 1995, being practically bankrupt, this can only be seen as an attempt by the regime to obtain an additional source of international financing for a lucrative business, which would have the additional effect of enslaving to the banks the few poor students who manage to enter an institution of higher education.

Increased privatization, introduction of a system of loans for “non-wealthy” students, layoffs and early retirement of professors, closing “inefficient” institutions (or unwanted ones, like the Rural Teachers Training Institute at El Mexe, for example): this is precisely the plan that the Mexican government is pursuing. To what purpose? Only because it’s following orders from the World Bank and the IMF? No. The federal assistant secretary for higher education and scientific research, Daniel Reséndiz, recently declared that Mexico has to join the “educational revolution” which essentially consists, according to him, of introducing short-term degree programs, in particular in two-year “technological universities.” Over the last five years, 31 new institutions of this sort have been opened in Mexico. Their attraction, according to Reséndiz, is that “they have educational programs with an intensity far higher than those of the traditional universities,” and that they “train youth who can find jobs quickly,” according to *La Jornada* (20 February 2000).

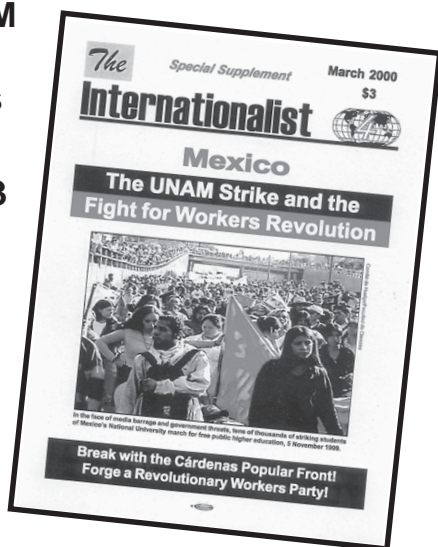
The annual student fees of 1,360 pesos (US\$150) which they are seeking to introduce at the UNAM are only the beginning. President Zedillo singled out the

Mexico: The UNAM Strike and the Fight for Workers Revolution

March 2000 US\$3

For almost a year, tens of thousands of students occupied the largest university in Latin America, facing repression by both the PRI government and the PRD opposition. This 64-page special supplement tells the story of the strike and documents the intervention of the Grupo Internacionalista.

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Autonomous University of Chihuahua as an example, where the students pay “college tuition” of up to 4,600 pesos. And in the (private) “technological universities” hailed by the government, fees range up to 34,200 pesos a year in the Western Institute of Higher Technological Studies (ITESO) and 34,500 pesos *per semester* in the Monterrey Technological Institute (ITM). This is the image of the future foreseen by the *Barnés Plan*, which although it has been temporarily suspended is by no means eliminated from the arsenal of a regime that is seeking to increasingly “elitize” “public” higher education. The regime is utterly uninterested in the money collected from fees, which in any case would be insignificant, but rather in the “collateral” effect of purging tens of thousands of students without resources from UNAM, all in the name of “excellence” and the fight against “populism.”

This class purge is already underway. The enrollment of the National University, which at the beginning of the strike numbered 270,000 students, had already been considerably lowered from the 350,000 it had five years ago. Now it is estimated that no more than 230,000 remain, and it is clear that the administration is seeking to eliminate all of the strikers. The government brags that there are 1.5 million university students in Mexico. But out of a total of 20 million youth between the ages of 19 and 24, this means only 7 percent have access to public and private higher education (*Excelsior*, 10 February 2000). Put another way, 93 percent of Mexican youth are already excluded *a priori* from higher education, and now they will exclude tens of thousands more.

This is the counterpart of Zedillo’s all-out defense at Seattle and Davos of Mexican industry based on the “comparative advantage” of low wages. The same scheme foresees “universities” which produce middle-level cadres, at low cost, for the *maquiladora* (free trade zone) industries. The technical secretary of the University of Guadalajara, Ricardo Gutiérrez Padilla, confirms: “What is intended is that the public universities should be training people for the *maquila*” (*La Jornada*, 28 February). The “maquilization” of the public universities goes hand-in-hand with the maquilization of the country. What’s needed to fight it is not to fall into nationalist dreams of returning to a mythical golden age of a “*México lindo*” (beautiful Mexico) in the past. The offensive against public education affects the United States and Europe as well as Latin America. In New York, for example, the authorities have introduced a series of exams, also in the name of “academic excellence,” to eliminate thousands of black and Latino students from the City University of New York (see “Smash Racist Purge of CUNY – Fight for Open Admissions, Free Tuition!” on page 11 of this pamphlet).

Among the most cynical of the intellectual mercenaries who oppose the students’ Strike General Council (CGH) is José Blanco, who has the nerve to try to mobilize Karl Marx against the fight for free public higher education. He distorts the famous “Critique of the Gotha Program” (1875), where Marx remarks that if in some states of the U.S., “higher educational institutions are also ‘free,’ that only means in fact defraying the cost of the education of the upper classes from the general tax receipts.” Blanco comments: “This thesis cannot even be weighed by the CGH or its followers. They are condemned to keep on insisting on subsidizing the rich.” This is a total non sequitur. The fees they are attempting to introduce in Mexico

today would not eliminate a subsidy to the rich, who in any case send their offspring to the private universities, but instead are intended to exclude thousands of children of working people from the UNAM. Moreover, Marx’s point was to underline that in order to resolve a whole host of questions, among them education, it is necessary to overcome the “old democratic litany familiar to all” and to pose proletarian revolution. Hence his main thesis:

“Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but *the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*.”

What the World Bank, UNESCO and IMF plans express is the decay of capitalism in its imperialist phase, in which, by means of wars, economic crises and a fraudulent economic “development” based on lowering the standard of living of the masses, the principal means of production – the workers – is worn down. In order to defeat this system, what’s needed is a fight for socialist revolution on a global scale. In 1848, the *Communist Manifesto* indicated that among the first measures of the workers revolution would be “Free education for all children in public schools.” But as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels stressed, this requires “despotic inroads on the rights of property, and on the conditions of bourgeois production,” which can only come about through workers revolution. ■

Stop CUNY Racist Purge...

continued from page 55

leges and other innovations unknown in Europe. The name of Horace Mann is famous worldwide as an architect of progressive education (and opponent of slavery) along with that of the liberal educator John Dewey. The Russian Bolsheviks paid great attention to public education in the U.S. Lenin wrote articles on U.S. schools and in praise of the New York Public Library, pointing out that ordinary workers could go there after work to gain knowledge, and vowing to introduce such institutions in a workers Russia. Today, in the era of capitalist decline, many European countries still do not have public libraries, the NYPL is closed most evenings, and now the New York city government is planning to “blow up” the City University by cutting its size in half.

The bourgeoisie and pro-capitalist reformists seek to adjust the educational system to the needs of capital. This produces the spectacle of cutbacks in enrollment in higher education, particularly of black and Latino youth, at a time when technological developments require *more* skills not less. A chauvinist drive is underway against bilingual education and English as a Second Language instruction just as the immigrant population is exploding. In opposing the butchering of CUNY, liberals argue for a more “rational” educational policy. Yet the offensive against mass public higher education is an expression of the fundamental irrationality of the capitalist system, which destroys millions of jobs in the name of profitability and educates youth only to use them as cannon fodder in its wars.

Today, as 150 years ago with the dawn of scientific socialism, it is the communists who are the only consistent defenders of free public education for all. ■

After Massacres at Sicartsa Steel Mill and Atenco

Mexico: Oaxaca Teachers Repel Bloody Cop Assault



Indymedia/México

Teachers (at rear) face off with an army of police after June 14 eviction attempt. The 40,000 teachers camped out in the center of the state capital regrouped and retook the main plaza, routing the cops.

Grupo Internacionalista Urges National Strike to Avenge the Blood of Oaxaca

The following article appeared in The Internationalist No. 24, Summer 2006.

1 AUGUST 2006—The strike by 70,000 Mexican teachers in the southern state of Oaxaca, now entering its third month, has thrown the entire state into convulsions. The attempt by Governor Ulises Ruiz on June 14 to dislodge tens of thousands of teachers camped out in the state capital backfired badly. Set upon by an army of 3,500 paramilitary riot police, after several hours of pitched battle the teachers retook the city center, which they have held ever since. It was the third time in two months that Mexican working people were subjected to murderous police assault, and in each case they valiantly fought off the uniformed thugs.

In Oaxaca the cop assault not only failed miserably, it produced a wave of revulsion among the poor and working

people, the Indian population and large sectors of the middle class. A series of “megamarches” culminated in a huge outpouring of a half-million or more anti-government demonstrators on June 28, on the eve of nationwide elections.

For several weeks, the strike leadership had called for a boycott of the vote. But at the last minute the teacher union tops did a turnaround and called for a “punishment vote” against the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) of the hated governor Ruiz and the National Action Party (PAN) of Mexican president Vicente Fox. This amounted to a backhanded call to vote for the candidate of the bourgeois populist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), Andrés Manuel López Obrador, widely known by his initials AMLO. The result was a heavy turnout for AMLO, who took 46 percent of the total in Oaxaca. The overall results are being sharply contested, with huge marches in Mexico City pro-

testing fraud and supporting the PRD. But the Oaxaca teachers strike has largely been lost in the shuffle.

Immediately upon learning of the bloody assault on the Oaxaca teachers on June 14, the Internationalist Group called a protest picket on an hour's notice outside the Mexican consulate in New York City. The next day the IG initiated a second demonstration with over 50 protesters, including a contingent from the Professional Staff Congress, the faculty union at the City University of New York. A photo of the demonstration was published in the Mexico City daily *La Jornada* and many strikers later told us that they were greatly encouraged by this immediate show of international labor solidarity.

The Grupo Internacionalista (GI), Mexican section of the League for the Fourth International, have been actively present in Oaxaca almost continuously during the last month and a half of the strike distributing thousands of leaflets, talking with strikers and addressing an assembly of the teachers union. From the outset, our comrades warned against giving any political support to the PRD and its candidate López Obrador. This capitalist party, they stressed, was coresponsible for each of the recent bloody cop attacks on workers. (In Oaxaca, PRD deputies in the state legislature voted in advance to authorize the governor to use "public force" to evict the teachers.) A June 16 GI leaflet declared: "Not One Vote for the Bourgeois Parties PRI, PAN and PRD! Break with AMLO, the PRD and Its Popular Front! Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!"

As the Oaxaca teachers union leadership started talking of a "punishment vote" against the governor (and for López Obrador), the Grupo Internacionalista issued a second leaflet, "Oaxaca Teachers Strike at the Crossroads" (29 June), warning that a vote for the PRD could doom the strike. Calling on the national Senate, "that den of big-time thieves," to oust the blood-drenched governor would only lead to his replacement

by another capitalist politician, like the governor of Chiapas, who after being elected with the endorsement of the PRD and PAN, turned around and attacked the militant teachers and Zapatista Indian rebels. In the face of police attack, the GI called on teachers, miners and steel workers to form workers self-defense committees and to initiate a "national strike against the murderous government."

As we go to press, the fate of the Oaxaca teachers strike hangs in the balance. Although the state government promised not to use force to dislodge the teachers' sit-in, it has issued orders to state police to prepare for mass arrests. The rebellious educators have vowed to make the state "ungovernable" in support of their call for Ruiz' ouster. They have occupied the governor's offices, the state legislature and state supreme court, as well as dozens of city halls. But while these tactics reflect the militancy of the teacher ranks and the discontent of the impoverished population, "ungovernability" is one of the criteria set out in the Mexican constitution for relieving the head of a state of his duties through a *juicio político* (political trial). So while the country is convulsed with anti-fraud protests against Fox's National Action Party, the Oaxaca teachers' leaders are beseeching the PRD and PAN senators to impeach the PRI governor.

As opposed to this appeal to the capitalist parties, including the ruling right-wingers, the Grupo Internacionalista has called for the formation of workers defense committees independent of all the bosses' politicians. The response to the undoubted electoral fraud, a constant in Mexican elections, should not be support for one bourgeois candidate over another but a mobilization of workers' power in a national strike and a fight to build a revolutionary workers party.

We print below a translation of the June 16 leaflet by the Grupo Internacionalista in response to the bloody police attack on striking teachers two days earlier.

For a National Strike to Avenge the Blood of Oaxaca!

JUNE 16 – Two weeks before the Mexican presidential elections, the government of Oaxaca under Governor Ulises Ruiz of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) staged a blatant provocation, violently evicting teachers who have been occupying the downtown area of the state capital. In the classic manner of military dictatorships, thousands of city and state police fell upon the teachers as they were sleeping in the 53 blocks where they have been camped out for the last three weeks. Firing off tear gas grenades in all directions, they invaded the union headquarters, destroyed the teachers' tents and burned what was left of their encampments. But the government only succeeded in shooting itself in the foot, and the eviction was a failure. After three hours of pitched battle, the 40,000 strikers managed to break through the police barriers and to drive out the forces of repression.

Amid the great confusion reigning in the city, there were reports of several people killed: an initial notice by the Mexican Red Cross reported eleven dead, a number that was later reduced to four according to spokesmen for the teachers and the Oaxaca daily *Noticias*. Clarity is still lacking on this issue. What is certain is that Social Security hospitals treated 92

people wounded in the attack, several of them in serious condition; in addition, a number of teachers are still missing. In short, the streets of Oaxaca ran red with the blood of the working people. It was a real massacre – the third in less than two months – coming after the April 20 shooting of workers at the Sicartsa steel plant in the Pacific Coast port city of Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán; and the deadly attack on the townspeople of San Salvador Atenco, near Mexico City, on May 4. In the electoral contest, each of the three main bourgeois parties is posing as being the toughest on "security" issues. In fact, the PAN (National Action Party), PRI and PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution) have all sent killer cops against the working people. This is how the Mexican ruling class prepares its electoral farce that is drenched with workers' blood.

In the wake of his failed paramilitary operation and facing the fury of the working class nationally and internationally, Governor Ruiz had to retreat. He freed ten strikers and suspended (but did not drop) arrest orders for 25 teachers union leaders. The federal government of President Vicente Fox joined in and the Ministry of the Interior (under the rightist Carlos Abascal) dispatched an undersecretary to act as mediator. They

intimated that all of a sudden they might be able to find federal funds to pay for “rezoning” the teachers which would provide a minimal raise to their starvation wages. But matters will not be resolved with a round-table “dialogue.” This battle is not over, and any “truce” could prove fatal. Although they have withdrawn from the center of the city, the strikers have not abandoned their mass sit-in and they are now demanding the head of the repressive governor. The union has called not to vote for any of the presidential candidates, and is proposing to boycott the July 2 election – which they have the power to disrupt, at least on the state level.

What is urgently needed at this time is to break out of the state framework and to undertake a *national strike against the murderous government*, fighting for victory to the strikes by Oaxaca teachers and mine workers; for total *trade-union independence* from the bourgeoisie, breaking the shackles of the corporatist pseudo-unions and throwing back the government attack on miners and metal workers; for *freeing and dropping all charges* against the arrested workers, peasants and teachers, victims of the repressive onslaught by the ruling class. What’s needed above all is a political reply to the bourgeoisie’s class offensive, refusing to give a single vote to the PAN, PRI, PRD or any other bosses’ party, breaking with the popular front tying the “independent” unions to the PRD candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador, and forging the nucleus of a *revolutionary workers party* which would fight for a workers and peasants government to begin international socialist revolution.

Teachers, Miners and Peasants in the Face of the Capitalist Assault

It is striking that in each of the recent massacres, the workers under attack tenaciously resisted the repression and routed the repressive forces. In *Lázaro Cárdenas*, they took back the Sicartsa steel mill in a hard battle against the police and marines. (It now seems that the Fox government may be trying for a repeat performance in the copper mine town of *Cananea*, Sonora near the Arizona border, where the miners walked out when they were ordered to work on the centenary of the great strike that sparked the Mexican Revolution of 1910-17.) In *Atenco*, hundreds of police from the state of Mexico fled from the fury of the population incensed over the arrest of some flower sellers. And now in *Oaxaca*, the uniformed guard dogs of capital received a sharp response from those they sought to put down.

It began with a silent operation in the early morning hours of June 14. At 4:50 a.m., the general secretary of the union, Enrique Rueda Pacheco, sounded the alert over Radio Plantón



Marco Ugarte/AP

Oaxaca teachers resist police attack on June 14. Break with the popular front around the PRD! Form workers self-defense committees!

(Radio Sit-Down, the strikers’ radio station), calling on the ranks to prepare for “organized resistance against the repression that the state government is carrying out in an irrational manner.” At 5:15, the police took over the Teachers’ Hotel (union headquarters), a few blocks from the city center, and then advanced on the Zócalo, Oaxaca’s central plaza. Enveloped in dense clouds of tear gas from troops on the ground and from a helicopter which flew over the plaza for hours, the police managed to momentarily “recapture” the Plaza de Armas and the Alameda. At gunpoint and brandishing riot clubs, they pillaged and burned the teachers’ encampments, dismantled the equipment with which the strikers broadcast Radio Plantón, and savagely beat teachers they encountered.

But what happened next certainly wasn’t part of the operational plan. While the governor with his hands soaked in blood tried to hide his crimes behind his own cloud of verbal laughing gas, talking about a fantastical “state of law,” *Excelsior* (15 June) reported on its front page that the teachers “Force Police to Flee.” The Oaxaca daily *Noticias* described how the teachers used buses to smash through police barricades:

“At around 7:45, the 40,000 teachers regrouped almost in their entirety and began to corner the police who as the minutes passed were forced to fall back to the Alameda de León and the Zócalo, due to a shortage of munitions, mainly tear gas canisters. A helicopter of the special operations police circled over the historical city center and fired off grenades on multiple occasions, but still they could not defeat the teachers....

