

"WORKERS' AND OPPRESSED PEOPLES OF THE WORLD, UNITE!!"

# WORKERS' PRESS

THE POLITICAL ORGAN OF THE MARXIST-LENINIST COLLECTIVE

## HEALTH & SAFETY IN THE SHIPYARDS

In February, 1976, three workers were killed and another seriously burned by an explosion and fire at Willamette Shipyards in Richmond. The fire was caused by oxygen flowing into a hold from a hose which had not been turned off the previous shift. Investigators from the government agency, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), found the company responsible for these deaths due to its own negligence.

In November, 1976, at AAA Shipyards in SF, a worker, docking a ship, suffered severe contusions when a rope broke and slashed him across the back of the legs. He died ten days later from complications which led to a blood clot in the lungs. This worker was a laborer who, with inadequate training and limited experience, was assigned to do riggers work. Moreover, the workers docking this ship were without proper supervision. Also in November, at AAA, a painter was knocked from scaffolding in a cargo hold by a load being raised on a crane. He suffered a fractured skull, neck and wrists. As in the case of the laborer, this probably could have been avoided if proper supervision and other precautionary measures had been taken by the company.

Every year 100,000 workers die from industrial accidents and work-related hazards. The ship repair and construction business is one of the more dangerous industries in the US. The murder and maiming of the working class is a product of the capitalist system, where profit is more important than human life. The bourgeoisie will spend as little as possible on safety in order to maximize profit. This is particularly so during crises of relative overproduction (the most recent crisis began in 1973). In these periods the bourgeoisie increasingly attempts to shift the burden of the crisis to the working class. Speed-ups, forced overtime, inadequate training and supervision, and lack of maintenance of machinery and equipment, along with the capitalists refusal to invest in health and safety measures, create the conditions for a greater number of deaths and injuries on the job.

This June, the contracts of all unions in the shipyards will expire. Shipyard workers must demand that their new contracts contain provisions which will adequately protect their health and safety. One such proposal is for a safety committee with representatives elected from each craft. Safety representatives must have paid time off to inspect their respective work areas for health and safety hazards. Unlike the existing management-labor safety committee, which has no authority, each representative should have the power to immediately shut down any particular operation in the yard where unsafe and hazardous conditions exist. Work would not begin again until the company corrected the unsafe situation. Why must the rank and file have the authority to do this? The government will not solve the problem. While we must constantly struggle for the enforcement of federal and state regulations, we can have no illusions about government agencies such as OSHA. OSHA is a sham. As a part of the state apparatus, OSHA serves the bourgeoisie and not the proletariat. For example, over 80% of the health and safety violations found by OSHA in 1974 did not result in fines, and the average for fines actually levied in 1974 was \$15!

Likewise the trade union bureaucrats will not stop the killings. It is the role of these bribed labor traitors to serve as props for the capitalist system and represent the interests of the bourgeoisie. An example of the kind of response we can expect from the labor bureaucrats was revealed by the leadership of the machinist local 68 at a recent union meeting. The leadership was asked what action the union was taking concerning the murder of

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two members who had been crushed to death while making repairs on the cable car system in SF, Dec 10, 1976. The bureaucrats said they were 'waiting' for the completion of the investigation by OSHA and 'anticipated' criminal indictments of the Muni management by the State. In other words, these flunkeys will not lift a finger to protect the health and safety of the membership.

Ultimately, we must completely expose and expel these labor traitors and turn the unions into instruments which will serve the proletariat in the revolutionary struggle to overthrow the bourgeoisie. In the upcoming contract struggle the rank and file must make the bureaucrats, by its militancy and organization, include contract provisions which will give genuine protection to the health and safety of the shipyard workers. For we, the majority of workers, not the labor bureaucrats or the State, are the only force capable of preventing our own death and injury by this barbaric capitalist system.

## ON IMPERIALIST WAR

"Every war is but a continuation of the politics of certain classes 'by other means'" (Comintern, 1928). Imperialist war is a continuation of the imperialist nations' politics of ceaseless economic rivalry and expansion. The entire development of imperialism -- the export of capital, the domination of the world's markets and raw materials, the subjugation of the world's peoples and nations -- puts these imperialist countries on the inevitable path toward imperialist war and economic re-division of the world.

