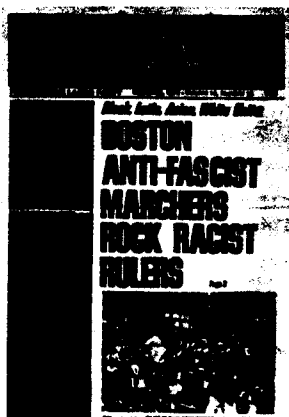


progressive labor party

BOSTON, '75



The following article is an edited, updated version of a piece that appeared in the Fall 1975 PL Magazine. It describes the previous summer of struggle against ROAR, Boston's antibusing fascists. During June, July, and August of 1975, the PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY and the Committee Against Racism threw down the gauntlet in a bold challenge to the most significant mass-based racist movement in the U.S. at the time—and won hands down.

The movement represented by ROAR had more than local significance, and our defeat of it can truly be said to have "changed history." As the article points out, ROAR was a trial balloon for open adoption of fascist slogans and ideas by the ruling class as "mainstream," that is, for the building of a mass fascist movement by the bosses.

The Boston Summer Project led by our comrades punctured that balloon so thoroughly that nearly a generation later they have still not been able to put open racism and fascism forward as a mass movement... And it is still our business to keep it that way.

Another, and no less significant aspect of Boston '75 is the number of volunteers who were won to membership in PLP in the course of the summer struggle. Many of them remain in the Party, and have become leaders. Perhaps because of the sharpness of the Boston struggles and their experience there, they have helped to lead sharp struggles around the country, fighting the Klan, the Nazis, and their ruling class sponsors.

We hope that this experience and its many rich lessons will interest readers of THE COMMUNIST. In the future, we will carry more articles reflecting the PLP's practical experience in the leadership of class struggle.

The U.S. ruling class decided in the early 1970s to make a racist anti-busing movement in Boston serve as a trial balloon for developing a nationwide fascist base. Boston's black population then was twenty per cent of the whole population, and Boston was one of the most segregated U.S. cities.

The segregation of black and white workers and their children in housing and schools was also reflected at the workplace. For example, the workforce at Lynn G.E.—the major industrial plant in the area—was only 3 percent black. Therefore, the objective unity that existed elsewhere at the point of production between black and white workers against the boss as the common enemy was weaker there than in more highly integrated cities.

To a great extent because of this division in the working class, Boston had and still has a high percentage of unorganized workers. Therefore, the class solidarity that accompanies even the weakest forms of unionization was not firmly embedded in the collective outlook of Boston's working class.

Organized racism, though, had a long history in this city. Louise Day Hicks, the local racist political leader, and her lieutenants had been pushing neo-nazi demagoguery against school integration since the Civil Rights movement of the early 1960s. The Boston School Committee (a majority of whose members had joined Hicks' organization, ROAR, by 1974) spent years deliberately creating segregated school zones and simultaneously presiding over the universal degeneration of the schools.

ROAR came into existence in 1974. Its initials stood for "Re-

store Our Alienated Rights." Its leaders claimed to support the principle of neighborhood schools. In fact, their only basis for unity was the desire to keep Boston as segregated as possible. ROAR quickly grew into the most significant mass-based racist organization in the U.S. It mobilized thousands in anti-busing marches, received copious publicity, and was so brazenly winked at by the mayor, the police, and the rest of the state apparatus that it dared convene regular meetings in the Boston City Council chamber.

All this preparation enabled the racists to seize the offensive during the first weeks of the 1974-75 Fall school term. The stonings of school buses and mob violence against black people that marked the first days of the busing of more than 18,000 school children took place on international television and under the "benign neglect" of the Boston Police Department, which gave the racists the keys to the city.