“About 8:50, the educational workers now numbered thousands and proceeded to launch the final battle. The police were forced to pull back and abandon the Zócalo, retreating along Bustamante Street, after offering their last defense.” Throughout the day, federal and state authorities banded

about threats of a new attack by the Federal Preventive Police (PFP). It was reported that Hercules troop transport planes filled with the paramilitary police were headed to Oaxaca to “finish the job.” The governor wanted to “clear” the Zócalo in order to “promote tourism” and carry out the demands of the state Coparmex (employers’ association) to get rid once and for all of this “rabble” of teachers who fight for higher wages. Ruiz claimed to have the support of the federal government, but apparently the president’s office decided otherwise. Interior minister Abascal announced later that it would be “better” not to attempt a new eviction. The federal government made an electoral calculation and decided to leave the PRI governor twisting in the wind.

The Story of the SNTE and CNTE: Oaxaca Teachers in the Eye of the Storm

In the face of the all-sided anti-labor repression, what’s needed is a class-struggle leadership to wage an all-out battle against the capitalist government. In the first place, it is necessary to break the shackles of the corporatist “trade-unionism” (represented by the CTM, CROC, CROM, CT, SNTE and related federations) which during more than half a century of PRI rule served as the labor police of the regime to suppress the Mexican workers, break their strikes and murder their best fighters on a mass scale. Today the corporatist bureaucrats offer their services to the Fox government, although they have occasionally fallen afoul of their godfather as they find themselves caught between a furious proletariat and a decaying regime. This is what happened with the mine leader Napoleón Gómez Urrutia (“Napito”) after the “industrial homicide” in Pasta de Conchos¹ for which the corporatist mine and metal union was co-responsible along with the company and the capitalist state.

The effects of the corporatization of the workers movement in Mexico are still being felt. The National Education Workers Union (SNTE), under its *caudillo* (strong man) Carlos Jonguitud, served for decades as the political instrument of the PRI (of which it was a part) to control the rural areas of the country. When discontent over his misrule boiled over, Jonguitud was replaced by the current “moral leader” of the SNTE, Elba Esther Gordillo, who was hand-picked by the PRI president Carlos Salinas de Gortari and designated union president in an all-night meeting in Gobernación (the interior minis-

¹ On February 19, an explosion in the Pasta de Conchos mine in the state of Coahuila trapped 65 miners underground where they were left to die. In the face of the outraged relatives of the doomed miners, who complained to the press that the “union” was “the same as the company,” Gómez Urrutia accused management of “industrial homicide,” although the union had signed off on fraudulent safety certifications along with the company and state labor inspectors. The mine owners then demanded Gómez’ ouster and the Fox government summarily dismissed him (just as they had installed him four years earlier). The Grupo Internacionalista opposed government intervention while calling on the miners and metal workers to break the corporatist stranglehold and fight for genuine workers’ unions, free of state control, with a class-struggle leadership.

try). The SNTE maintained its control over the teachers through internal terror, with bands of hired gunmen whose job was to “clean out” any dissidents. Jonguitud and Gordillo between them are responsible for the assassination of more than 150 members of their “union.” When a labor body engages in mass murder of its members, dedicates itself to breaking strikes and not simply selling them out (as the reformist bureaucrats regularly do), when it is an integral part of a whole repressive apparatus, then it is no longer a workers union, but instead a state apparatus for control of labor.

The Oaxacan teachers in particular rebelled against this repressive apparatus, playing a key role in the National Educational Workers Coordinating Committee (CNTE), a union tendency which in much of the country acts as a separate union. This is the case in the state of Oaxaca, where the CNTE controls Section 22 of the SNTE. Although the PRI no longer holds the presidency of the country, the corporatist apparatuses have continued offering their services to the federal government, now run by the PAN. Thus the general secretary of the SNTE, Rafael Ochoa, declared that “the SNTE dissociates itself” from the Oaxaca teachers’ struggle. In the same tone as Fox’s education secretary, he asked “who is supplying the money to pay for the [strike] movement” (*La Jornada*, 6 June). Even after the June 14 massacre, Ochoa insists that “the teachers in the struggle belong to the National Education Workers Coordinating Committee (CNTE) and not to his union” (*Noticias* [Oaxaca], 15 June). SNTE leaders yearn to put an end to the labor militancy of the Oaxaca teachers and would not hesitate to call on the police to do so, as they did against the CNTE in Mexico City.

But breaking the stranglehold of corporatism on the Mexican workers is far from sufficient. It is also necessary to free the proletariat from the political bonds tying it to the ruling class via the pro-capitalist leaderships of the “independent” unions who are subordinate to the PRD, among them top leaders of the CNTE. It is pro-PRD union bureaucrats in the first instance who stand in the way of action by the proletariat on a national scale against the repression (offering the mockery of a three-hour national work stoppage). They don’t want to pose problems for PRD candidates and particularly for its presidential hopeful, López Obrador, who calls for “dialogue” with the butchers (i.e., for the teachers, miners, peasants, etc. to surrender).

Massacres and Elections: Plenty of Stick, Not Much Carrot

The six-year term of Vicente Fox is drawing to a close as mass repression rains down on the working people of the countryside and the cities. Fox’s victory in the 2000 elections was seen as the longed-for end of the “perfect dictatorship” of the PRI. But the end of the PRI-government regime of a state party and its replacement by a PAN-PRI-PRD condominium has only brought more repression, helping to dispel many democratic illusions. No matter who emerges as the victor in the July 2 elections, the workers’ blood will continue to be spilled until the gruesome capitalist ruling dynasty in Mexico is swept away once and for all.

In fact, the string of police massacres is closely linked to the elections. The PRI, PAN and PRD are up to their necks in the

electoral circus and are going after each other with all they've got. The main theme of their campaigns is the "lack of security." The bourgeois candidates are competing over who can be the best repressor in upholding the business affairs of capital. Felipe Calderón of the PAN promises a "firm hand"; Roberto Madrazo of the PRI says he "knows how to do it"; and López Obrador proposes to throw in a little carrot along with the stick. Until now, the triplet parties of the pseudo-democratic "alternation" have not hesitated for an instant in banding together in the hour of repression. At Sicartsa, it was a joint action by the local (PRI), state (PRD)

and federal (PAN) police. In Atenco, the repression was ordered by a PRD mayor and the PRI governor, backed by the PAN federal government. They cut down 14-year-old Javier Cortés and National University student Alexis Benhumea, who died last week after more than a month in a coma. The toll in Oaxaca is not yet known.

The Oaxacan teachers of Section 22 also know that the "PRI, PAN and PRD are the same thing," as a teacher said last week in a union assembly of the sit-down strikers. "First they kill the Sicartsa workers in Michoacán, then two youths in Atenco," he went on. "This is the work of the same wretches. The PRI, PAN and PRD, all three of them, are parties of the rich. We call not to vote for any of them; what we have to do is boycott the July 2 elections." His conclusion is correct, but insufficient. A negative, passive policy is not enough. In the face of the repressive onslaught by the capitalist regime, we must build the indispensable vehicle to wage a political struggle against the bourgeoisie: a revolutionary workers party.

It must be a Leninist vanguard party; a party of class struggle, which points the way and mobilizes the working people to win battles like the Oaxaca teachers' strike; an internationalist party, capable of fighting the nationalist demagoguery peddled by the bourgeois politicians (while subordinating themselves to the imperialists), also reflected in the empty posturing of the Other Campaign.² It must be a party based on the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution, which in the face of the anti-democracy of the bourgeois regime that oppresses the peasants, Indians and all working people raises the program of workers revolution, not only in Mexico but also on the other side of the Line, in the imperialist bastion to the north,

² The "Otra Campaña" initiated by the Zapatistas calls for opposing the mounting repression without suggesting the means to fight it, other than repeated demonstrations.



300,000 marched in Oaxaca, June 16, against the repressive governor Ulises Ruiz in support of the teachers strike.

Marco Ugarte/AP

where millions of Mexican workers form a human bridge and a growing, potentially militant sector of the North American proletariat.

In fact, the struggle of the Oaxaca teachers and the massacre they have suffered has had a strong impact in the United States. Our comrades of the Internationalist Group, U.S. section of the League for the Fourth International (LFI), initiated a mobilization protesting the repression in Oaxaca in front of the Mexican consulate in New York. Already on April 14, the day the massacre took place, the IG called an emergency picket, pulled together in less than an hour. Yesterday, June 15, they held another protest attended by more than 50 people, among them many members of the Professional Staff Congress, the faculty and staff union of the City University of New York. Demonstrators chanted angrily, "Atenco, Oaxaca, massacres in Mexico," and "Hail the Mexican teachers' strike!" Union speakers expressed solidarity with their Mexican brothers and sisters. And last night, the San Francisco local of the West Coast U.S. dock workers union, the ILWU, unanimously approved a motion protesting the repression in Oaxaca.

The IG also fights for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants* under the slogan: "The workers' struggle has no borders." In Mexico, the fundamental objective of the Grupo Internacionalista is to build the nucleus of a genuinely revolutionary workers party, as part of a reformed Fourth International. This is not something that will become necessary in the distant future: faced with the government repression against the working people, it is necessary to build this indispensable political instrument for proletarian revolution. Today is when it is possible to give the final push to bring down the tottering corporatist edifice and land a telling blow against the murderous regime. We call upon teachers and other fighters who want to go from resistance to a fight for revolution to join the ranks of the Grupo Internacionalista. ■

Spirited Solidarity Picket in New York

“Oaxaca Teachers, We Are With You!”

The following article is reprinted from *The Internationalist* No. 26, January-February 2007.

On September 21, some 150 teachers, professors, trade-unionists, students, leftists and community activists joined in an energetic picket outside Mexico’s Consulate General in New York to “Protest Repression in Oaxaca, Mexico – Defend the Striking Teachers.” (See leaflet on page 58 with endorsers list.) The picketers were demonstrating militant solidarity with the 70,000 teachers in the southern Mexican state on strike since last May 22, who have braved massive police repression and death squads that have killed at least five strike supporters in the last month.

“*Maestros oaxaqueños, estamos con ustedes*” (Oaxaca teachers, we are with you), the NYC demonstrators chanted. The chant was so loud, in fact, that it was heard all the way to Oaxaca, via a live broadcast from the picket line to the strikers’ station, Radio Plantón (Sit-In Radio). Pictures of the protest were printed in *El Diario-La Prensa* in New York and *La Jornada* in Mexico City. On the same day in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, members of the teachers union (SEPE) from the steel city of Volta Redonda carried a banner proclaiming: “SEPE-V.R. Calls on the Working Class to Strike in Solidarity with the Teachers in Oaxaca, Mexico.”

The New York protest exceeded the organizers’ expectations, as protesters kept arriving. Soon it was almost impossible to move in the narrow area blocked off by steel barriers set up by the police to cordon off demonstrations. Picketers chanted, “From New York to Oaxaca, fight for the right to strike!” Other chants included, “Oaxaca, Atenco, massacres in Mexico,” “International solidarity with Mexican teachers,” “Defend Mexican teachers against death squad terror” and “¡Viva la



Internationalist photo

September 21 New York protest initiated by IG drew some 150 protesters, including NYC teachers, City University professors and students.

huelga de los maestros oaxaqueños!”

An important aspect of the Oaxacan teachers’ struggle is the fight against the oppression of the indigenous peoples of this state, where more than a third of the population speaks native languages. One of the signs in the September 21 protest carried a greeting in Mixteco from a Oaxacan teacher thanking New York teachers for their support. Another declared in Spanish: “Against Racism, Discrimination and State Terror, Defend the Indigenous Peoples of Oaxaca and Chiapas!” (A large majority of the striking teachers in this heavily indigenous state are women, many from the Zapotec, Mixtec, Mixe, Triqui and other Indian peoples.)



Indigenous women and bilingual teachers from Oaxaca in encampment in Mexico City, August 2006.

The united-front protest was in response to a call endorsed by more than 70 individuals and organizations, including scores of professors from the City University of New York (CUNY) and teachers from the city's public schools. For several weeks, union activists from the Professional Staff Congress (PSC, representing CUNY faculty and staff) and the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) have been gathering support for the protest in support of the Oaxaca teachers. The Internationalist Group and supporters in the PSC and UFT as well as members of the Internationalist Clubs at CUNY played an important role in initiating and building the protest.

The broadcast over Radio Plantón was particularly important, lasting for 25 minutes before the connection was broken. The strikers prepared beforehand to transmit on all the occupied radio stations in Oaxaca. So when the call from New York came in, four other stations (Radio La Ley, Radio APPO, and others) were networked in. Amid the chanting some of the signs carried by protesters were mentioned, among them the call for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. A student from the CUNY Internationalist Clubs spoke from personal experience growing up in the state of Guerrero about the racism directed against indigenous peoples in Mexico. CUNY professor Electa Arenal sent greetings to the Oaxacan teachers she had met while attending a tri-national (U.S.-Canada-Mexico) conference in defense of public education there last March.

As demonstrators called to fight for the right to strike, we explained to listeners that under New York's anti-labor Taylor Law, public sector workers are banned from striking here, yet last December the pow-

erful Transport Workers Union (TWU) shut down the city's subways and buses for three days. Despite massive fines, the TWUers were unbroken. A spokesman for the Internationalist Group explained to listeners that this was intimately connected to the burning need for a revolutionary workers party, both in the U.S. and Mexico, because all the bosses' parties supported repression against the strikers. The announcer in Oaxaca said that many strikers had expressed the need for a party representing the working people.

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The picket was being broadcast while Oaxacan strikers were beginning a long trek by foot to Mexico City that is expected to last two weeks. Marchers listening to the broadcast from the striker-occupied radio stations called in questions to Radio Plantón to pass on to the protest in New York. One listener wanted to know what unions were represented (dozens of members of the PSC, UFT and TWU). Another asked if any document had been brought to the consulate. We reported that a New York teacher and a high school student had tried to deliver a letter from UFT president Randi Weingarten protesting the repression against Oaxacan teachers, but they were rebuffed.

There is no doubt that the radio broadcast gave marchers trekking through the Oaxacan countryside a real lift hearing the chanting from New York and knowing that there was a large and combative solidarity demonstration in the heart of U.S. imperialism supporting the strikers. Now the right-wing government of Mexican president Vicente Fox is threatening to send in federal forces to dislodge the teachers. Governor Ulises Ruiz has issued an ultimatum for teachers to return to work by Monday, September 25, or he will replace them with scabs and send in the police. It is urgent for the working class internationally to come to the aid of our class sisters and brothers in Oaxaca.

Bloody Repression, Hard Class Struggle

For the last four months the Oaxacan teachers and their supporters have been engaged in a hard and protracted class battle, the likes of which hasn't been seen in Mexico in several decades. On June 14, the governor sent an army of 3,500 riot police to evict strikers camped out in 52 blocks in the heart of the state capital. The repressive forces let off repeated volleys of tear gas (and rifle fire), burned the strikers' tents, invaded the teachers union headquarters, destroying the strike radio station, and brutally beat anyone they came across. But after a tenacious struggle, tens of thousands of teachers retook the city center.

Two days later 300,000 people marched in solidarity with the teachers. Ever since, the entire city has been in the hands of the teachers and their allies. Police, often masked, periodically sneak into town for nighttime incursions in unmarked vehicles. After one such raid in late August, in which a strike supporter was shot to death by a marauding "caravan of death," more than 500 barricades were thrown up all around Oaxaca city. The city hall, state legislature, supreme court and governor's office are all occupied, as well as several radio stations and the state government's TV channel.

Upon receiving phone reports from our comrades of the Grupo Internacionalista in Mexico about the bloody June 14 cop attack on the striking teachers, the Internationalist Group in New York called an emergency protest outside the Mexican consulate on an hour's notice. The IG initiated a second demonstration at the consulate the following day which was joined by a large contingent from the PSC. Photos of that demonstration were published in the Mexico City daily *La Jornada* and in *Noticias* in Oaxaca, the widely read daily newspaper which



Members of the PSC at the City University of New York protest repression against Oaxaca teachers, 16 June 2006.

Internationalist photo

is supporting the teachers.

Over the next two and a half months, militants of the Grupo Internacionalista were in Oaxaca almost constantly, distributing thousands of leaflets to the strikers and talking of the need for a national strike against the murderous government, the formation of workers defense committees and fighting to forge class-struggle unions to break the stranglehold of the corporatist "unions" which for decades acted as labor police for the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party). A particular focus was the GI's call to break with the popular front around the bourgeois-populist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) led by presidential candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador, widely known by his initials AMLO.

This was a key issue among the teachers, since after saying for a month that they would boycott the July 2 elections, the union leadership and their allies in the Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca (APPO) ended up calling for a "punishment vote" against the hated PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) of the bloodthirsty governor Ruiz, which ruled Mexico for 70 years and was still in power in Oaxaca, and against the right-wing clericalist PAN (National Action Party) of Mexican president Fox. This popular-frontist appeal amounted to a call to vote for AMLO and the PRD, which 46 percent of the voters in the state did. At the end of July, supporters of the Grupo Internacionalista held a video showing of the film "Land and Liberty" about the Spanish Civil War and forum on the popular front which drew several dozen strikers.

In August, a youth leader of the GI addressed a mass meeting of 1,500 strike supporters in Oaxaca called by the APPO, declaring that there would be no "democracy" under capitalism for the poor and working people, women and indigenous peoples, denouncing the role of the PRD, and calling for a revolutionary workers party. As PRD supporters attempted to shout him down, our comrade held his ground, while a number of teachers called out to "let him speak." In the end he got more applause than a PRD senator. Striking teachers crowded around to see photos of



Oaxacan teachers view photos of NYC teachers demonstrating in their defense, 16 August 2006.

the June 14 and 15 protests in New York City and effusively asked IG supporters to convey their thanks to NYC teachers for their solidarity. 198 copies of a new issue of the Mexican edition of *El Internacionalista* were sold as strikers lined up and called out for copies.