As communists and workers, we must be clear on the danger and source of imperialist war; we must plan a course of action to prevent it. Although we understand that imperialist war is inevitable under imperialism (as long as imperialism and classes exist, the inevitability of war remains in force) it is not inevitable at any given moment if the forces for peace (the international proletariat and its communist parties, the socialist countries, and the oppressed peoples and nations) are sufficiently strong and mobilized against it. Imperialist war can be prevented if the working class and its allies in the imperialist nations can launch civil war before its outbreak, can overthrow imperialism by proletarian revolution.

We must also understand that we do not oppose all wars, that we differentiate between just and unjust wars. Proletarian revolution and wars of national liberation by oppressed peoples and nations are just wars and demand our support and involvement. These wars are the continuation of politics of the international proletariat, its allies, and the oppressed nations and peoples against the forces of imperialism and reaction. To deny these wars would be to deny class struggle and betray the proletariat and the oppressed nations and peoples.

Communists, workers, progressive people: it is urgent that we increase our activity against the drive toward imperialist war and war preparations. Our propaganda and agitation first, must expose the bourgeoisie's drive toward war reflected in \$100 billion 'peacetime' defense budget, exaggerated claims of Soviet military superiority, the B-1 bomber plans, and the step up of volunteer army recruitment; second, must reveal the reasons for imperialist war, such as economic re-division of the world and continued imperialist and social-imperialist domination of workers and oppressed peoples; and third, must denounce the Social-Democrats and their phoney 'pacifism' which covers up war preparations and the danger of Soviet social-imperialism, and dupes the working class (CPUSA, CLP with their support of 'detente', and the phoney Helsinki conference and their bourgeois slogans of JOBS, PEACE, EQUALITY).

Recently the Marxist-Leninist Collective distributed a leaflet at the Bay Area vocational school. The leaflet was titled 'Oppose Imperialist War and War Preparations'. Basically, the leaflet exposed the bourgeois voluntary army recruitment campaign. It explained why the bourgeoisie needs workers in its army and how it attempts to deceive them so that they join the armed forces and fight their wars. It briefly explained the reasons for imperialist war and why we should oppose it. However, we made several major errors in the leaflet. It failed to show the support that we must give to just wars.

We did not make the vital differentiation between just and unjust wars. When the example of the war in Indochina was used, we did not mention the just side of the Indo-Chinese peoples who were fighting for national liberation. Another major error came in the last part of the leaflet when listing the ways to stop imperialist war. We called on young workers not to join the imperialist armed forces. This advocacy of boycotting the military tends to give credit to the pacifist illusion that if we boycott war, we can prevent it. It is the duty of communists to join the bourgeois army, lead the spontaneous struggles of the soldiers, stimulate the class struggle, and help to 'disintegrate it from within'. In the event of war, communists must lead the soldiers to take revolutionary control and help turn the imperialist war into civil war. Workers who are called upon to join the imperialist army should be advised, Lenin said, 'to avail themselves of the opportunity to learn the use of arms, to carry on revolutionary work in the army and, at the proper moment, to turn their weapons against the bourgeoisie'.

The leaflet does call for a vanguard party and explains the vital role in leading our struggle against imperialist war. Finally, the leaflet ends with this:

"The best way that the working class, organized and led by its vanguard party can stop imperialist war once and for all, is to turn such a war or preparations for such a war into a civil war or proletarian revolution. As the Communist International resolved in 1928: 'War is inseparable from capitalism. From this it follows that the abolition of war is possible only through the abolition of capitalism through the overthrow of the bourgeois class of exploiters, through the proletarian dictatorship, and the building of socialism, and the elimination of classes!'

Two important points need to be re-emphasized: first, we must increase our work against war preparations and the danger of imperialist war. Second, the weakness of the movement against imperialist war without a vanguard party is sorely apparent. Thus, our struggle against imperialist war, at this time, really involves our central task of building a communist party. This means an immediate need for joint theoretical work around this issue of imperialist war and the drafting of an outline or plan of action to prevent it. The formation of joint factory nuclei to insure that we can effectively raise the question of imperialist war among the working class would be a great step forward. Through this joint theoretical and practical work, the development of a party programme could be started. This joint work is a vital step in the formation of a communist party, and all Marxist-Leninists must seriously undertake to initiate it!