The 1974-75 school year was characterized by incidents of racist violence, particularly at schools in ROAR strongholds. ROAR developed an image as a significant political force. The Boston Police Patrolman's Association contributed money to it; the sellout leadership of the Massachusetts Building Trades Council endorsed its racist anti-busing position; Mayor Kevin White

dispensed patronage to ROAR members and held secret negotiating sessions with ROAR leaders; and Louise led a Spring march of 1500 racists in Washington against busing. Meanwhile, the cops continued to protect the thugs responsible for racist attacks and to arrest black people for defending themselves; the liberal politicians were secretly in cahoots with ROAR; the leadership of the unions—those who pretended to support busing and integration—did nothing. The NAACP confined itself, as usual, to press conferences and reliance on the bosses' courts.

Not only liberals were in cahoots with ROAR. No fascist movement is complete without a sprinkling of revisionists, phony communists who distort the idea of working class struggle into tailing after the most backward aspects of the working class. In Boston this not-so-comic relief came from the so-called Revolutionary Communist Party. This gaggle of cartoon lefties actually marched with ROAR's South Boston Marshals against busing for integration! They claimed that busing was a liberal ruling-class plot to turn white workers against black people. That's true as far as it goes: the ruling class would rather have working-class disunity than united working-class neighborhoods and schools, but marching with the enemies of multi-racial unity is a

strange way to build working class unity!

Without backing from the politicians and the cops, ROAR was all shadow and no substance. Its leaders were hacks and ward-heelers who saw how to make a fast buck out of racism, and its "cadre" were the dregs of society: drunks, ex-cops or their families, young punks, and a handful of sadists. In order for ROAR to play a useful role in the rulers' plans, it had to remain essentially unchallenged by a mass movement against racism.

CHALLENGE TO THE FASCISTS

The only force that emerged to provide leadership in the fight against the racists and their bosses was the Progressive Labor Party. PLP's annual May Day march that year was called for South Boston, which had become a national symbol of the threat posed by racism. When the call went out to demonstrate under the red flag of revolution in ROAR's own bailiwick, 2,500 workers and students came from all over the East Coast to call for unity against the bosses and to chant "Death to Fascism!"

Egged on by the applause of Boston's Nazi Tactical Police Force, ROAR's bullies tried to smash the march before it could start. About eighty of these goons charged the small PLP security force. Twenty-five antiracist fighters met them and kicked the stuffing out of

them, putting them to rout and landing a good number of them in the hospital. When the cops saw this happening, they went on the attack, arresting and injuring several antiracists. But the march took place. It was the talk of the town for days.

The problem now became to transform the battle of May Day into an ongoing offensive that could eventually smash the racist movement. This task was assumed by the Committee Against Racism.

CAR proposed "BOSTON '75: A Summer of Struggle, a Lifetime of Commitment, a Call to Action," a bold national summerlong drive directly in the eye of the storm against the most virulent racist movement since the heyday of the KKK. This was precisely what was needed to put ROAR on the defensive and stall the rulers' plans for a nationwide fascist mass movement. Tens of thousands of brochures flooded college campuses in early spring. They called on "... students and other interested people to join our Freedom Summer AntiRacist Action Project. Its purpose is to give a national/international focus to the antiracist struggles going on in Boston. Summer volunteers will work under the leadership of Boston CAR. Together, they will prepare the way for a strong people's movement which will unite blacks, whites, and other minorities to fight against the racism be-

ing used to wreck the busing program...Boston is the test of whether or not racist mob violence similar to FASCISM, combined with political racism, can succeed in stopping the desegregation movement. CAR says with this summer project, 'THE RACISTS ARE GONNA FLUNK THIS TEST!' "

Before it started, BOSTON '75 was faced with two objective limitations. First, most of its volunteers would of necessity come from college campuses. Could inexperienced students carry the message of multiracial unity into working class communities? Second, although some of the volunteers came from Boston, most were from out of town. The forces of racism would surely redbait them and brand them "outside agitators." Could the project flourish under these circumstances?