The struggle of the Oaxaca teachers figured prominently in a Grupo Internacionalista forum on “Mexico: Bourgeois Elections and Workers Blood” and “Revolution and Counterrevolution in the Post-Soviet World” held in the Leon Trotsky Museum in Coyoacán (Mexico City) on August 19, the eve of the anniversary of Trotsky’s murder there by a Stalinist agent in 1940. Starting in late August, supporters of the International Group back in New York began agitating and working with activists of the PSC and UFT, to build a labor protest of solidarity with the embattled Oaxacan teachers. UFTers to Stop the War was among the initiators of the demo. Although the union tops refused to endorse, many individual members enthusiastically did.

The IG had a stand at the annual West Indian Day Parade in Brooklyn on September 4, selling copies of *The Internationalist* with several articles on the hot struggles in Mexico. A well-attended forum was held by the Hunter Internationalist Club on September 7 showing a just-completed video produced by the Internationalist Group on “Class Battles in Mexico” (copies of the video are available for sale). On September 9, several hundred leaflets calling for the protest along with a fact sheet on events in Oaxaca were distributed and dozens of endorsements for a protest gathered at the Labor Day parade, despite the wretched Democratic (and in some cases Republican) politics of the pro-capitalist union tops.

On September 14, a “report-back” meeting was held at the City University Graduate Center, sponsored by the Association of Latino and Latin American Students and endorsed by the PSC, CUNY Internationalist Clubs and the Doctoral Students Council. In a room packed to overflowing with more than 60 people, CUNY faculty who recently were in Oaxaca recounted the struggle there and segments were shown from a video shot and being edited by

Professor Tami Gold of the Hunter Film Department. After the presentations there was a lively debate with more than a dozen speakers in the audience over the role of the PRD, the nature of the corporatist “unions” in Mexico and the need for solidarity action in the United States.

On September 17, flyers were distributed and 50 copies of *El Internacionalista* sold at the Mexican Independence Day festival in New York. As momentum built for the picket, an IG spokesman gave an interview on WBAI radio emphasizing key aspects of the struggle in Oaxaca, including the important issue of racism against indigenous peoples. The Hunter Internationalist Club held a sign-making session making dozens of signs. In Mexico City, the Grupo Internacionalista held a forum on the teachers’ struggle, with students who traveled from Oaxaca speaking, at the CCH-Sur preparatory school which was attended by over 100 students. Meanwhile, in Brazil, supporters of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brazil, section of the League for the Fourth International, were pushing for the teachers union there to demonstrate support for the Mexican strikers. In all three countries, the Internationalist video was shown.

These intense efforts prepared the way for the successful September 21 protest. At the picket, an Internationalist Group leaflet was distributed with an update from Mexico on the “Threat of Heavy Crackdown in Mexico.” At the end of the hour-long protest, the crowd was addressed by a number of the participants. An executive board member of TWU Local 100 spoke of the battle for the right to strike and against the union-busting Taylor Law, after which demonstrators again chanted to fight for the right to strike. A prominent member of the PSC spoke of how teachers in Oaxaca had inspired teachers in New York, and of the need for the working class to become active against the war. Protesters chanted “For workers strikes against the war!” and “Defeat U.S. Imperialism!” An activist from the UFT told how the consulate refused to receive the letter from the NYC teachers union, with 150,000 members, against the repression in Oaxaca.

There were also speakers from Grassroots Haiti, the CUNY Internationalist Clubs, the International Socialist Organization, the League for the Revolutionary Party, Progressive Labor Party and the Spartacist League. The speaker from the Internationalist Group emphasized that the key issue is revolutionary leadership: the Oaxacan teachers have certainly shown tenacity and courage, and have massive popular backing, but the strike is undercut by the leadership’s support for the PRD, many of whose members have been scabbing on the strike and whose legislators are now calling to bring in the Mexican federal police to dislodge the strikers. The fight against massive poverty, to defend immigrants’ rights, to defeat the imperialist war on Afghanistan and Iraq, both in Mexico and the U.S., require the leadership of a revolutionary workers party.

The demonstration ended with vigorous chants to fight for the right to strike, denouncing death squad repression, and proclaiming “¡Viva la huelga de los maestros oaxaqueños!” ■

The Bourgeois and the Communist Labour School

On the Class School

By Anatoli Lunacharsky

Introduction by *The Internationalist*

When the Bolshevik party took power at the head of the soviets (workers councils) in Petrograd in the October 1917 Russian Revolution, they undertook the construction of the first workers state in history. This signal event unleashed an unprecedented outpouring of cultural creativity. Revolutionary new schools of art flourished, modern architecture was born. In the sphere of education, the Bolsheviks' determination to spread literacy to the predominantly peasant population, and to make the workers masters of industry and the state, led to a vast development of pedagogical innovation. After the devastation of the Russian Civil War (1918-21), educators from around the world traveled to Soviet Russia to observe its schools at work. The main architect of this enterprise was Anatoli Lunacharsky, whose lecture is printed below. Lunacharsky held the post of People's Commissar of Education from 1917 until 1929.

The centerpiece of the Bolsheviks' educational policy was the *unified labor school*. Its aim was to provide a common education for the entire population. Until then, schools in Russia and throughout Europe were rigidly divided along class lines. In the semi-feudal tsarist empire, the vast majority of the peasantry was illiterate; peasant children at most received a couple of years of primary schooling, the offspring of urban workers a little more. Workers and peasants were largely excluded by heavy school fees and other discriminatory measures from any form of secondary education (high school), which, imitating Germany, was sharply divided between the classical *gymnasia* (academies for the sons of the aristocracy where students learned ancient Greek and Latin), and a limited number of *realnoye* schools, where future members of the technical intelligentsia learned science and modern languages. Under the soviets, all children would receive primary and secondary education in unitary schools.

The Bolsheviks sought to break down the division between intellectual and manual labor, and to end the divorce of "book learning" from actual life. Children went out of the classroom to the countryside, visited factories and reported back on their experiences. As Lunacharsky explains in this essay, the form that this took varied according to the age of the pupils. By the time they reached the end of secondary school, the young men and women would have a general polytechnical education including exposure to different forms of agricultural, industrial and craft labor. This laid the basis for more specialized professional/technical training and higher education. The concept of linking education to experience of social labor was not new: various exponents of "progressive education" in the United States, such as John Dewey, had long advocated this and applied it in small experimental schools. But never before

was this undertaken on a comprehensive, national scale. Reports from Soviet Russia spoke of enormous enthusiasm for the new system, although it meant more work for the teachers.

A third revolutionary element was a dramatic change in school governance. No longer was the school director (principal) a little dictator, with absolute power over students and teachers. Instead, a system of teacher-student-worker-parent control of elementary and secondary schools was instituted. Students at every level would elect classmates to a committee which together with the teachers and school administrators, as well as representatives of the school staff workers, parents and the Communist Party, would design the school curriculum and organize activities. Questions of discipline were handled in the first instance by the students themselves, and since the rules were not imposed by an alien force but by fellow students, such problems were radically reduced. Initially there was considerable opposition to the Bolshevik educational system from reactionary administrators and teachers who were ideological props for the elitist tsarist system. But resistance from those yearning for the old order was quickly overcome by the soviet-type organization, with the active participation of workers and parents.

Virtually every 20th-century social revolution produced a drive to spread literacy to the countryside and the urban poor and working people. But a distinguishing characteristic of the Bolshevik Revolution was the massive program of worker education. This was not just training in reading and writing or low-level vocational education, as some Western educators mistakenly thought when visiting the Soviet Union. The *rabfaks* (*rabochikh fakul'tet*, or Workers Faculty) were set up in 1919 to prepare workers for university-level education. In a workers revolution such as Russia's, there was an urgent need to prepare worker specialists to manage factories and government departments, as well as to "proletarianize" the institutions of higher education. But following the usurpation of political power in 1923-25 by Iosif Stalin at the head of a growing privileged bureaucratic layer, the *rabfaks* were increasingly marginalized and eventually shut down in 1940. No longer did the educational system serve to form worker communists who would revolutionize society; instead it became another cog in the bureaucratic machinery.

Founded on the program of international socialist revolution, Soviet Russia was intended by its leaders, Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, as a beachhead for a proletarian upheaval that would spread throughout Europe, raise up the colonial and semi-colonial peoples and reverberate in America and Asia. In proclaiming the anti-Marxist, nationalist conception of "building socialism in one country," Stalin sought to "peacefully coexist" with imperialism and conciliate domestic reaction, which ultimately prepared the way for counterrevolution. Much of the groundbreaking educational work in the early years of Soviet

rule was limited and deformed by the betrayal of the revolutionary program by the Stalinist bureaucracy. (Even so, the schools of the Soviet degenerated workers state were capable of enormous achievements, such as training the engineers who made the “Sputnik” space vehicle possible and breaking the U.S. monopoly of atomic and hydrogen bombs.) In countries like China or Cuba, where the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism was bureaucratically deformed from the outset, the revolutionary educational efforts (often with impressive results, such as the Cuban medical system) were in the service of producing a bureaucratic elite.

Another unique development in the young Soviet workers republic was the workers clubs. These were to be centers of culture, recreation and education, with reading rooms, conference halls, theaters and sports facilities. A few handsome modern workers clubs were designed by leading architects (such as the Rusakov Club by Konstantin Melnikov, or the Zuev Club by Ilya Golosov) and actually built. In a society in which economic and social advance depends on the creativity of the working class in power, talk of “continuing education” and “lifetime learning” could have real meaning rather than being empty phrases for minimal tax deductions. Trotsky devoted a speech to the Second All-Union Conference of Cultural Workers to the importance of workers clubs, stressing:

“The club is a bridge from the everyday life of the working man or woman to the life of the citizen, that is, to conscious participation in the constructive work of the state, the party, or the profession to which they belong. But the club does not toss aside the working person who has already joined in on the work of the collective through a trade union, soviet organization or the party. It helps such already awakened persons to raise their civic and revolutionary qualifications still higher. If the club can be called a school, it is a school of civic awareness, a school for heightening one’s qualifications as a citizen.”

—L.D. Trotsky, “Leninism and Workers’ Clubs” (July 1924), in *Problems of Everyday Life* (1973)

Trotsky insisted, “Not one bit of coercion! Not even a hint of coercion! No order-giving! Not even a hint of order-giving!” in the workers clubs. Yet the bureaucracy functioned precisely through coercion and order-giving, and the workers clubs soon saw their emancipatory functions sharply curtailed. But not entirely eliminated—right up to the counterrevolutionary wave that engulfed the Soviet Union and the East European bureaucratically deformed workers states in 1989-92, workers there enjoyed cultural benefits that they lost with the return of capitalism.

Anatoli Lunacharsky was a contradictory figure. A member of Trotsky’s Mezhrayonka (Inter-District Committee) prior to the



Anatoli Lunacharsky, to the left of Lenin (center), inaugurating monument to “Liberated Labor” on May Day 1920.

fusion with Lenin’s Bolshevik Party in mid-1917, arrested in the tumultuous “July Days,” he vacillated over the October Revolution. He overcame his hesitation to become commissar of public education amid the destruction caused by the imperialist world war, subsequently intensified by the devastation of three years of civil war. In the depths of that cruel battle against the counter-revolutionary White Guard armies and imperialist invaders, with food and fuel scarce, Lunachevsky kept the museums, libraries and theaters heated and open to the public. Later he became a patron of the Proletkult grouping that was sharply criticized by Lenin and Trotsky for its anti-Marxist conception that a distinct “proletarian culture” would arise in the dictatorship of the proletariat, which as a transition between the capitalist society and the socialist society of the future lacks a material base to generate its own characteristic culture.

In his obituary of Lunacharsky written in January 1934, Trotsky remarked that the founder of Soviet education deserved the credit for “reconciling the patented, diploma-bearing intelligentsia to Soviet power.” But he noted severely that the “commissar of enlightenment” also showed a congenital softness: “His steadfastness was very – it seemed to many of us, excessively – elastic.... As a politician, too, his glance wandered right and left.” Lunacharsky was rather chaotic organizationally, which was overcome by backing him up with capable organizers. Having run afoul of Stalin by publishing a book of *Silhouettes* of leaders of the October Revolution which failed to even mention the future *vozhd* (Leader), he soon compliantly subordinated himself to the new master of the Kremlin. Despite his weaknesses, the Bolshevik educational policies which Lunacharsky put forward (explained in the essay reprinted here) revolutionized education. They laid the basis for stunning achievements of Soviet technology (despite the dead hand of the Stalinist bureaucracy), and were vital for the survival and development of the first proletarian state in history.

On the Class School

Lecture by Anatoli Lunacharsky delivered on 20 April, 1920 for the branch of the Commissariat for Education at the Sverdlov University, the institution of higher learning of the Communist Party. The text is taken from the Progress Publishers (Moscow) 1981 collection of Lunacharsky's translated speeches, On Education.

In a class society everything that the state does has a strictly class character.

There are two dominant opinions on the state: that put forward by the liberal bourgeoisie, and that held by Marxists.

The liberal bourgeoisie asserts that the state is the organization of order. While not denying that separate classes exist in present-day society, and that they may fight against one another, the liberals say that the state and its laws stand above classes and have the duty to see that these classes do not, in the course of the strife between them, destroy the general unity. It guards justice, and at the same time sees to communications, hospitals, schools – those sides of life, in short, which are essential to everyone and which therefore come under the charge of the common body, the highest body of a social character – the state.

The liberals consequently demand that the state itself should depend upon parliament, elections to which are free, so that each class may send its own representatives there. In this way parliament is in their opinion a reflection of the relations between forces within the country.

This theory of the state as a compromise, as a contract wedding together the differing classes in a society, gets some reinforcement under a democratic parliamentary regime. Yet this theory is quite incorrect. In fact the reality does not fit into it. In fact the state, as many suspected before Marx, and as Marx quite definitely and precisely demonstrated, is the organization of the government of the ruling class, and no more.

The ruling class is a minority exploiting the majority, living on the labour of the majority, and having to control land, equipment, stock, and its own workers. It can exert this control only by creating a vast machinery of force, and all states in the world have armed forces and police forces which are at the service of the ruling class, and which put a stop to any attempt on the part of the majority to reach out to the huge property in the hands of the minority, employing the cruellest reprisals to herd the majority back into obedience.

It was so in the slave-owning state, where the slave-owner was armed and the slaves were not, where the slave-owner had men of his household ready at his command to overpower the slaves should they dare to rebel. And it is so in the most refined democracies, where the labour movement's protests against exploitation evoke judicial reprisals or outright punitive expeditions, even in Britain, even in America, even in Switzerland. (Not long ago the Swiss police shot down workers in the streets of Zurich.)

The principal object of every state is to ensure the domination of the ruling class. But as the majority starts to acquire education and organisation, when there is a proletariat already thinking in political terms and a petty bourgeoisie indulging in

radicalism (that happens where the big bourgeoisie is either close to power or has already taken power into its hands, where there are good communications, where there is a certain level of capitalist development), then the big bourgeoisie finds itself unable to establish an order of things whereby power belongs to it without conditions and without disguise. It has tried to do this by operating the so-called property-qualification form of government, which only admitted rich people to parliament. But this was difficult, this was obvious to mature democratic sections (even among those who owned property), which became restive; there was even fear of revolution. So for these reasons there has been introduced by the bourgeoisie (sometimes quite voluntarily) the ingenious machinery of universal suffrage, which appears to give political equality to all citizens, but at the same time ensures that power remains with the rich.

In America, Britain and France universal suffrage exists; these are the democratic countries (democracy means "the power of the people"), but the vast majority of the people there live a beggarly life, while an insignificant minority owns the factories, mills, mines, houses, properties of vast extent, and lives in imposing luxury. And these are the models of the democratic state. And if there should appear people who say that the machines, and the buildings, and the land should all belong to the people, and only then will there be people's power, those people are seized and put in prison, their newspapers are closed down – in a word, such teachings are met with cruel repression.

This cannot be achieved by force alone. Of course, the bourgeoisie can be better armed than the workers, but at this stage of development the bourgeoisie is obliged to maintain very large armed forces. Both to deal with the country, which is large, with the large numbers of people in revolt, and likewise to defend itself against the attacks of other predatory states, a large standing army is needed. So on the military side the bourgeoisie has to rely on universal conscription.

But an army of the people might easily join the rebels. The point is that never, at any time, has the state relied on crude force *alone*. The *principal* means of suppressing the lower orders has been *the sword*, crude force, but alongside this have gone *methods of poisoning the consciousness* of the lower orders of society.

Firstly, one must not give the lower orders knowledge, the masses must remain ignorant; secondly, on the basis of that ignorance one must inculcate in them such views, such a state of mind, that the slave should consider the existing situation quite right, that he should see it as a proper order of things; one must pervert his common sense and make him voluntarily submit to the conditions under which he lives.

Our own writers have depicted a character – the serf or household servant who waits on his master's pleasure like a dog, waits on him hand and foot, who is convinced that God bids him lay down his life for his master. Remember how the soldier used to be convinced that to lay down his life for the tsar was a feat of heroism. You see how people have been tamed, brought to hand! They were brought to hand so successfully that they became slaves to the marrow and blessed their slavery. This was done with the aid of religious pervers-

sion, through the priests. From childhood upwards, sometimes, they began to fill the heads of subordinates with the idea that this world is not the real world, there is another world beyond the grave, in which everything is different, and which one must know about in order to know how to behave here. Religion most cleverly teaches that the world is so ordered that here the poor man drags out a miserable existence, but so that he may in the next world receive his reward, while if, on the contrary, he should to any extent rebel against fate here, he will suffer terrible torments in the next world.

These ideas have been knocked into the skulls of the peasantry, along with a mass of other prejudices, and thus the peasants, the lower orders, became permeated with this idea.