Suggested Readings on Imperialist War

- 1) The Struggle Against Imperialist War and the Tasks of Communists, Resolution of the Sixth World Congress of Communist International, 1928
- 2) War and the Workers, Lenin
- 3) The Historical Experience of the War Against Fascism, Editorial Department of Renmin Ribao, Peking, 1965
- 4) Lenin on War and Peace
- 5) On the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union, Stalin
- 6) Whence the Differences, Peking
- 7) World Politics 1916-1936, R.P. Dutt
- 8) From Lenin's Collected Works; Socialism and War, Vol 21; War and Revolution, Vol 24; The Military Programme of the Proletarian Revolution, Vol 23; The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky, Vol 20; The Peace Programme, Vol 22; Draft Resolution of the Zimmerwald Left, Vol 21; On the Defence of the Fatherland Issue, Vol 23

- 9) Communist International Documents
- 10) The United Front Against War and Fascism, Dimitroff
- 11) Economic Problems of Socialism, Stalin

# WHO BENEFITS FROM FORCED OVERTIME?

To answer this question we must first understand how the capitalists make their profits. The workday is basically divided into two parts, paid necessary labor and unpaid surplus labor. The paid necessary labor is realized in the wages the worker receives when working for a company. The amount of the workers wages is determined by the means of subsistence (clothing, food, housing) necessary for the maintenance of the worker and his family. The unpaid surplus labor is the value the worker creates over and above the necessary labor (means of subsistence). Let's say that in an eight-hour day, four hours are necessary labor and four hours are surplus labor time. In four hours the worker produces the equivalent of his wages. The capitalist realizes his profit in the remaining four hours of surplus labor.

In a capitalist society which produces strictly for profit, the capitalists are continually trying to increase the surplus labor time, or profits. The capitalists, in this case General Motors Corp (GM), have two ways in which to increase the surplus labor. First, by increasing the productivity of the workers. This can be done by introducing new technology, such as machinery or new methods of production. This can also be accomplished through speed up or intensification of labor. These ways are used by the capitalist class to reduce the necessary labor time (wages) and increase the surplus labor time. So now we might have three hours of necessary labor and five of surplus labor. This is called an increase in the relative surplus value. The second way surplus labor is increased is by lengthening the working day. The capitalist does this by working us overtime. Now by working nine hours instead of eight, we have increased the surplus labor time by one hour. We still need only four hours necessary labor, but have increased the surplus labor to five hours. In this case, we have an increase in the absolute surplus value.

Another reason GM and other companies have their workers working overtime is because they can eliminate the cost of paying benefits for additional workers. Workers working overtime don't get an increase in their benefits because these are figured on their base rate. This is one reason thousands of workers are laid off and the remaining workers are forced to work overtime. This way the company can continue to produce the same amount of commodities (in this case cars), eliminate the cost of benefits paid to the laid-off workers, and still increase the surplus labor of the workers remaining.

The workers at GM urged the trade union bureaucrats to do something about the overtime in this contract. Workers should read pages 185-187 of the national agreement between GM and the UAW to see what the union has negotiated for us. There are two plans: in plan A, we work nine hours a day; in plan B we work 10 hours. These plans are not there to eliminate overtime and create more jobs. They are there so the company can continue to force us to work overtime. We want to work fewer, not longer hours. We want to create more jobs for the thousands of workers who are unemployed, not add to the unemployment.

We must expose these union bureaucrats for what they are -- traitors of the working class. They must be replaced by class conscious workers, who will fight for the real interests of its members. As workers at GM, we must refuse to work overtime, we must demand a 32-hour work week with 40 hours pay, and we must demand more jobs for the thousands of unemployed workers. But we must realize that this is only one step in the struggle of the working class and the development of a socialist revolution.

As long as capitalism exists, a system based on profit, there is going to be exploitation of the working class by the bourgeoisie. Capitalism is a system that does not take into consideration the needs of the masses, but is concerned only with the amount of profit produced for the rich minority.

Under socialism, there will be no forced overtime. The length of the working day will be determined by the workers based on the needs of the society. There will be a stable, planned economy, where the working masses take part in planning and production and share the wealth of the country. This must be our goal!