As the CAR Steering Committee estimated and as events later proved, the answer to both these questions was clearly affirmative. Students had already demonstrated during the Civil Rights movement and the antiwar movement that their energy and creativity, their militancy, and their political commitment more than compensated for inexperience. Besides, as in any endeavor, you learn to swim by swimming. In the second place, although most of the volunteers didn't come from Boston, Boston was in the United

States, and all of the United States was permeated with racism. All of the volunteers had been confronted with Nazi "theoreticians" like Jensen, discriminatory budget cuts, police terror, unemployment, and any number of racism's other hideous guises. Boston wasn't Mars. Finally and most significantly, the project's organizers and volunteers knew that their politics and program met the aspirations of the overwhelming majority of Boston's black and white workers, parents, students, and teachers. The racists had never built a single school or won a single job. On the contrary, they had helped make Boston's schools among the worst in the U.S. (no mean feat.)

Confident in this estimate of the situation and in the responsiveness of Boston's working class, the first wave of volunteers began to arrive in early June. Eventually their numbers would reach 150, and they would come from California, Texas, the Midwest, Washington. D.C., Seattle, New York, and other areas.

CAR'S STRATEGY

The blueprint envisioned several overlapping areas of work: a Freedom School in Roxbury that would bring black and white students together in a friendly atmosphere and help them compensate for the havoc of the previous academic year; the formation of committees to canvass in South

Boston, Hyde Park, Roxbury, Dorchester, Cambridge, and other parts of the greater Boston area; an Outreach Committee to win support from churches, unions, and other mass organizations; and a citywide petition drive to popularize CAR's program for better schools and against the racists. Regular street agitation was planned to complement these activities. The petition drive was conceived as the vehicle that could tie them all together.

From the very outset, the politicians, the cops, and of course, ROAR, served notice that they considered BOSTON '75 a serious threat and would do anything in their power to crush it. Their strategy was to harass, intimidate, and openly terrorize the volunteers in order to prevent the message of antiracist solidarity from reaching the city's working class.

ROAR's plan was put into operation early in the project. In early June, a group of volunteers went to conduct street agitation in Boston. A group of ROAR thugs overturned their table and vandalized their panel truck. No arrests were made. On June 7, 60 CAR members tried to picket the new ROAR office in Fields Corner (an integrated section of Dorchester). Cops immediately arrived and blocked the picket line as well as a planned march through the neighborhood. However, the CAR anti-racists were not deterred. They successfully circu-

lated a petition calling for ROAR's ouster from Dorchester. When cops attacked a CAR rally at Boston State College, 25 CAR members and friends invaded the president's office.

These opening skirmishes proved that the ruling class's stake in Boston's fascist movement was such that they weren't about to let "free speech" for anti-racists interfere with Hicks & Co.—and that CAR's fighters weren't about to back down in the face of petty harassment.

Therefore, the bosses and their agents decided to up the ante and see if they could wipe out the project before it got off the ground. On June 14, 25 CAR members were at Uphams Corner for a street rally. The rally took place in orderly fashion with anti-racist speeches, leafletting, and petitioning to kick ROAR out of Dorchester. Soon, about ten men carrying bats, a hockey stick, and a sawed-off boat oar, arrived and began viciously attacking the CAR members, all of whom were weaponless. Five minutes before the attack began, all the cops who had been watching the rally since its start disappeared. The CAR members fought back. Suddenly the police "reappeared." A CAR worker made a speech to the 100 onlookers who had gathered by this time, explaining that the attack was caused by ROAR goons working with the police and that the anti-racist movement would

not be intimidated by these tactics. He was immediately arrested. The ROAR attackers were never arrested.

The CAR volunteers—barely over 50 by the time of Uphams Corner—refused to yield an inch in the face of racist terror. Two days later, they were back on the streets, this time picketing City Hall to expose the collaboration between the racist movement and the Boston City Council (8 of 9 Council members admitted to ROAR membership). The racists were so shameless about advertising their Jim Crow ideas that they plastered the letters "ROAR" in the windows of City Council offices. The "right" to strut racism in this manner was upheld several times in court as an exercise of "free speech." However, on June 16, this "right" was unceremoniously abridged when several CAR members ripped the hated letters off the windows. The Uphams Corner attack had proved that the fascists were ruthless and had to be treated with their own medicine. Henceforth, every CAR event was to have adequate preparation for security and self defense in case of attack. This measure and the militancy of the CAR security force helped insure the project's survival during the course of the summer.