There is a great monarch in the world, against whom one can do nothing – God, to whom good harvest and bad, the fates of men, life and death, sickness, success and failure – everything, is obedient; all depends on him. He is not your mere earthly tsar, who can put you in prison: on Him depends a man's fate not only while he lives, but the fate of his eternal soul. And what is man's short life on earth compared to that eternal soul? And this great tsar has established the existing order on earth.

Christianity says that it is the poor man whom God loves, that He is on his side. Nobody knows, maybe the rich man will really catch it in the next world, one just has to withstand this brief temptation and obey the rich man in this world. This doctrine is advantageous, of course, to the rich man, and the poor man in his ignorance believes and supports the whole ingenious device. Even in Western Europe we see the same thing: we see vast sums of money being spent by the state (or, where state is separated from church, by "society") to maintain this army of poisoners, darkeners of human understanding, the priests of all sorts.

And the more cultured a country is, the more refined and ingenious Christianity becomes, to remain a sufficiently effective narcotic.

At the stage of development of the more or less civilised state it receives into its hands enormous resources for the poisoning of human consciousness, it gets the national barracks. Universal conscription means that every young man finds himself for a time, in the iron grip of the military machinery. In fact two or three years' military service for everyone is not necessary. War experience has shown that in three months at the most one can produce a good fighting man.

But the young man went to be a soldier for a long time, so that the officer caste and the NCOs can rob him of all will of his own, so that he will be prepared to shoot at anyone when they order him to do so. Under the guise of "patriotic" duty men are turned into dummies, trained to perform tricks, and a man thus trained carries in his soul, not only for the duration of his life as



Propaganda poster, "Books," by V.A. Rodchenko (1925)

a soldier, but in afterlife too, the submissiveness, the faculty of being hypnotized by the word of command.

Then the state gets the press, i.e., the ability to disseminate on vast quantities of paper (either as itself, the state, or through the organs of the press which it buys over or maintains) any slander you please, to write whatever you please, to carry on a lie campaign against socialism, to put out a web of gossip, rumour, false news. A whole river of lies runs through the veins of the press, especially in the countries of the West. It penetrates everywhere, literally into practically every peasant's hut, and there does its devastating work. The mercenary newspapers create what is called public opinion. This public opinion, which seeps through into the very midst of the masses of the people, is in the literal sense of the word fabricated. The state says: kindly prepare public opinion thus and thus – and all the papers start to buzz, to a given line; they are believed. Then they have to fight the "alien" press, the socialist press. In democratic republics one cannot just close down socialist newspapers, but even without that the fight against them is comparatively easy. To run a big newspaper you need big money. The workers do not have this, the workers' newspapers are published on a shoestring. Then the bourgeois banks and firms do not give them their advertisements, and in order to sell a paper for one *sou* (penny), as used to be done in France, you must have advertisements, otherwise the papers cannot exist. For this reason the socialist press has in many cases been just a poor relation of the bourgeois press.

Lastly the bourgeois state had yet one more resource – *buying up and bringing over to its side leaders of the oppressed people and the working class.*

From among the workers themselves men are often elected to parliament, men numbered among those who understand this whole mechanism, who start to preach to the masses that they should open their eyes, should look and see that this is not democracy at all, that it is deception all along the line, that with the aid of barracks and press, and bribery, they are being

governed by an insignificant minority that makes their lot in life miserable.

To begin with, such men were simply wiped out by all available means, but later that became impossible, there were too many of them.

Since under a parliamentary regime these men get elected, if they are eloquent speakers, to town councils or the wider councils corresponding to our former *zemstvo* of the *gubernia* (provinces), or in the end to parliament, it is found convenient to buy them off. Such a man is promised all kind of good things, accepted into the club; some of them marry bourgeois girls, suddenly get appointed to high posts, are sold or get given shares in companies. Some workers' representatives give way to these temptations and sell themselves. Some sell themselves completely, body and soul, like a Briand¹, becoming utter lackeys of the bourgeoisie, but still preserving a thin veneer of socialism as camouflage. They mouth all sorts of revolutionary phrases, but put the revolution off a few hundred years into the future, and warn the workers not, God forbid, to follow those who frivolously want to implement socialism now. They become *evolutionary socialists*. They are made ministers. They are able men, and the bourgeoisie entrusts its entire fate to them, makes them the chief helmsmen of the ship of state, because they, veiling themselves in a fog of socialist phraseology, are of more use as politicians than an ordinary bourgeois whose wolfish fangs are too obvious to the people.

They did the same thing here in Russia. As soon as the bourgeoisie attained power in February-April [1917] it demanded that socialists should be made ministers. It summoned up Chernov, Tsereteli, etc.² It set them up as a screen, and they travelled around putting out the fires of revolution like real

masters of the hose-pipe. They served as a blind in every way, while real power was in the hands of the capitalist Konovalov, the landowner Lvov, the banker Tereshchenko.³ We did not have men to whom the bourgeoisie could simply entrust all power, but in Western Europe there are some men risen from the people, like, Lloyd George and Millerand,⁴ who become prime ministers and presidents. Of course they are kept on a short leash.

There are some who only sell themselves partially. Their circumstances become more or less comfortable, they stop hurrying, but in words they remain, apparently, entirely socialist. They go about all the time, they carry on agitation among the workers, they set up organisations, but in reality it is all by arrangement with the bourgeoisie. They say that the goal, i.e., revolution, is nothing, but the way to it, i.e., reforms, are everything. Today working time was cut by half an hour, tomorrow there will be ten kopeks on the wage-rate. This is the reality of "parliamentary struggle." Softly, softly, take it gently. The bourgeoisie is happy to make such concessions. And a huge party, such as the German Social-Democrats, up to and including the most left-wing people, like Kautsky,⁵ finds itself completely bogged down in this parliamentary silt. Thus does the working class lose its leaders.

You see what immense powers the bourgeoisie has, but far from the least important among these is *the school*, which the bourgeoisie also turns into a tool for perverting the consciousness of the masses.

The first task a government of the ruling class sets itself is to keep the lower orders undeveloped, without powers of critical thought. When one thinks of a country like Russia, there right to the very end of the tsarist regime the minister of educa-

Footnotes are adapted from the Progress Publishers 1981 collection of Lunacharsky's translated speeches, On Education.

¹ *Briand, Aristide* – French statesman and diplomat. From the 1880s onwards took an active part in the socialist movement. Elected as a parliamentary deputy in 1902, became a member of the bourgeois government in 1906, and was in consequence expelled from the Socialist Party. Between 1909 and 1931 he held the post of Prime Minister eleven times.

² *Chernov, V. M.* – one of the leaders and theoreticians of the Social Revolutionary party (the SRs). In 1917 was Minister of Agriculture in the bourgeois Provisional Government, and carried out ruthless repressive actions against the peasants. After the October Revolution he was one of the organisers of anti-Soviet revolts. In 1920 he emigrated abroad, where he continued anti-Soviet activities.

Tsereteli, I. G. – in May-June 1917 was Minister of Postal and Telegraphic Communications, and later Minister for Internal Affairs, in the bourgeois Provisional Government. After the triumph of Soviet power he went into emigration abroad.

³ *Konovalov, A. I.* – textile manufacturing magnate in the old Russia, Minister for Trade and Industry and, later, Deputy Prime Minister in the bourgeois Provisional Government. Emigrated after the October Revolution.

Lvov, G. K. – Prince in the old nobility, owner of great landed estates; in March-July 1917 Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Minister for Internal Affairs in the bourgeois Provisional Government. After the October Revolution went into emigration and took part in the organisation of armed intervention against Soviet Russia.

Tereshchenko, I. I. – millionaire, magnate of the sugar industry. In 1917 was Minister of Finance and, later, Minister for Foreign Affairs in the bourgeois Provisional Government. In emigration after 1917, was one of the organisers of armed intervention against the Soviet state.

⁴ *Lloyd George, David* (1863-1945) – English statesman, diplomat,

and leader of the Liberal Party. Member of Parliament from 1890, Minister of Trade 1905-08, Chancellor of the Exchequer 1908-15, Prime Minister 1916-22. "I would call this system Lloyd-Georgeism," wrote Lenin in 1916, "after the English Minister Lloyd George, one of the foremost and most dexterous representatives of this system in the classic land of the 'bourgeois labour party.' A first-class bourgeois manipulator, an astute politician, a popular orator who will deliver any speeches you like, even r-r-revolutionary ones, to a labour audience, and a man who is capable of obtaining sizable sops for docile workers in the shape of social reforms (insurance, etc.) Lloyd George serves the bourgeoisie splendidly, and serves it precisely among the workers, brings its influence precisely to the proletariat, to where the bourgeoisie needs it most and where it finds it most difficult to subject the masses morally." (V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism and the Split in Socialism* [October 1916])

Millerand, Alexandre Étienne (1859-1943) – French politician, in the 1890s joined the Socialists and took the lead in the opportunist wing of the French socialist movement. In 1899 took office in a reactionary bourgeois government, where he worked together with General Galliffet, butcher of the Paris Communards, who was given the post of War Minister. It was this action of Millerand's that gave rise to the concept of Millerandism or "ministerial socialism" – a parliamentary form of political collaboration with the bourgeoisie. In 1904, Millerand was expelled from the Socialist Party; in the period 1909 through to 1915 he occupied various ministerial posts, and from 1920 to 1924 was President of the French Republic.

⁵ *Kautsky, Karl* – one of the foremost leaders and theoreticians of German Social-Democracy and of the Second International. After the October Revolution Kautsky came out against Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Kautsky's retreat from Marxism was laid bare by Lenin in "The Collapse of the Second International" and in *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* also in a number of other works.



Workers clubs in Moscow built in the 1920s: Zuev club (left) for streetcar workers, designed by Ilya Golsov. Rusakov club (right) for employees of Moscow soviet, designed by Konstantin Melnikov.

tion was more of a minister of *de*-education, in Shchedrin's phrase.⁶ If a society wanted to open a school the Minister would not allow it; if a town wanted to have a university the Minister would not allow it: if there was a talented professor he was driven out, abroad: if the students fought for the schools to extend their scientific activities, the students were sent to serve in the army. This was the regular policy of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education was like a department of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The latter Ministry took care that schools should be under its authority.

But even in Russia the Ministry of Finance (which had an interest in balancing the budget, and realised that for this one needed developed capitalism, that without it Russia must fall hopelessly behind other countries, since a noncapitalist country will always be beaten by a capitalist one) insisted on the need to build up the schools, and got into a sharp conflict with the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Finance established its polytechnical colleges, its schools of commerce, on the best West European models. And in truth you cannot keep the people in ignorance if you want to have skilled workers, if you want good shop assistants, if you want a peasant who can read a popular journal on agriculture and improve his farming accordingly.

Countries with general literacy, countries with a good, even if bourgeois, educational system, can have relatively good soldiers, farmers and workers. And when Western Europe became convinced of this it paid concentrated attention to the people's schools.

However, it did not want the people's schools to give the people full knowledge. What good would that do them? They

⁶ The expression of the 19th-century Russian satirist Saltykov-Shchedrin. In his 1913 article "On the Policy of the Ministry of Education," Lenin noted that "The Ministry of Public Miseducation is in essence a ministry of police surveillance, making a mockery of young people and abusing the desire of the people for knowledge."

⁷ The figures quoted by Lunacharsky are actually on the high side. The first universal census of the Russian population, made in 1897, showed that only 3 persons out of 100,000 coming from the rural classes had higher education, and only one out of a thousand had secondary education.

needed training so that they could read and write, but you must have the priest right there to see that they got as much Christian poison as possible fed them at the same time. A man of the people should acquire technical knowledge up to a certain limit, but without any serious scientific training, and the most important thing was to bar his way forward from the narrow sphere of the elementary school to any higher school.

And this was done so skilfully that in Russia, for example, the number of people of peasant and working-class origin who went on from elementary school to secondary school was only a quarter of one percent. One in four hundred might get to a school of a higher level, if someone used patronage on his behalf or if he was the offspring of a rich peasant, etc.⁷

Thus a man from the people receives education for at the most three or four years and is then thrown out of school. If he should succeed in getting any further education at continuation classes in the evenings, that will be only to raise his skill in his trade. It is all done with a view to not letting a man get full knowledge and so too easily turn into a Social Democrat, for instance. This is why in Germany, in France, in England, in all the European countries, there is no way onwards and upwards out of the lower schools. In America it is not quite the same. There the percentage of workers or small farmers who reach higher schools is much greater, 4 to 5 per cent at least. Why is this so? America is not so afraid of men risen from the people. The schools are structured in such a way there that a small percentage of urban workers and of farmers do get there, but the school does its best to cultivate a bourgeois consciousness in them, to give the schoolboy the idea that he should turn away from his own people. And one cannot imagine anything more repellent than these people – ashamed of their parents, ashamed of their comrades in the lower school, because these dress differently, eat differently and are treated differently by the ruling classes. And it is a great point that the German policy of not admitting workers and peasants to secondary school has its disadvantages for the bourgeoisie, because talented workers remain within their own working class,

and for this reason there are very many talented working-class leaders in Germany. Eventually the number of class-conscious administrators and organisers belonging to the Social Democratic party increased to a very imposing level in Germany. America, on the contrary, is cleverer. She has no remnants of feudalism, she makes these men officers in her army, raises them up to be engineers (but meek ones), and if it were not for the emigration which has taken a constant flow of poor folk into the country – from Poland, from Russia, from Germany – there would be absolutely no socialist leaders in America. The socialist leaders there are in most cases Italians, Jews, Poles and Irishmen, who have gone there from Europe. The American of established stock, as soon as he goes to school and it is noticed that he has ability, is trained – to do the right tricks. In school the knowledge imparted is exclusively of a practical nature. There history is taught in the spirit, of “patriotism” and class, there religion is taught and poisons the child’s understanding, after which all the sciences are taught at a crude, basic level, and only for a period of four years. At twelve years old a boy has nothing more to learn, he goes off as an apprentice to mill, factory or workshop, he is pushed out of school, his education is finished.

The bourgeoisie has trouble with the teaching of religion. The famous German pedagogue Paulsen,⁸ for instance, asserts that the teaching of Scripture in school, which is obviously at variance with the scientific lessons given by other teachers, gives pupils a sense of mistrust towards the school. When they have realised that the Bible tales they are told are anti-scientific inventions, the children stop believing the other teachers with their “patriotic” tone and other preachings. This is why, in Paulsen’s opinion, the class school whose task it is to process small humans in the interests of the ruling classes should get rid of its weakest point, that, is teaching Scripture. Another famous pedagogue, on the other hand, Foerster,⁹ insists that all attempts to run the school without Scripture do not come off well for the privileged classes. In no way is it possible, he complains, to convince little peasants and proletarians that they should shed their blood for a homeland in

which they are exploited pariahs. The justice of such an order of things cannot be rationally defended, and only if one brings in the will of God and the idea of the next world can one “patriotically” educate, i.e., in fact poison, the heads and hearts of the pupils. The French, having abandoned Scripture for roughly the same considerations that Paulsen indicates, have tried to replace it by bourgeois civic ethics. The textbook of these ethics, according to Buisson,¹⁰ who is a radical and no socialist, is the limit of idiocy.

Thus bourgeois political thought tosses and turns: with the priests you get stupidity, but without the priests you cannot get by: education really does become a more and more difficult matter. The cultural level has already risen high enough for it to be hard to lead a little German or Frenchman by the nose. He is beginning to use his own eyes to look at everything, hence the crisis in the schools.

How can one manage things so that the schools send out loyal subjects who will go off without question to die for the prison in which they are exploited? It is a difficult problem.

But do not think that matters are any better when it comes to the secondary school. In Western Europe the secondary school was organised in such a way that children of the same age as those in the elementary schools started to attend it, but these were children of the bourgeoisie. So that poor children should not get in, fees were set high. They are fee-paying schools, and the fees are such that, a worker has no possibility of paying them; there are some free places, so that children from petty-bourgeois families can get in. Here we find put into practice the slogan proclaimed by D. A. Tolstoi, that, high school is no place for the children of cooking women¹¹ – this is a slogan common to all the bourgeoisie. The principal product of schools is officers for the various services – whether this is the army, or industry, or bureaucracy in general; here we have the mass on which capital relies as on *its very own*, these are *its assistants*, there to govern the rest.

When a government is very rotten, when it is behind the times, when it is a monstrosity, as it was in Russia, then such a government displays the greatest possible distrust of even its own officers. When the intelligentsia is in every respect repressed, when the country is kept in such a state of ignorance, of barbarity, that a doctor cannot earn a living although there are no doc-

⁸ Paulsen, Friedrich – 19th-century German philosopher and educator who sought to educate the human being as part of the social whole, using data of scientific research and more active teaching methods. Lunacharsky is referring here to Paulsen’s *Pedagogics*.

⁹ William Foerster – 19th-century German theologian and philosopher who based character formation on Christianity.

¹⁰ Buisson, Ferdinand – French educator and public figure; appointed by Minister of Education Jules Ferry as director of elementary education in France in 1879, a position he held until 1896. A member of the bourgeois Radical Socialist party, in collaboration with the colonialist Ferry, he helped draft school reforms providing for free education and exclusion of religion from school curriculum (*laïcité*).

¹¹ The circular “on the children of cooking women” was issued in 1887, raising fees for secondary schools. It recommended a purge of pupils, “without due regard” to existing rules and regulations, and required school administrators to give “a firm refusal” to any requests from “persons without means or without sufficient means” for their children to be accepted in classical secondary schools. “Given unwavering application of this rule,” the circular noted, “the *gymnasii* and their preparatory departments will be spared the presence within them of the offspring of coachmen, footmen, cooks, washerwomen, small shopkeepers and suchlike persons, whose children it is not at all desirable – with the possible exception of those gifted with special abilities – to bring forward out of the sphere of life to which they belong.”