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# INDEPENDENCE FOR PUERTO RICO

The most recent example of US imperialism's efforts to maintain their hegemony in the Caribbean was expressed by ex-president Ford's proposal that Puerto Rico become the 51st state. The Puerto Rican people themselves rejected this so-called 'solution' to the national question, both in 1967, when 60% voted against statehood, and in more recent polls where the same sentiment was revealed (San Juan Star, 12/6/76). Reaction to the declaration on the island was overwhelmingly negative and angry.

So what was Ford's flimsy excuse for making this outrageous proposal and then claiming he was interpreting the will of the Puerto Rican people. It was the election of the pro-statehood section of the comprador bourgeoisie in Puerto Rico - the New Progressive Party (NPP) - to the colonial government. The election was conducted around the issues of the economic crisis and worsening conditions of the masses in Puerto Rico. With false promises, considerable election fraud, and a pledge to the working class not to make statehood an issue, the NPP won over the Popular Democratic Party (PDP). The PDP's open assistance to the US government in shifting the burden of the economic crisis to the Puerto Rican people completely discredited them in the eyes of the working class on the island. The election of NPP was not a sign of the peoples willingness to be further subjugated, but clearly a protest against the colonial policies of the PDP. However, it is a case of changing identical twins; two sections of the same comprador class, tools of the US imperialist bourgeoisie.

The evidence of the shift of the economic crisis continues to grow, with the unemployment at 40% (in Jajuya it is 96%)! About 75% of the people are on food stamps, with 91% eligible if the funds were available. Unlike the mainland federal welfare system, Puerto Rican welfare funds are based on a small percentage (3%) of the entire health, education and welfare budget. In the states it is based on population. Living costs are 25% higher in Puerto Rico than in NYC and the average wage is one half that on the mainland.

So what are the real reasons for the stepped up efforts of the US imperialists and their lackeys to further consolidate their hold over Puerto Rico? It is simply that imperialism cannot exist without the political and economic enslavement of entire nations and colonies. Colonies and nations such as Puerto Rico and the Black Nation with their raw materials and cheap labor-power as a source of super-profits, constitute part of the main reserves of US imperialism. Recent discoveries of off-shore oil on the northern coast of Puerto Rico have added fuel to the fire to annex Puerto Rico and secure it as a permanent base in the Caribbean. The US has already stated that Puerto Rico has no control over their coastal waters under the Commonwealth Agreement.

Why is the US pushing statehood now rather than the so-called free associated state myth? There are two reasons. First of all there is a growing movement in the working class for independence. Many strikes such as service workers (Sept. 1976) at the University of Puerto Rico, and the bus drivers strike earlier in the year, have linked their economic demands with political demands for independence. Both of these strikes were strongly supported by pro-independence students and revolutionary groups. These are but the tip of the iceberg. There were hundreds of smaller shut-downs in protest against the worsening conditions of life. This reflects the growing desire of the Puerto Rican people for independence. The sham statehood cover-up by the US imperialists is designed to blunt this growing movement by obscuring the basic colonial relationship with the mainland. Second, this statehood proposal is a ploy to silence world opinion that has more and more come to condemn the colonial status of Puerto Rico. The same attempt was made in the case of Hawaii, another colony, that was directly annexed by the US imperialists in the late 1950s.

The People's Republic of China has taken a principled stand by refusing to

receive a member of the colonial lackey government in a delegation of US mayors in 1976. The reaction to the statehood proposal in the rest of the Carribean and Latin America was generally negative and properly denounced as an imperialist maneuver.

This proposal must be exposed. Communists and workers in the US must firmly support and render direct aid to the Puerto Rican people in their struggle for independence and condemn the imperialist posturing of the US government's statehood plan.

VIVA PUERTO RICO LIBRE!

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#### WHO WE ARE

Workers' Press is written and published by the Marxist-Leninist Collective. We are a communist organization based on Marxism-Leninism, the science of the revolutionary class struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. We are part of the international struggle of the proletariat to end exploitation and oppression by overthrowing capitalism and establishing socialism. We aim to bring communist ideas and analyses to the working class. We strive to broaden the outlook of our fellow workers and to arm workers with proletarian class consciousness so that together we can lead the struggle against all forms of oppression and exploitation by imperialism. To do this we must organize ourselves into an independent political party to concentrate the resistance of the proletariat into a single fighting force. Send all correspondence, criticisms, articles to Workers' Press.

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