Lenin on Capitalist and Socialist Education

“One of these bourgeois hypocrisies is the belief that the school can stand aloof from politics.... The bourgeoisie themselves, who advocated this principle, made their own bourgeois politics the cornerstone of the school system, and tried to reduce schooling to the training of docile and efficient servants of the bourgeoisie, of slaves and tools of capital. They never gave a thought to making the school a means of developing the human personality. And now it is clear to all that this can be done only by socialist schools, which have inseparable bonds with all the working and exploited people and wholeheartedly support Soviet policy.”

– V.I. Lenin, Speech at the Second All-Russian Conference of Internationalist Teachers (January 1919)



Posters from Soviet literacy campaign: (Left) "Books Are the Source of Knowledge. Citizens, Protect the Libraries" (1919) by Nikolai Kupreyanov.

(Right) "The Illiterate Man Is Like a Blind Man" (1920) by Aleksei Radakov.



tors, that writers live in Siberia and are forbidden to write although there are no journalists available – then it is only natural that the intelligentsia too should be against the government. This is a feudal, landowners' government. Its mistrust of high school is expressed in the fact that only the Black Hundred¹² men get appointed heads of high schools (*gymnasii*). Textbooks and other books of colossal stupidity are produced, and the vast majority of educational establishments are so organised that they are of no use whatever even to the state. Pride of place goes to the dead languages. Once upon a time these dead languages, Latin for instance, were very important. Once in a Europe that was Catholic throughout writers wrote all their books in Latin; Englishmen, Italians and Poles all wrote in Latin. It was the international language of those days.

Today Latin has lost all importance. Utterances to the effect that the worlds of Greece and Rome can be studied only using the dead languages are just not true. In the "classical" secondary schools somewhere in the background you find the history of culture, falsified and distorted, and taught by the history teacher for two or three hours a week, while every day you have grammar, rules and exceptions, drummed into you – all attention is concentrated on the mere form of the language.

The justification produced for this is that it all supposedly forms the mind, that it is good for a child to learn something that bores him, something quite unnecessary to him. A special sort of gymnastic training! In fact it is done to block up the

brain of a person who has no need of grammar, who will forget it all, but who does need to display submissive obedience, to listen and read what he is told. These poor dummies of high school boys sit there in their uniforms not daring to stir, they must answer when called on and keep quiet the rest of the time. Lessons are set from here to here, they have to learn off what is set; all the way it is obedience to orders just as in army barracks. The amount of knowledge they take away with them on leaving high school is minute. The universities and technical colleges, for instance, used to be horrified by the lack of preparation of the human material they were sent.

Those who attended "modern" high school were a bit better, but to make you see the difference between the modern schools and the old high schools I will tell you the following. When Wilhelm II came to the throne [in Germany], he was approached by pedagogues who were in favour of the modern schools, who said, "We need good commercial travellers, we need good captains, we need good book-keepers and engineers. Why the devil do you clutter up our children's minds with Greek and Latin? We categorically demand to be given useful schools." And Wilhelm, who had imperialist aims in view, in consequence of which Germany is now brought to ruin, Wilhelm took the same standpoint: one must teach useful things, because Germany needs to extend trade and industry, and in war it is good organisation that wins.

But the dyed-in-the-wool "classical" teachers replied, "Your Majesty, you are about to make a great error. The modern schools will give you, it may be, better specialists in this field or that, but not nearly such good and loyal subjects. If you want really loyal subjects, only a classical education will provide them."¹³

Now this is a perfectly correct statement of the case.

¹² The Black Hundreds (*chernosotentsy*) were gangs of reactionary anti-Semitic thugs set up by the police of the tsarist autocracy in league with the clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church in response to the mounting socialist movement that led to the Revolution of 1905. The Black Hundreds staged numerous *pogroms* against Jewish communities.

¹³ Lunacharsky is quoting from memory Paulsen's book, *A Historical Outline of the Development of Education in Germany*.

Wilhelm just replied that he didn't mind it they were not good subjects, so long as they were a bit cleverer. Later on he repented. At a later period he became a positive opponent of science, to the point of sometimes expelling famous workers in the natural sciences from the universities on account of their political views.

The bourgeois school in America and Western Europe is somewhat better than the Russian version. There the intelligentsia has been reliably bought by the bourgeoisie, so there is no reason to be particularly nervous about letting such an intelligentsia have knowledge. An efficient engineer is well aware that arrangements will be made for him to acquire stocks and shares in the company that he will work for, that he will have a very high salary and will live all the better, the more money he manages to squeeze out of the workers on his employer's behalf. A lawyer, a journalist, a doctor — in the majority of cases these are people who were well and truly bought in advance, in their fathers' time, people who represent a force supporting the bourgeoisie of its own free will rather than under compulsion. For the Russian government, though, the words *revolutionary* and *student* were for a long period synonymous. The government was obliged to wage a continual struggle against the people as soon as it got any education, yet it was not possible to provide no education — officials and specialists were needed. And the Russian government writhed on the horns of this dilemma. But note that as soon as bourgeois freedom arrived in Russia, part of the student body was found on the side of the bourgeoisie, against the proletariat and its ideals. During the Moscow revolution students fired on workers and formed the cream of the White Guard units,¹⁴ because they believed things would be better for them with the bourgeoisie than with the proletariat: "Deuce knows what will go on with the proletariat, they are a rough, ignorant lot, we shall have to take orders from some clodhopper or other; that won't do."

In Europe the secondary schools are more rationally organised, but none the less badly organised, the bourgeoisie simply cannot bring itself to abandon the scholastic approach. The secondary school is best run in America, and we need to look very carefully at how the American bourgeois have arranged the schools for their children. Much of what we are introducing into our unified labour school is a socialist application of methods

made current in the best bourgeois schools in America. But the bourgeoisie is scared to make teaching entirely realistic.

When a science has to be pursued to its ultimate conclusions, every science invariably turns out to be full of socialist tendencies. These ultimate conclusions not only shatter any religious ideas into little bits, they also make it quite unthinkable to defend the bourgeois system. If an intellectual, a real intellectual, a sincere one whose mind is not occupied with thoughts of how much he will be earning, whom he will marry and how he will set up house, but who really wants to be a good doctor or a good teacher — if he devotes himself seriously to his science and thinks it through to the end, he will inevitably become a socialist. For how is a good life to be built? Is it not the natural aim of every thoughtful, socially thinking man to work with others to organise a harmonious life, in which all sides of a man shall find development and in which these developed people shall live in brotherly cooperation one with another for the happiness of all? Such great educators as Rousseau,¹⁵ Pestalozzi,¹⁶ Herbart¹⁷ "and Froebel"¹⁸ "could not fail to approach this task in the light of just such a wide ideal. Science has always pushed people in the direction of socialism, if they were honest and had a broad enough outlook.

The engineer has to pose the question: how to produce as much as possible with the least expenditure of effort, how to organise the economy so that competition does not cause losses? And he will say that first of all one must get rid of capitalism, since competition is an immense waste of resources, since the basic task of technology is to enable man to produce as abundantly as possible while working in conditions as little noxious as possible to himself, and to knit enterprises together into a rational system. An honest doctor will realise that treating illness is a palliative, that the thing of first importance for a doctor is prophylaxis, social and sanitary work. What is needed is good housing, removal of the need to work too hard and proper nourishment, and people will become a hundred times healthier — and only socialism can give all that.

Not a single intellectual who considers his work as a specialist in all its implications can fail to be a socialist. So if he is not to become a socialist one must kill his conscience, make him into a

¹⁴ Lunacharsky is referring to the events of 1917 in Moscow. The action of counterrevolutionary forces in Moscow was supported by organised groups of bourgeois students.

¹⁵ Rousseau, Jean-Jacques (1712-1778) — French philosopher of the Enlightenment, writer and educator. Rousseau's educational philosophy found its fullest expression in the novel *Émile or On Education*. Rousseau was criticising the feudal aristocratic system of education, which crushed the individuality of the child. Considering freedom to be a natural right of man, he advanced the idea of free education, which would bring out all the good naturally latent within the child. Rousseau condemned authoritarianism in education and stressed that one must not train a child to obey blindly. An enemy of dogmatism and scholasticism, he stressed the need to develop children's powers of independent thought and education through work. As a precursor of the French Revolution, Rousseau's humanist and democratic educational ideas had a great influence on the development of bourgeois educational theory and practice in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

¹⁶ Pestalozzi, Johann (1746-1827) — Swiss educator, one of first theorists on primary and pre-school education. Pestalozzi argued that elementary schooling should include all-sided mental, moral, physical

and labor education, aimed at developing pupils power of thinking. He favored schools accessible to the general population.

¹⁷ Herbart, Johann Friedrich (1776 -1841) — German idealist philosopher, psychologist and educator. Herbart saw the main purpose of education as bringing the individual into harmony with ethical ideals, inculcating "moderation" and dependence on higher forces. These conservative elements were used by Herbart's successors to justify authoritarianism in education.

¹⁸ Froebel, Friedrich (1782-1852) — German educator and disciple of Pestalozzi. In 1837 he opened an establishment, "for the play and occupation of younger children" to which he gave the name "kindergarten." A child, in Froebel's opinion, is a growing plant (hence the name "children's garden"); the aim of the kindergarten was to assist the development of natural powers and individual characteristics in children, to satisfy their need for activity in concert with their peers. Froebel carried on active propaganda for the creation of kindergartens, and trained women teachers for work in them. Kindergartens, and the system of *pre-school* education elaborated by Froebel, based upon the idea of all-round development of the child by means of play and exercises of various kind, spread to many countries throughout the world.



Soviet literacy poster: "Our Train. Literary-Instructional Train of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviets" (1920).

being without conscience; but it is not always possible to do this.

In consequence of this, outstanding intellectuals often rebel, and a whole list of famous names, especially in the recent period, have come over to socialism. Middling people are more easily bought, but it is not a bad idea to pull the wool over their eyes first, as a precaution. In the last resort it is still better for them not to know the full truth. Hence falsification and trickery of all kinds. Hence you will find the secondary schools even in Europe keeping to the old style of teaching. You will meet any number of people who have been through secondary school but who cannot give you a sensible account of the simplest production process. Their education has been predominantly literary. The secondary schools of a technical type turn out people with specialist knowledge who are barbarians in every other respect; their graduate knows only his own little part, and nothing about anything else. This is how the secondary school is organised.

What can we, as socialists, offer instead of this class school? First of all we must not have separate elementary (or "people's") schools and secondary schools. Every boy and every girl, whatever family he or she is born into, goes to one and the same first class, to the unified labour school (first stage). Equally, each one has the same right to go on, after completing the four years of the first stage, to the four years

of the second stage. There is one, unified school for all.¹⁹ Of course there is a proviso here: in order to give every boy and girl the right to schooling, we must have more schools, an incomparably greater number of schools than we have now. Until the country's economy gets on its feet the school will remain far from its ideal, for it depends upon the economy. But it does not follow from this that we should not have these ideals before us. Far from it, we must take this sacred obligation upon ourselves.

Matters are worse when it comes to the schools of the second stage, for this second stage is what corresponds to the former classical high schools (*gymnasii*) and modern schools (*realnoye uchilishche*). There are very few of them in Russia, they were introduced purely for the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois intelligentsia; there are so few of them that whereas the primary schools were able to take in 60 per cent of all children, these could not cater for even 10 per cent. We have to increase the extent of the second-level school system ten times over, and second-level schooling requires laboratories, equipment for studying physics, etc., properly trained teachers, and so on. So huge is the task facing our country, it can be tackled only over many years.

What are we doing, then, proclaiming the principle that every child from the first-stage school can go on to the second stage, when we have not the ability to ensure this for all children? We must take the standpoint of transferring the most able. Often the more able child will prove to be the one who has had more preparation, who has better home surroundings and can extend his knowledge more rapidly than the peasant or proletarian child. Therefore it seems to me right, in the highest degree, to give preference to children from the labouring part of the population. We run no risk whatever in this. It is not true that in doing this we shall be transferring slower and less gifted children to the second-stage schools. On the contrary, there is a vast number of talented children among the mass of peasants' and workers' children who previously could not go to secondary school just because their circumstances were worse than those of children with a bourgeois-intellectual background.

We call our school the unified labour school. What does this mean? It means that the bourgeoisie inherited from the scholastic school its "schoolroom" way of teaching, i.e., the school of the book, the textbook, the oral lesson given by the teacher, and the oral answer given by the pupil, who is sitting still at his desk for a given number of hours, the school of the strictly divided time-table and of learning off by heart. We consider this school to have been utterly condemned by pedagogic science. Even bourgeois educators, the best of them, have moved away from this.

The first idea of the labour principle is that the child should perceive the subjects of instruction through labour, i.e., through living, active processes. When a girl plays with dolls she is preparing to be a housewife and a mother; when a boy plays war games he is preparing to be a fighter; children are forever imagining themselves as grown-ups, forever playing at being grown-ups, and by play they are practising what later they will be doing in reality.

¹⁹ In pre-revolutionary Russia, secondary education, to say nothing of higher education, was the privilege of the propertied classes. The October Revolution removed all privileges in the matter of education. In accordance with the directive "On the Universal Labour School in the Russian Socialist Federated Republic," issued on 16 October 1918, a unified labour school providing a nine-year course was created, divided into two levels: the first, for children from 8 to 13 years of age, and the second for those from 13 to 17.

Play is a method of self-education. “Schoolroom” teaching ignores this fact, it says: a child wants to run about – make him sit still; a child wants to make things himself, to occupy himself with something interesting – sit him down to his Latin! In a word, it is a struggle against a child’s very nature. We take exactly the opposite standpoint. We say: the whole task of the kindergarten and of the first years at school is to help children to play usefully! When children dance, sing, cut things out, mould material into shapes, they are learning. Those in charge of them must so choose their games that every day fresh knowledge is emerging, every day the children are gaining something, every day they are able to learn this or that small skill. And all this in such a way as to be interesting for them.

In the first-level school the same trend prevails, but from play the transition must be made to work, in the widest sense of the word; things must be so organised that the children acquire knowledge *while playing, but at the same time working*. Work, after all, is a cheerful thing so long as it does not go too far and produce fatigue; the teachers must help the children to form themselves into groups, must select occupations and direct them towards the acquisition of specific information. They must set particular aims to be achieved, they must give the children prepared material on which to work and reach conclusions. The essence of the new way of teaching is not rote learning, not setting a lesson and asking for answers from it, but going on excursions and walks, making sketches, models, all manner of working processes through which the child himself enriches his own experience.

Let us take, for example, geometry; you say, “Here is our yard: divide it up; on part of it there will be a garden for growing plants, on another places for keeping animals, etc. Let’s do that together.” And the children will start thinking and wondering how the yard can be divided evenly into the parts needed. And at this point you show them simple methods of measuring, surveying – the measurement to plan means surveying. In just the same way, when you go on to three-dimensional geometry you and the children together make and paste up cubes, pyramids, spheres. The child is doing the sticking together himself, he is making these bodies himself, getting acquainted with them at first-hand. “Make a regular cylinder out of this piece of wood.” The child will spoil one piece and then another; let another child give him some help.

Instead of teaching geography from a map, you first go

out and show what a real hill and a real river are like, what a plain is, how one can measure the ups and downs of the ground. Together with the children you make a plateau and a mountain peak out of clay; the whole class can produce a map or their own locality, and later on one of some part of the Republic – the Crimea for instance. This is what is called “teaching through work.” No one can forget knowledge acquired in this way.

Let us take for instance another method, teaching through theatre. The children, for example, are to prepare a show for some school festival, using their own resources. This is a marvellous lesson, an act of group labour! The main point here is that dramatisation is of course a principal element in play. When children play with dolls or at “being” robbers, this

is something very close to theatre! Suppose we are learning about the primitive period of human cultural history. Let’s live for a week in summer as savages, go into the woods, light fires by using flints, cook our own food, and so on. We can live it through in the same way when studying life in the patriarchal family. Let’s act it, and we have something really interesting!

You are studying, say, medieval times, the children have to grasp it themselves: get them to try and describe, to draw, what the relationship was between a guild artisan and his customer, or between a suzerain and his vassal, with the clergy represented too: describe the scene so that the child’s interest is roused; from such a lesson he will take away such an understanding of the Middle Ages that he will never forget, for he has lived through it, it is in his blood.

This kind teaching *through play* is extremely important.

A great deal of emphasis has to be given to drawing, in all this. I am not speaking of aesthetic demands, of teaching artistic skill, but of drawing as a necessary means of communication – like writing, or speaking. He who cannot draw is illiterate. In America a schoolteacher has to draw the whole of the lesson he gives. When he is asked how a caterpillar is formed, he will draw you one straight, away while you watch, and each child has to try and do the same. A pencil or a piece of chalk in a man’s hands, when he is addressing a large audience, is one more organ of his speech. One must be able to illustrate one’s words. Children are out for a walk – have them draw it. There’s such and such a building – draw it. There’s a tree that we haven’t seen before – once you’re home, jot down a drawing of it from memory. As a *croquis* or sketch, draw the house you live in, a plan of how it is built, where the bed stands, where the window is. These sketches and illustrations are exceptionally important things, because



“Women, Learn How to Read!” from *Krasnyi Agitator* (Red Agitator), 1923, by printmaker and teacher Elizaveta Kruglikova.

in life such things will be required a million times. If you have given the children an assignment to organise this undertaking and that, take a sheet of paper, map out a scheme or organisation. The pencil is a draughtsman's tool and as a means of illustration is an absolutely essential item.

Such is the first realisation of the labour principle in the school.

Besides this, the labour school has another purpose also. We cannot turn out literary intellectuals as the former secondary school used to do. The labour school must, teach all to work. That, is, we must, not only pay attention to the subjects of school study being perceived *through work*, but teach the children *work itself*.

Here we find many supporters of this idea, including intellectuals who are disciples of Lev Tolstoy²⁰ they too preach orientation on work. It, is easy to understand this aim not in the Communist sense but in the Tolstoyan. The Tolstoyans believe that a man must be able to build his own stove, bake his own bread, make his own boots, so that he can himself perform all the services he needs, and the better he can do this the less he needs other people. This is a petty-bourgeois ideal.

The Communist system is based upon large-scale industry, on factories and mills. How can you make a man who works in a factory producing straps, say, or nails, do everything for himself when he gets home too! No, we do not want his wife to do the washing, we want there to be one large steam laundry where everyone's washing is done, we do not want him to make his own dinner, we want there to be well-equipped cafeterias for all. The Communist system transfers everything to an industrial basis it aims not at everyone doing everything for himself, but at emerging from the tyranny of petty labour to huge social establishments.

Of course we cannot give all this to the children immediately. Of course petty-bourgeois and peasant households exist in Russia and will continue to exist for a long time yet. And the peasants, so far as they set us their requirements on trade schools, tend towards the craft approach: "You teach my lad so he'll be able to forge horseshoes and make clothes too." We cannot say that today this is already unnecessary. We have to give knowledge of this sort, especially in the countryside, but our basic trend is not in this direction. So when the labour school is often given the character of Tolstoyan doing-things-for-yourself, this is quite contrary to the true socialist idea.

Sometimes you ask children what they have been taught in the last year. They say, "Not much, we didn't have time for lessons." "So what have you been doing?" "We've been do-

ing things for ourselves, every day we carried firewood, got the food ready, peeled the vegetables." Now if children stoke the stove in school it should, maybe, not be done for the sake of "doing it yourself," but in order to discover in practice what combustion means, why wood burns and gives out heat. Through every action, even preparing soup, one can explain the whole world and its laws. But often we do not find any regard for the instructional aspect. We are told, "Well at least they have been taught how to work, they used not to like getting their hands dirty, and now that does not scare them, they carry the slops and everything." This is a purely Tolstoyan approach. The point of the exercise appears not as the production of a true citizen of a Communist republic, but as breaking down in the children or intellectuals the repulsion felt for crude forms of physical labour.

I have heard from not very clever supporters of the unified labour school even the following: every factory in Russia must be productive, so the school has to justify its existence too. One can get the children doing dressmaking or woodwork, sell what they make on the market, or use it for barter, or hand it over to the Council of the National Economy and get money in return, and then the school will cost nothing. This displays utter lack of understanding that a school does not produce goods, but people with knowledge. That is its product. The product is in the knowledge and skills of the pupils, everything else is subsidiary. Of course, children should be accustomed to real work which is actually useful; one must not invent unreal, unwanted work for schools, making little fretwork frames and suchlike, work of that kind is worth nothing. One must think of work children can do with results that are educational. Work in school must be educationally justified, i.e., it must be done in amounts which enable the child to learn, and if a child works and gains nothing, then that is a crime on the part of the school.

Work has no right to exist in school for even one hour, unless through it the child becomes more knowledgeable and more skilled. This does not mean that we should condemn the idea of work being done in first-level schools. On the contrary, the Americans quite correctly are developing the idea that skill in using the hands needs to be developed. So it is very useful if the children of a first-level school have a workshop for metalwork, if they can have some training in woodwork and lathe operation, if they learn how to measure up, set up and make some little thing. To teach children in the first-level school to use simple tools is a good thing. Even "doing things for yourself" can be excellent if it is skillfully guided. Carrying out minor repairs to school premises, or working in a kitchen-garden, or looking after the smaller animals – rabbits, goats – this is extremely important, but care must be taken that the children are not over-tired, and that always observations should be made and experience enlarged. One should not start keeping cows simply for the sake of getting milk – this has in some places led to unfortunate results – but one should help children to acquire, through taking the trouble to look after cows, a whole range of zoological, physiological, technical and veterinary knowledge, etc. – in a word, the maximum amount of information must be extracted.

²⁰ Lunacharsky is referring to the disciples of Tolstoy – a religious, Utopian social trend in Russia at the close of the 19th century, under the influence of the great Russian writer Lev Tolstoy (1828-1910). The Tolstoyans proposed to transform society through moral self-perfecting and teaching "universal love," "nonviolent resistance to evil" and moral purification through physical labour. In an insightful essay, Lenin noted that the glaring contradictions in Tolstoy's works – in which powerful and indignant protest against social falsehood and misery is combined with preaching of submission – were "a mirror of the weakness, the shortcomings of our peasant revolt" (see "Leo Tolstoy as the Mirror of the Russian Revolution," September 1908).

As regards the second-level schools, things are quite different here. At the second stage, starting from age 10-12, we must accustom children to real, technical – accessible to their age-group – large-scale social production in the factory setting. According to our syllabus this is to be done polytechnically, i.e., we are not aiming to turn out by the end of this period – 12 to 16 years of age – a trained craftsman or skilled worker, someone fully qualified to work in a particular department in the metal-working industries or in tanning. We must make it our aim that at 16 a boy should leave school having some idea of what industry is in general, that he should have a clear understanding of the structure of a factory, of a steam engine, of a dynamo, of transmission systems, of the most important types of lathes, of how a factory is divided up into shops and sections, that he should know how the storage and the shipping department operate, how the raw material comes in, how the plant office functions – that he should visualise all these things clearly. He should have worked in all the parts of a factory, maybe only for two weeks in each.

A school comes to a factory, it splits up into groups, goes off to various shops to work, and after a few days the workplaces change over. When the children get back to school they sum up what they have learned by giving reports and by debate; then the teacher brings it all together into a single picture. He will put questions to this pupil and that, and the idea of what that factory is all about will be fixed firmly in their memories. If they already know one factory, they will find it easier when they go to another. The teacher will point out what is the same and what is different, and why. It does not matter if the children do not get acquainted with a great number of different types of production. It is sufficient if they have gained a knowledge of the most important of these. It would be desirable, ideally, for every boy or girl leaving school to have already some knowledge of the metal-working industry, the textile industry, and the chemical industry. These types of production they should be shown.

Our country is backward, there are not many factories and mills. There are some towns which have none. There are many factories not working. We encounter enormous difficulties in this direction, but the chief problem is the lack of training among teachers. If several factories cannot be viewed, then visit one, as an example, and then by reading, through discussion, using drawings, bring out how one sort of factory differs from another. If there are no other places of industry, the railways can be of great help, the study of locomotives and of railway workshops. Large steamships, post and telegraph stations – these can be made use of in small towns. One can utilise any steam-powered machinery, be it a print shop or a power station providing electric light. As the network of factories expands, as we become able to take children to see what they should, to make longer excursions, this will get evened out. During their four years the children will see a considerable number of industrial establishments, and these must not only be visited, but stayed in for a sufficiently long period. Then it will be possible to make this the basis on which all school subjects rest.

The central, basic subject is the history of human culture – how all the forms of human culture have developed on the basis

of the economy. In studying the steam engine you will relate, with illustrations, how this appeared, what there was before it; every lesson will be made very much more fruitful by the impressions the child receives from its acquaintance with industry. Industry is such a rich field, it includes questions of chemistry, physics, health and hygiene, strictly economic matters and those of class and politics also. The teacher only rarely has to tell the story himself, he will say to the pupil, “You look in such and such a book; ask the workers questions yourself; work it out for yourself.” In this way the ability for independent mental activities is acquired. Later you can introduce the giving of reports or papers. On the textile mill in Russia, for instance – how it appeared, when it appeared, and how it is structured. The pupil is to prepare himself to make the report, to collect his material; you must indicate some main threads to be followed up in books, indicate whom he should question; and he himself reads the report. Then there will be discussion of it.

Things must be so set up that the pupil learns nothing by rote, but discovers everything for himself.

Not long ago a talented man who wants to reform a pharmaceutical business was saying to me that one could achieve immense results if one got children to look for certain medicinal plants, using an information sheet, and then to dry these. At one and the same time you are teaching children to look at and understand the characteristics of plants, giving them an excellent lesson in botany, and you are amassing a vast, amount of valuable material for the pharmacist. It is an absolutely correct idea. Let the children know that they are doing independent, useful, needed work. Of course, one must not overtax a child, one must assist him, but let him look, let him search around a little. Then you can say to him that there exists such and such a law, such and such a formula, which will explain a lot to you: now try and make sense of this particular case in the light of this law. Suppose you want to give the children a concept of the air. You draw the child’s attention to the fact that objects fall at different rates, a stone faster, a feather more slowly, while an air-filled balloon goes upwards – now think about it, find all explanation of why this is so. Perhaps he will say that the last object is lighter than air, the second of approximately the same weight, and the first heavier than air. Maybe he will think that it depends on the volume of the objects, but will not be able to give you any other formula, and you will have to give him a lead.

The children must acquire at first through play, and later with an ever-increasing element of work, knowledge of a number of items which must be previously indicated in the syllabus, so that the teacher can at the year’s end check on himself – has he given them all that is needed. He can divide his year into shorter periods with calendar stages. In the period of the first-level school children should learn particular forms of work – carpentry, metalwork, perhaps, and so on. And the sort of thing that went on in progressive bourgeois schools: vegetable-growing and gardening generally, looking after animals, the terrarium, the aquarium – all this is useful during the first level. During the second level we transfer the centre of gravity, as the main things, to technology, but we are producing not specialists, but people who have a knowledge of all technology, more or less. He knows

what industry is in general, and, accordingly, he has received a lively conception of society from the economic and historic point of view, and of the laws of physics, of chemistry and of biology.

Russia, being an agrarian country, can never lose sight of agriculture. For the vast majority of the Russian population the town is something to which they have little access. Although it enters into our plan that country children should at least make extended excursions to towns, this involves difficulties, and it will be rather the town children who make excursions to the country. There are not so many of them, and the countryside is vast. But for those who live in the country the labour school willy-nilly assumes an agricultural rather than an industrial character. Indeed, we shall not have got our labour school properly under way until we have made every village school into an establishment for the study of agriculture.

The country school must be agricultural. Just now I have travelled round not less than thirteen *uyezds* [counties], I have been in Russia and in the Ukraine, and have seen many different schools and talked a good deal with the peasants about schools.

By and large, the peasants are dissatisfied with the labour school as it is today, although in very many cases the teachers, both men and women, are doing their best, to make this idea a reality. But what is the situation? A woman teacher has received, say, Blonsky's book or a pamphlet by Kalashnikov,²¹ she has a fair idea of the industry-based school, but there are no factories, there are no lathes available. How can she put it all into practice? But she has also read that eurhythmic gymnastics is a good thing, that modelling is a good thing, and so is drawing, while a lot of learning from books is bad. So she organises things so that the children study grammar very little, arithmetic very little, but spend an enormous amount of time modelling, drawing, dancing and singing. The peasants are alarmed, and say, "There you are, they took the icons away, they don't teach you what's what any more, they stopped teaching Scripture, now they spend the whole time singing and dancing. It used to be better in the old days – if the kids got a bit cheeky the teacher would give them a good clout, but now it's got so bad that if I raise my hand to my lad he'll say, 'Dad, that's forbidden under Soviet power!' They're going to turn out good for nothing, that's no good to us, we don't want that sort of school and we're not going to feed that teacher."

²¹ *Blonsky, Pavel* – Soviet educator and psychologist. From the first days of Soviet power he played an active part in transforming the schools and in elaborating the theoretical foundations of Soviet thinking on education and psychology. The book by Blonsky to which Lunacharsky refers, *The Labour School* (1919), had a great influence upon the formation of the ideas and principles of the polytechnical labour school.

Kalashnikov, Alexei – Soviet physicist, teacher and educator; worked on problems of educational theory, of the polytechnical labour school, and of teaching method for physics in the secondary school and in higher education.



Lenin leaving the Moscow Higher Women's Courses building after a session of First All-Russia Congress on Education, Moscow, August 1918.

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And in his way the peasant is right. He thinks that as in the good old days a child should be drilled, and beaten, and have the fear of God put into him, and be taught reading and writing, and all the rest is quite unnecessary. These are bad ideas, but it is true, after all, that in the countryside aesthetic schooling is a secondary thing. When I came to one school and saw all the walls covered with children's drawings, and realised that a very great deal of time had been given to this, I understood that it must have a depressing effect on the peasants. The trouble is that the teacher knows little about agriculture and nature and, therefore, cannot teach much to the children, "she can't tell a rake from a shovel," as the peasants say, and so they cannot respect the school.

At the same time, the Russian peasant is terribly ignorant himself on agricultural matters; if the Russian peasant practised the kind of farming you find in Germany, we should have harvests six times the size of the biggest yield you can find in Russia now. And if the scientific methods now used in America were followed, one cannot even foretell the results, as the Americans have got matters so organised that they need neither sun nor rain. They have quite done away with the concept of the bad harvest. They determine what the length of grain should be, and what the number of grains in the ear, for this or that variety of wheat; they change the characteristics of soils by adding various substances or by introducing micro-organisms, and perform real miracles in ensuring a good harvest. Compared to them our peasants are real, genuine savages – but if our schools could give them some help on this point, then they would pay it some respect.

Russian scientific agronomy must reach out its tentacles to the peasantry through the teacher and through the children. For this purpose we are at present doing our best to organise

Communism and Education

In bourgeois society the school has three principal tasks to fulfill. First, it inspires the coming generation of workers with devotion and respect for the capitalist régime. Secondly, it creates from the young of the ruling classes “cultured” controllers of the working population. Thirdly, it assists capitalist production in the application of sciences to technique, thus increasing capitalist profits....

The unified school is not merely the ideal of every advanced educator, but it is the only possible type of school in a socialist society, that is to say, in a classless society or in one that is striving to abolish class. Socialism alone can realize this ideal of the unified school, although certain bourgeois educators have entertained aspirations towards it.

For communist society, the labor school is absolutely indispensable.... A child's first activities take the form of play; play should gradually pass into work by an imperceptible transition, so that the child learns from the very outset to look upon labour not as a disagreeable necessity or as a punishment, but as a natural and spontaneous expression of faculty.

—N. Bukharin and E. Preobrazhensky, *The ABC of Communism* (1922)

autumn and spring campaigns of our own, during which the children will take part, under the teacher's guidance, in the work in the fields, and will get simultaneously a lesson in natural science and a lesson in agriculture. We have to bring teachers together for short courses at which agronomists will give lectures. In the first year of course we cannot do much, but in a few years' time we shall succeed in giving every country teacher a fundamental knowledge of agronomy, in seeing that he or she receives journals on agriculture and builds up a library of books on the subject, and will really be able to tell the peasant something — about the new types of agricultural equipment and how to repair them if they go wrong, and to advise on rational use of fertiliser, and so on. To change the whole peasant economy, to raise it to a new level — that is the job of the People's Commissariat of Agriculture; but if the school can introduce knowledge of this kind into the irrational peasant economy, the peasant will have respect for the school. We have issued directives that every school is to have a piece of land. The teacher needs to develop gradually on that land a model orchard, a model bee hive, and within the bounds of possibility, a model field.

One must add the political dimension. As the resolution of the Eighth Congress of the Party stated, the school must be a source of knowledge, of labour education and of civic education.²²

²² The Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in March 1919, approved a new Party Programme (the first Programme of the Party had been approved by the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Party, held in Brussels and in London in July/August, 1903). The new Programme indicated, among other things: “In the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e. the period of preparation of the conditions required for full realisation of communism, the schools must be not only a means of communicating the principles of communism in general, but also of bringing the ideological, organisational and educative influence of the proletariat to bear upon the semi-proletariat and the non-proletarian strata of the working masses, in order to bring up a new generation capable of finally achieving communism.”

Every village school must be a centre of education not only for the children, but for adults as well, i.e., every school — this is our aim — must have a small bookshop and a library/reading-room, and a small extramural centre where lectures are given for the adult population.

The school must be a centre of propaganda, an agitational centre. As part of the system of school and extramural education it must strive to do one better than the priest, to kill off religious prejudices, to fight the power of the kulak, to combat prejudices of all kinds including those of the Social Revolutionaries; to lay out before the peasant a correct understanding of what the Communist system is, what the Soviet Republic is, what the revolution is and how it happened, what its aims are; to use the newspapers, to use each day's information to carry this propaganda on constantly, both through the children to the parents and to the parents directly.

And then our teachers, who should of course have not 50 or 60 children each under their charge, but not more than 25, will become the bearers of enlightenment to the countryside. And we must not say this with scepticism: it will be so one day. Now is the time we must do this. The most important thing is to set our aims correctly.

The state is in our hands. Yes, we are overcoming our enemies, we shall cope, not at once but we shall cope, with the economic problems. The time will come when the education front will be denoted as the most important front, when the slogan will be “All for Education” — then we shall go forward, and all that I have spoken of will be made fact.

There are some people who say that for two and a half years we have been struggling like mad, and nothing has been done yet. But everything cannot be done at once, here one has to go through definite stages. And to say now that it would be better to be realistic and to go back to the old school — this is the greatest possible mistake.

We cannot retreat from our Communist ideals, even though the realisation of them may be very difficult. Both the peasant and the worker know very well that nothing can be made on the lines of “One, two — and there's your ship.” When the task is a great one — to build a gigantic edifice — one must put a very great deal of labour and perseverance into it, and not complain that the roof is not on when we are only just beginning to lay the foundations.

The Unified Labour School is different from even the best schools of Western Europe. When our *Declaration of the Unified Labour School* was translated into foreign languages, the newspaper *Norddeutscher Allgemeine Zeitung*, a paper which is bourgeois in the highest degree, wrote: “For the first time a government is mapping out a programme for a school genuinely of the people. If the Bolsheviks succeeded in achieving this, then of course they would have a school incomparably higher than in any other country But this is, of course, a chimera, it is of course utopian — they cannot do it”

At that time the bourgeois thought that the Russian Revolution in general was just an episode, an experiment. Only now have they waited to howl about the Bolshevik menace, now they think that it is not all experiment, but a storm on a world scale that may be their ruin. ■

The Basic Principles of the Unified Labor School

By Anatoli Lunacharsky

Among the first tasks of the Soviet power, education was a top priority. A struggle had to be waged to overcome reactionary influences from the previous clerical-monarchist educational system, while at the same time, the efforts to create a new proletarian school were embarking on a journey in uncharted territory. Following discussion at the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik), in March 1919, several documents were written laying out the theoretical basis for "labor-oriented education." As People's Commissar for Education and Enlightenment, Lunacharsky wrote "The Basic Principles of the Unified Labor School" (excerpted here), which became the basic guideline for the Soviet education system in the early years.

Contrary to the stereotypes of a sclerotic, bureaucratized school system in later decades of Stalinist rule, Lunacharsky emphasized here the importance of individualization of education, enabling the talents of each child to flourish, while combatting the individualism that sets one student against another. The key was building strong collectives of students, which were tasked with aiding slower-learning classmates. Another important element was a system of student self-government, as part of the management councils which included teachers, students, school administrators and workers' representatives. Likewise, the formation of student clubs was encouraged with a variety of educational, cultural and sports activities. The contrast between this innovative system and the authoritarian schools of the past, emphasizing rigid discipline and rote memorization, was dramatic.

These revolutionary reforms in education are, it goes without saying, a mass movement for knowledge and education. In this, maybe the most important sphere, the Commissariat for Education must destroy class privilege – and as quickly as possible. It is not just a question of making the present education system available to all, because that was the system of the previous regime and because it was just not good enough for the workers; it is rather a question of a radical reconstruction thereof, in the spirit of a new system which will be truly for all the people....

The new school must be oriented to the principles of labor. For the Soviet state, currently transferring from a capitalist system to a socialist one, this is of course more important than it is for an education system in an advanced capitalist country; nevertheless, even there they have recognized that, to a certain extent, such an education system must be established, and even launched certain practical steps in this direction.

The need to make labor the foundation stone of all instruction rests upon two completely different bases, but the consequences thereof do blend together easily.

The first foundation is a psychological one, and this tells

us that real understanding comes only if the child actively participates in the educational process. Any child yearns for action, yet they used to put him into an immobile state. But when they let him play a joyful and active part in games or in work – and the former can be fully blended with the latter – he can master new knowledge with exceptional ease....

The second foundation by which a contemporary and advanced education system endeavors to enhance the ideal of labor is in the direct desire to acquaint the pupil with that which currently plays domineering role in the education system itself – i.e., with the work on the land and in all branches of industry.

We remember, however, that while we are in no way opposed to specialized technical training for the older child, we are dead set against any special streaming in the lower grades at school, i.e., for those not yet at least 14 years old....

An exceptionally important principle of our renewed school system lies in the fact that it can offer greater opportunities for individual study. This is to say that the teacher must analyze the natural bents and particular talents of every child, and so facilitate a greater accommodation not only of what the school may ask of the child, but also of what it can give him, to the personal requirements of each.

Individualization in teaching, we feel, should be clearly differentiated from the spirit of individualism. The school must try, in so far as it is able, to eliminate from the soul of the child those traits of egoism which man has inherited from an earlier age; instead, in preparing him for the future, it should try right from the start to unite pupils into strong collectives and to develop to the utmost the pupils' aptitude for sharing emotions and for solidarity.

Individualization is not repressed by this. In Soviet culture, the highest value is still the personality of the individual. But a personality's gifts can only be developed to the full in a harmonious and united society of equals. Individualism at school, however, develops a desire to be first in everything and to make use of others, just for oneself. A socialist upbringing is one which combines creating psychologically built collectives with retaining subtle individualization with the result that an individual may be proud of the fact that he has developed his abilities for the service of all. The aim here is not to retard the development of exceptionally talented individuals.

But if this aim should be respected and in no way put to neglect it is even more important to try to decrease, as much as possible, the number of backward children.

In a democratic school, caring for the backward child is extremely important, because in an overwhelming number of cases, backwardness is not due to deficiency of natural abilities, but rather to poor home and social conditions. It is better not to help the exceptionally gifted, while making sure that the

underdeveloped child always get special attention.

Every school shall be duty-bound to set up special classes for the less-gifted children.

The description, even if only a summary one, of the school education satisfying our initial demands would be incomplete without reference to two conditions which are vitally necessary for its development: all schools should be secular and mixed.

There is no point in arguing these two fundamental demands. Suffice it to say simply that these principles absolutely *must* be disseminated among the population. The new-type school will come against widespread and, therefore, seemingly democratic prejudice; nothing can be achieved here by the use of force, but meanwhile, [sex-]segregated schools are fraught with many bad effects. To liberate our schools from the influence of the Church is not only important; it is in fact vital for an overall liberation from submission to the state under which the school was simply a breeding ground of moral vices, such as are called the virtues of slaves.

Wherever they were introduced, mixed schools produced the very best results. "At the moment, they do not try to prove that girls are not as able to do the same work as boys just as successfully," says George Hoyt Whipple, "current experience tells us otherwise. Now they're trying to tell us it is bad for their health."

But it is just as impossible to prove this, since brain power and physical strength vary very much from one male child to another, too. The question of the unequal spread of abilities amongst pupils can be resolved only by the individualization of study, and in this the specific features of the sexes should be kept in mind....

The bourgeois world vacillates between two poles: individualism and loyalty. The former is a requirement of the world of private property and competition; and the latter spells a total submission of the individual personality to the hierarchical and military-industrial machinery of the state.... [W]e shall not forget that each individual has the right to his/her own, personal development.... The stability of socialist society is based neither on a

barracks-like monolith of people, nor on artificial drilling, and nor again on a religious or aesthetic deception; rather, the foundation thereof is a real solidarity of interests.

And that is why we have allowed ourselves the principle of a more profound unity combined with a maximum of variety. Just as we must recognize the importance of individualization in education, so too we can see the greatest task in education to be the creation of a collective spirit in the school, glued by joy and close comradeship...

However important the principle of labor in the development of the child's will-power, character and sense of solidarity, beneficial results in this regard can only be achieved given the correct organization of school life. This, first of all, involves the teachers' fraternal, loving, and respectful attitude to the pupils....

Children should play a full part in the life of their school. For this they must have the right to self-government and be themselves always willing to help. In preparing to become citizens of the state, they must as early as possible learn to feel themselves to be citizens of their own school.

School self-government can be classified in this way:

—firstly, students should participate in the management councils of their schools, in conformity with the rules and regulations given in the Statute on the Unified Labor School;

—secondly, what is meant is self-government of pupils only. In this, we must avoid the typical mistake of the American system, i.e., the fact that they allow little self-appointed tyrants or irremovable oligarchs to be elected by their groups, and such an abuse gets worse, of course, if they are just appointed by the teachers. A class or any other group of pupils must look after all the matters in common. For this purpose, a large number of responsibilities should be founded, which should then be split up into several functions... [P]upils should be given the opportunity to organize any sort of society [club], be it temporary or permanent. Indeed, they should be allowed to set up scientific discussion groups, editorial boards for their own magazines, political clubs, exhibition societies, sports associations, dances, drama groups, choirs, orchestras, and so forth....

Public Education and Democracy

By Nadezhda Krupskaya

While Anatoli Lunacharsky was head of the commissariat and leader of the collective building the Soviet schools, the leading pedagogical figure was Nadezhda Krupskaya, Lenin's close comrade and companion. A revolutionary Marxist from the late 1890s on, Krupskaya endured five years of Siberian imprisonment and later acted as secretary of the Bolshevik faction, coordinating the work of building an underground party in the tsarist empire. At the same time, during ten years of exile in Europe, she undertook a study of educational reformers from Robert Owen, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Leo Tolstoy to Comenius, J.H. Pestalozzi and John Dewey, and in 1915 wrote a booklet titled Public Education and Democracy.

The monograph was published in early 1917 when tsarist censorship still held sway. In a 1920 preface, Krupskaya wrote

that she would have preferred to title it Public Education and the Working Class. In that preface (excerpted below), she traces the origins of the idea of labor education.

In this essay, author's aim is to investigate how in a democratic milieu the perspective took shape of the need to unite productive labor with intellectual development in the sphere of public education.

This viewpoint arose at a time when large-scale industry began massively employing and exploiting child labor. In the 17th century, the English writer John Bellers was the first to call

¹ John Bellers (1654-1725), a Quaker and author of "Proposals for Raising a College of Industry of All Useful Trades and Husbandry."

attention to the need to combine learning with productive labor.

In 18th century and at the beginning of the 19th, this concept found its defenders not only in England but also on the continent. Rousseau ardently defended this idea and his stand on the issue received an enthusiastic response in France, Switzerland, and Germany. In France, the National Convention sought to realize the idea through legislation², while in Switzerland the ardent democrat [Johann] Pestalozzi devoted his life and all of his possessions to demonstrating in practice how productive labor can be used in popular education. In the name of workers democracy, Marx and Engels put forward this idea from the 1850s on, developing and giving it a scientific basis. In *Capital*, Marx shows how technological progress itself creates the need for a highly trained, polytechnically educated worker with multiple skills.

However, the idea of uniting the intellectual development with the physical development, of joining together conventional learning with productive labor, advocated by thinkers of the 18th century, as well as their experience in that regard, were soon forgotten. This was because during the first three quarters of the 19th century, capital required only simple, unskilled labor, which did not demand of the worker initiative, intelligence, knowledge and agility. The voices of democrats demanding all-sided public education, based on combining broad intellectual development with preparation for the most diverse kinds of physical labor, remained a voice crying out in the wilderness. It is true that the number of the public school was growing, yet these were the conventional schools, where physical labor was excluded and which only taught reading, writing and arithmetic. They mainly focused on bringing up well-behaved, obedient workers. In the 20th century, tremendous technical progress has given rise with particular force to a new tendency of modern technology: vigorous machine labor. There is a growing demand for an well-rounded educated, skilled workers, who can quickly adjust to constantly changing and evolving machinery and production processes.

Of course, this tendency was found at first in the most industrially developed countries: America and Germany. Leading capitalist countries begin to pay particular attention to the development of workers who are well-prepared for labor: they organize all sorts of professional schools, evening courses, etc. As the demand for educated workers grows, they try to

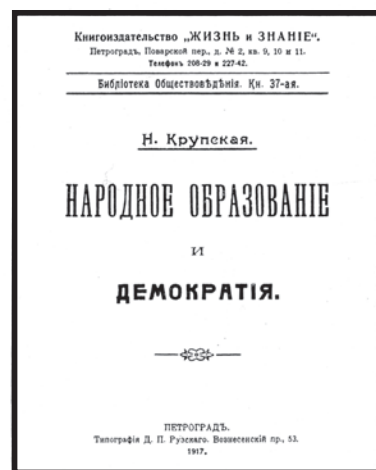
convert the technical into conventional learning, they begin to combine it with the basic education, and with that purpose they reform public education. In America, and lately in Germany, conventional schools are being converted into so-called “labor schools” (*Arbeitschule*). Labor schools, however, cannot be built on the

principals of conventional schools. It requires the fostering of initiative in its pupils, the development of individuality in its pupils. Repression of the pupil’s personality, external discipline, is hardly compatible with the tasks of the labor school. New methods demand a completely new teaching staff. A teacher used to holding onto routine and waiting for the instructions for every step is useless for such a school. Labor schools requires a living relationship to them, they require individualization. Old forms of control become impossible to achieve. It is necessary to have self-management on the part of the pupils, control by the population. But not only control by the population is needed, the widest cooperation is required. Labor schools presuppose a close relationship between learning and production, and this is not possible without the involvement of the working people and their organizations in the task.

Economic development strongly demands the transformation of conventional schools into labor schools, but such a transformation is not possible without reorganizing the whole sphere of the public education.

But at the end of the essay, Krupskaya concludes:

As long as the organization of schools remains in the hands of the bourgeoisie, the labor school will remain a weapon aimed against the interests of the working class. Only the working class is capable of making the labor school into “a weapon of transformation in a modern society”.



Concerning the Question of Socialist Schools

By Nadezhda Krupskaya

Krupskaya's investigation laid the basis for the revolutionary educational program implemented by the Bolsheviks following the 1917 October Revolution. In the essay excerpted here, published in 1918, she emphasized the need not merely to

extend education to the masses previously excluded from access to culture by the bourgeoisie, but to transform the schools to serve the interests of the working class. Attempts at curriculum reform in the interest of the exploited and oppressed or to democratize the educational system will be frustrated so long as the capitalist rulers hold sway. It will take a socialist revolution to make thorough-going educational reform a reality.

² In the period from 1792 to 1795, at the height of the French Revolution, the National Convention established a system of polytechnical education and a national teacher training institute.

In a bourgeois state – whether it is a monarchy or a republic – the school serves as an instrument for the spiritual enslavement of broad masses.

Its objective in such a state is determined not by the interest of the pupils but by those of the ruling class, i.e. the bourgeoisie, and the interests of the two often differ quite substantially.

The school's objective determines the entire organization of school activities, the entire structure of school life and the entire substance of school education....

In serving the interests of the masses the government of workers and peasants must break the schools' class character and make schools at all levels accessible to all sections of the population. It must do this not in words but in deeds. Until the objectives of schools are changed education will remain a class privilege of the bourgeoisie. The population is interested in ensuring that elementary, secondary and post-secondary schools serve a single objective, namely, the education of comprehensively developed people possessing conscious and organized social instincts, an integral, well thought-out world view and a clear understanding of everything that takes place in nature and in society; people who are prepared both in theory and in practice to undertake all types of labor, both physical and mental, and who are able to construct a meaningful, rational, beautiful and happy life in society. Such people are needed to a socialist society, for without them socialism cannot be fully achieved.

What kind of schools are capable of molding such people?

First, schools must do everything in their power to improve the health of the younger generation: they should provide children with nutritious food, health-giving sleep, warm and comfortable clothing, hygienic care, clean, fresh air, and sufficient physical exercise. All this is given by the ruling classes to their own children but it should be made available to all children regardless their parents' property status. In the summer schools should be moved to rural areas....

The domestic situation of most of the population is not conducive to the development of children's senses and creativity. This is why it is important to set up an adequate number of kindergartens to accommodate all children. These kindergartens should be organized in such a way as to give scope to each child's individuality. They must not be barracks in which small children are forced to march at the sound of a bell, move at the command of teachers ...

Thus, kindergartens, elementary schools and secondary schools form closely interconnected links in the overall development. The most important distinguishing feature of socialist schools should be that their only objective is the pupil's fullest possible and most comprehensive development. They must not suppress his individuality but only help develop it. Socialist schools are schools of freedom in which there is no room for regimentation, rote learning and cramming.

But as they help to mold individuality, schools must also prepare pupils so that they will know how to express this individuality in generally useful labor. This is why a second distinguishing feature of socialist schools should be the wide development of productive work by children. Much is said today about the labor method of instruction, but in a socialist school it is necessary not only to apply the labor method but also to orga-

nize the productive work by children. Socialists are opposed to the exploitation of child labor, but they naturally support comprehensive, developing labor for children that is within their capabilities. Productive labor not only prepares children to become useful members of society in the future, but also makes them useful members of society today, and a child's awareness of that fact possesses an enormous educational significance....

Socialist schools are conceivable only in specific social conditions, for they are made socialist not by the fact that they are directed by socialists but by the fact that their objectives correspond to the needs of a socialist society. In individual cases schools could emerge in a capitalist society that also set as their goal the education of comprehensively developed people with pronounced individualities and social instincts, who are equally capable of engaging in both physical and mental labor. But in a capitalist system such schools could only be isolated, hardly viable phenomena. As the young man educated in such a school left it, he would encounter an atmosphere that quickly reduced all the fruits of his education to naught. In society built on a division of people into those who engage in intellectual labor and those who engage in physical labor, he would have to choose one or the other type of labor, and his ability to perform "comprehensive" labor would atrophy. Moreover, the choice of a particular type of labor would not depend on him, but on his pocket-book and his social connections. A propertyless person having "connections" only among workers would be assigned to the category of persons engaged in physical labor, regardless of the course his own life had taken, and once having been assigned to that category would have to share the lot of those living by selling their labor. And here his pronounced individuality would only be a hindrance and would make monotonous imposed labor even more onerous, even more unbearable. Strongly developed social instincts were applicable only when the young man was a fighter by nature. In other cases these instincts were only a source of suffering. As for fighters, socialist schools in capitalist societies could produce them only in exceptional cases. Fighters must pass through the severe school of life, while socialist schools embedded in bourgeois systems could be nothing but exotic plants and institutions isolated from life. And since socialist schools could not be viable institutions in a capitalist system, they could at best only be interesting pedagogical experiments. They could only be private institutions, not public, for the physiognomy of public schools was determined by the ruling class, the class of the bourgeoisie, and the objectives that it set were altogether different. In organizing the school system the bourgeoisie proceeded from its own interests and from the desire to ensure its own class domination rather than from the interests of individuals and of society.

Only a people's government can, in organizing schools, proceed from the well-being of the individual and society.... If the characteristic features of the capitalist system were the senseless squandering of manpower and excessive labor on the part of some and the forced idleness of others, then the characteristic feature of a socialist system must be the rational, planned and most expedient distribution of labor among all people and the transformation of labor from forced activity into a voluntary one. ■

New Schools for a New Era

By John Dewey

The following is a chapter from the 1929 book by the American educational reformer John Dewey, Impressions of Soviet Russia and the Revolutionary World, based on a trip to the USSR in the summer of 1928. At the time, the Stalinization of Soviet society was in its early stages, and the heavy hand of the bureaucracy had yet to stamp out many of the liberating initiatives that had been sparked by the 1917 October Revolution. Dewey later chaired the International Commission of Inquiry into the Moscow Trials (known as the “Dewey Commission”) that exonerated Leon Trotsky of the lying accusations hurled by Stalin against the co-leader of the Russian Revolution. But Dewey himself was a bourgeois liberal and an avowed opponent of Marxism, as can be seen in his polemical exchange with Trotsky later published as a pamphlet under the title Their Morals and Ours.

The value of this selection is that it provides a glimpse of what Soviet education in the early years looked like in practice. It also underscores how the social revolution made it possible to realize many of the ideas of “progressive” educational reformers in the capitalist West who had been continually stymied in their attempts to carry out their programs. In fact, many of the Soviet educators’ proposals had come directly from the writings of pedagogical theorists in Europe and particularly the United States, who were grappling with how to adapt schools designed for a narrow bourgeois elite in agrarian society to mass public education in a modern, urban industrial age.

The centerpiece of Soviet pedagogy, the unified labor school, was not a Bolshevik invention but a concept that had circulated among educators for some years. It was derived in part from the universal awareness that classical educational models designed for a cultured (bourgeois) elite were dysfunctional and irrelevant in a system of mass public education to produce an (at least minimally) educated workforce for an industrial economy. A second key element was the principle that knowledge is derived from interaction with the subject matter: we learn about the characteristics of an object by acting upon it. Bourgeois educators arrived at this conclusion empirically, seeing that students gained far more understanding through labor (scientific experiments, field trips, participation in work, etc.) than by sitting through lectures. For Marxists, this is a fundamental part of a dialectical and materialist theory of knowledge.

Yet when educational reformers like Dewey sought to translate their theories into practice, they were blocked, not only by conservative educators wedded to the old ways but by the contradictory nature of capitalism. The ruling class might require workers who could read, write, count and have a basic understanding of complex production processes, but it decidedly did not want workers who had learned that it is possible to change material reality and the social order. The capitalists’ need for educated workers was in conflict

with their need for a docile workforce, and this contradiction lay behind their contradictory attitude toward public education. So in addition to blocking the generalization of democratic educational reforms, in those cases where such reforms were adopted they were often transformed into their opposite. Thus Dewey’s concept of labor schools was turned into systems of narrow “vocational” education in which working-class youth were prevented from gaining broader social and scientific knowledge.

As a result, “progressive” bourgeois educators had tested their theories in isolated experimental schools, but never seen them implemented on a mass scale. As John Dewey visited schools in the young Soviet republic, he marveled at the outcomes of his own and like-minded pedagogists’ concepts. Dealing with issues of school discipline through students’ commitments rather than externally imposed regulations, as part of a system of teacher-student-worker-parent control of the schools; aiding slow-learning pupils by inclusion in collectives where the group would be graded; combining classroom learning with work experience – such innovations which appear almost utopian in a capitalist setting became living realities. They are the polar opposite of current capitalist “educational reform” that undermines the comprehensive school, puts police in the hallways and emphasizes top-down dictatorial “management control” rather than democratic self-governance.

In subsequent years, the groundbreaking innovations of early Soviet education were repudiated as the schools became increasingly regimented by the Stalinist bureaucracy. The passionate debates in the 1920s over pedagogy in journals such as Towards a New School were cut off and the records locked up in the archives. Great Russian chauvinism toward other nationalities replaced the internationalist spirit. In 1929, Lunacharsky was purged as commissar of education, and by the 1930s the earlier reforms were denounced as an “ultra-left tendency.” The suppression of workers democracy, thereby impeding necessary economic innovation, and the failure to extend the revolution to the advanced capitalist countries, the result of Stalin’s anti-Marxist dogma of building “socialism in one country,” paved the way to imperialist-sponsored counterrevolution. But the initial program and achievements of “Red October” in the field of education remain a beacon for future revolutions.

The idea of a school in which pupils, and therefore, studies and methods, are connected with social life, instead of being isolated, is one familiar in educational theory. In some form, it is the idea that underlies all attempts at thoroughgoing educational reform. What is characteristic of Soviet education is not, therefore, the idea of a dovetailing of school activities into out-of-school social activities, but the fact that for the first time in history there is an educational system officially organized on the basis of this principle. Instead of being exemplified, as it is with ourselves, in a few scattering schools

that are private enterprises, it has the weight and a authority of the whole régime behind it. In trying to satisfy my mind as to how and why it was that the educational leaders have been able in so short a time to develop a working model of this sort of education, with so little precedent upon which to fall back, I was forced to the conclusion that the secret lay in the fact that they could give to the economic and industrial phase of social life the central place it actually occupies in present life. In that fact lies the great advantage the Revolution has conferred upon educational reformers in Russia, in comparison with those in the rest of the world. I do not see how any honest educational reformer in western countries can deny that the greatest practical obstacle in the way of introducing into schools that connection with social life which he regards as desirable is the great part played by personal competition and desire for private profit in our economic life. This fact almost makes it necessary that in important respects school activities should be protected from social contacts and connections, instead of being organized to create them. The Russian educational situation is enough to convert one to the idea that only in a society based upon the coöperative principle can the ideals of educational reformers be adequately carried into operation.

The central place of economic connections in the dovetailing of school work with social life outside the school is explicitly stated in the official documents of Commissar Lunacharsky. He writes: "The two chief present problems of social education are: (1) The development of public economy with reference to Socialist reconstruction in general and the efficiency of labor in particular; (2) the development of the population in the spirit of communism." The aims of education are set forth as follows: "(1) The union of general culture with efficiency of labor and power to share in public life; (2) supply of the actual needs of national economy by preparation of workers in different branches and categories of qualifications; (3) meeting the need of different localities and different kinds of workers." Like all formal statements, these propositions have to be understood in the light of the practices by which they are carried into effect. So interpreted, the fact that among the aims the "union of general culture with efficiency of labor" precedes that of supply of special needs through preparation of workers assumes a significance that might not otherwise be apparent. For perhaps the striking thing in the system is that it is not vocational, in the narrow sense those words often have with us, namely, the technical training of specialized workers. On the contrary, such training is everywhere postponed and subordinated to the requirements of general culture, which is, however, itself conceived of in a socially industrial sense; that is to say, as discovery and development of the capacities that enable an individual to carry on in a coöperative way, work that is socially useful, "socially useful" being conceived in the generous sense of whatever makes human life fuller and richer. Perhaps the easiest way to grasp the spirit of the industrial connections of school work with general social activities is to take the utterances of our own Manufacturers' Association on the same topic and then reverse them. Preparation for special occupations is deferred to the stage of special schools called *Technicums*¹, which can be entered only after seven years of

the public "unified" school² have been completed. These schools are called "polytechnic," but the word is a misleading one in its ordinary English associations. For with us it signifies a school in which individual pupils can select and pursue any one of a considerable number of technologies, while in the Russian system it signifies a school in which pupils, instead of receiving a "mono-technical" training, are instructed in the matters which are fundamental to a number of special industrial techniques. In other words, even in the definitely vocational schools, specialized training for a particular calling is postponed until the latest years, after a general technological and scientific-social foundation has been laid.

As far as could be determined, there are two causes for the adoption of this broad conception of industrial education, in identification with the general culture appropriate to a coöperatively conducted society. One is the state of progressive educational theory in other countries, especially the United States, during the early formative years after the Revolution. For a leading principle of this advanced doctrine was that participation in productive work is the chief stimulus and guide to self-educative activity on the part of pupils, since such productive work is both in accord with the natural or psychological process of learning; and also provides the most direct road to connecting the school with social life, because of the part played by occupations in the latter. Some of the liberal Russian educators were carrying on private experimental schools on this basis before the Revolution; the doctrine had the prestige of being the most advanced among educational philosophies, and it answered to immediate Russian necessities.

Thus from an early period the idea of the "school of work" (*Arbeitschule, école du travail, escuela de acción*) was quite central in post-revolutionary school undertakings. And a main feature of this doctrine was that, while productive work is educative *par excellence*, it must be taken in a broad social sense, and as a means of creating a social new order and not simply as an accommodation to the existing economic régime.

This factor, however, accounts only for the earlier period of the growth of Soviet education, say, up to 1922 or 1923, a period when American influence, along with that of Tolstoy, was upon the whole predominant. Then there came in a reaction, from a Marxian standpoint. The reaction, however, did not take the form of discarding the notion of productive work as central in schools. It only gave the idea a definitely socialistic form by interpreting the idea of work on the basis of the new estate of the worker brought about by the proletarian revolution. The change was a more or less gradual one, and even now there is hardly a complete translation or fusion. But the spirit of the change is well indicated in the words of one of the leaders of educational thought: "A school is a true school of work in the degree in which it prepares the students to appreciate and share in the ideology of the workers – whether country or city." And by the worker is here meant, of course, the worker made conscious of his position and function by

¹ A *technicum* was a post-secondary school preparing students for semiprofessional work.

² Unified Labor School, *edinaya trudovaya shkola*.

means of the Revolution. This transformation of the earlier “bourgeois reforming idea” through emphasis upon the ideology of the labor movement thus continued and reinforced the earlier emphasis upon the general idea of the connection of the school with industry.

This report is necessarily confined to a statement of general principles: the skeleton would gain flesh and blood if space permitted an account of the multifarious threads by which the connection between the schools and coöperatively organized society is maintained. In lieu of this account I can only pay my tribute to the liberating effect of active participation in social life upon the attitude of students. Those whom I met had a vitality and a kind of confidence in life – not to be confused with mere self-confidence – that afforded one of the most stimulating experiences of my life. Their spirit was well reflected in the inscription which a boy of fourteen wrote upon the back of a painting he presented me with. He was in one of the schools in which the idea just set forth is most completely and intelligently carried out, and he wrote that the picture was given in memory of the “school that opened my eyes.” All that I had ever, on theoretical grounds, believed as to the extent to which the dull and dispirited attitude of the average school is due to isolation of school from life was more than confirmed by what I saw of the opposite in Russian schools.

There are three or four special points that call for notice in the identification established between cultural and industrial education. One of them is suggested by the official statement regarding the meeting by the schools of local conditions and needs. Soviet education has not made the mistake of confusing unity of education with uniformity: on the contrary, centralization is limited to the matter of ultimate aim and spirit, while in detail diversification is permitted, or rather encouraged. Each province has its own experimental school, that supplements the work of the central or federal experimental stations, by studying local resources, materials and problems with a view to adapting school work to them. The primary principle of method officially laid down is that, in every topic, work by pupils is to begin with observation of their own environment, natural and social. (The best museum of natural and social materials for pedagogical purposes I have ever seen is in a country district outside of Leningrad, constructed on the basis of a complete exhibit of local fauna, flora, mineralogy, etc., and local antiquities and history, made by pupils’ excursions under the direction of their teachers.)

This principle of making connections with social life on the basis of starting from the immediate environment is exemplified on its broadest scale in the educational work done with the minority populations of Russia – of which there are some fifty different nationalities. The idea of cultural autonomy that underlies political federation is made a reality in the schools. Before the Revolution, many, most of them had no schools, and a considerable number of them not even a written language. In about ten years, through enlisting the efforts of anthropologists and linguistic scholars – which branch of science Russia has always been strong – all the different languages have been reduced to written form, textbooks in the local language provided, each adapted to local environment

and industrial habits, and at least the beginnings of a school system introduced. Aside from immediate educational results, one is impressed with the idea that the scrupulous regard for cultural independence characteristic of the Soviet régime is one of the chief causes of its stability, in view of the non-communist beliefs of most of these populations. Going a little further, one may say that the freedom from race- and color-prejudice characteristic of the régime is one of the greatest assets in Bolshevik propaganda among Asiatic peoples. The most effective way to counteract the influence of that propaganda would be for western nations to abandon their superiority-complex in dealing with Asiatic populations, and thereby deprive Bolshevism of its contention that capitalism, imperialistic exploitation and race prejudice are so inseparably conjoined that the sole relief of native peoples from them lies in adoption of communism under Russian auspices.

The central place of human labor in the educational scheme is made manifest in the plan for the selection and organization of subject-matter, or the studies of the curriculum. This principle is officially designated the “complex system.” Details appropriately belong in a special educational journal, but in general the system means, on the negative side, the abandonment of splitting up subject-matter into isolated “studies,” such as form the program in the conventional school, and finding the matter of study on some total phase of human life – including nature in the relations it sustains to the life of man in society. Employing the words of the official statement: “At the basis of the whole program is found the study of human work and its organization: the point of departure is the study of this work as found in its local manifestations.” Observations of the latter are, however, to be developed by “recourse to the experience of humanity – that is, books, so that the local phenomena may be connected with national and international industrial life.”

It is worthy of note that, in order to carry out this conception of the proper subject-matter of study, it is necessary for the teachers themselves to become students, for they must conceive of the traditional subject-matter from a new point of view. They are compelled, in order to be successful, both to study their local environment and to become familiar with the detailed economic plans of the central government. For example, the greatest importance is attached in the educational scheme to natural science and what we call nature-study. But according to the ruling principle, this material must not be treated as so much isolated stuff to be learned by itself, but be considered in the ways in which it actually enters into human life by means of utilization of natural resources and energies in industry for social purposes. Aside from the vitalization of physical knowledge supplied by thus putting it in its human context, this method of presentation compels teachers to be cognizant of the *Gosplan*³ – that is, the detailed projects, looking ahead over a series of years, of the government for the economic development of the country. An educator from a bourgeois country may well envy the added dignity that comes

³ Short for Gosudarstvennii Planovii Komitet, the State Planning Committee, which planned the economy and social life of the U.S.S.R.

to the function of the teacher when he is taken into partnership in plans for the social development of his country. Such an one can hardly avoid asking himself whether this partnership is possible only in a country where industry is a public function rather than a private undertaking; he may not find any sure answer to the question, but the continued presence of the query in his mind will surely serve as an eye-opening stimulus.

In American literature regarding Soviet education, "the complex system" is often identified with the "project method" as that has developed in our own country. In so far as both procedures get away from starting with fixed lessons in isolated studies, and substitute for them an endeavor to bring students through their own activity into contact with some relatively total slice of life or nature, there is ground for the identification. By and large, however, it is misleading, and for two reasons. In the first place, the complex method involves a unified intellectual scheme of organization: it centers, as already noted, about the study of human work in its connection on one side with natural materials and energies, and on the other side with social and political history and institutions. From this intellectual background, it results that, while Russian educators acknowledge here – as in many other things – an original indebtedness to American theory, they criticize many of the "projects" employed in our schools as casual and as trivial, because they do not belong to any general social aim, nor have definite social consequences in their train.

To them, an educative "project" is the means by which the principle of some "complex" or unified whole of social subject-matter is realized. Its criterion of value is its contribution to some "socially useful work." Actual projects vary according to special conditions, urban or rural, and particular needs and deficiencies of the local environment. In general, they include contributions to improvement of sanitation and hygienic conditions (in which respects there is an active campaign carried on, modelled largely upon American techniques), assisting in the campaign against illiteracy; reading newspapers and books to the illiterate; helping in clubs, excursions, etc., with younger children; assisting ignorant adults to understand the policies of local Soviets so that they can take part in them intelligently; engaging in communist propaganda, and, on the industrial side, taking some part in a multitude of diverse activities calculated to improve economic conditions. In a rural school that was visited, for example, students carried on what in a conventional school would be the separate studies of botany and entomology by cultivating flowers, food-plants, fruits, etc., under experimental conditions, observing the relation to them of insects, noxious and helpful, and then making known the results to their parents and other farmers, distributing improved strains of seed, etc. In each case, the aim is that sooner or later the work shall terminate in some actual participation in the larger social life, if only by young children carrying flowers to an invalid or to their parents. In one of the city schools where this work has been longest carried on, I saw, for example, interesting charts that showed the transformation of detailed hygienic and living conditions of the homes in a working men's quarter effected through a period of ten years by the boys and girls of the school.

A word regarding the system of administration and discipline of Soviet schools perhaps finds its natural place in this connection. During a certain period, the idea of freedom and student control tended to run riot. But apparently the idea of "self-organization" (which is fundamental in the official scheme) has now been worked out in a positive form, so that, upon the whole, the excesses of the earlier period are obsolescent. The connection with what has just been said lies in the fact that as far as possible the organizations of pupils that are relied upon to achieve self-discipline are not created for the sake of school "government," but grow out of the carrying on of some line of work needed in the school itself, or in the neighborhood. Here, too, while the idea of self-government developed in American schools was the originally stimulating factor, the ordinary American practice is criticized as involving too much imitation of adult political forms (instead of growing out of the students' own social relationships), and hence as being artificial and external. In view of the prevailing idea of other countries as to the total lack of freedom and total disregard of democratic methods in Bolshevik Russia, it is disconcerting, to say the least, to anyone who has shared in that belief, to find Russian school children much more democratically organized than are our own; and to note that they are receiving through the system of school administration a training that fits them, much more systematically than is attempted in our professedly democratic country, for later active participation in the self-direction of both local communities and industries.

Fairness demands that I should say in conclusion that the educational system so inadequately described exists at present qualitatively rather than quantitatively. Statistically considered, its realization is still highly restricted – although not surprisingly so when one considers both the external difficulties of war, famine, poverty, teachers trained in alien ideas and ideals, and the internal difficulties of initiating and developing an educational system on a new social basis. Indeed, considering these difficulties, one is rather amazed at the progress made; for, while limited in actual range, the scheme is in no sense on paper. It is a going concern; a self-moving organism. While an American visitor may feel a certain patriotic pride in noting in how many respects an initial impulse came from some progressive school in our own country, he is at once humiliated and stimulated to new endeavor to see how much more organically that idea is incorporated in the Russian system than in our own. Even if he does not agree with the assertion of communist educators that the progressive ideals of liberal educators can actually be carried out only in a country that is undergoing an economic revolution in the socialist direction, he will be forced into searchings of heart and mind that are needed and wholesome. In any case, if his experience is at all like mine, he will deeply regret those artificial barriers and that barricade of false reports that now isolates American teachers from that educational system in which our professed progressive democratic ideas are most completely embodied, and from which accordingly we might, if we would, learn much more than from the system of any other country. I understand now as I never did before the criticism of some foreign visitors, especially from France, that condemn Soviet Russia for entering too ardently upon an "Americanization" of traditional European culture. ■

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