REACHING THE MASSES

By late June, BOSTON '75 could count two significant accomplishments: it had established itself as the only organized public challenge to ROAR, and it had survived all attempts at intimidation. The bulk of the volunteers were to arrive by early July. But a serious political problem remained: despite a fair amount of public agitation, CAR had yet to approach the mass of Boston's workers, parents, and students with its positive program for fighting racism and winning improved conditions in the schools. The petition drive to oust ROAR from Dorchester succeeded in gathering 2,000 signatures; however, this brief campaign still did not provide a vehicle for uniting black and white people throughout the greater Boston area.

All along, the publicity for BOSTON '75 had announced CAR's six-point program: 1) Build 25 new schools in Boston; 2) Hire 1,286 teachers (to reduce teacher-student ratio to 15:1), of whom 500 must be black or Hispanic; 3) Expand bilingual programs for all relevant languages; 4) Indict Hicks, former School Committee head John Kerrigan, and the ROAR Executive Committee for conspiracy to violate the civil rights of school children; 5) Expand and upgrade cafeteria and athletic facilities; 6) End the prac-

tice of conducting segregated parents' meetings.

Because it combined the demand for vitally needed concessions within the schools and the fight against ROAR as a major roadblock in the way of winning these concessions, this program could serve as a shot in the arm to Boston's black and white workers and students. The bosses had already made their own program abundantly clear. While ROAR ran amok in the streets, Mayor White announced that he was slashing the school budget by \$30 million and laying off 600 provisional and nontenured teachers. The objective conditions for a mass campaign on these issues could not have been better. All that remained was to get the campaign underway.

An initial sluggishness prevented the campaign from opening with the vigor it needed to succeed. The problem was political: Did the volunteers really believe that most of the 640,000 Bostonians did not belong to or sympathize with ROAR, and that their interests actually required the smashing of racism? The press had constantly pushed the lie that the majority of Boston's white workers, who had been passive during the 1974 busing, were committed racists. The citywide campaign for CAR's six-point program was slow getting underway primarily because the CAR members and the PLPers fighting

alongside them lacked sufficient confidence in the objective anti-racist aspirations of Boston's working class.

Then two black families moved into virtually all white Hyde Park in late June. Each was savagely attacked by gangs of racist punks, who specialized in assaulting young children. CAR volunteers played an instrumental role in organizing a defense committee in both cases, despite the usual harassment from the police. The punks who attacked these families had also been responsible for terrorizing white families in Hyde Park. The material basis for anti-racist unity against these petty goons clearly existed. CAR acted upon it and organized a meeting to discuss the problem at the home of one of the black families. Despite threats from ROAR and the police, an integrated group of thirty people attended and discussed methods of dealing with the attacks.

That the meeting took place at all under such conditions meant far more than the particulars of its agenda. As a result of CAR's initiative, thirty black and white working people had sat down to discuss a common menace in a neighborhood where some of 1974-75's worst racist incidents had taken place. Imagine the possibilities if 150 CAR volunteers spent hours daily taking their program into the streets, the shops, and the schools. Tens of thousands could

be motivated to move Leftward on the question of anti-racism. After the unity meeting in Hyde Park the mass aspect of Boston '75 got underway in earnest.

The six—point petition suddenly became a commonplace sight in dozens of greater Boston neighborhoods, at street-corner rallies, in projects, at plant gates and on campuses. In Dorchester, Hyde Park, Roxbury, Southie, Jamaica Plain, Cambridge and elsewhere, hundreds responded every day to the demand for improved schools and the call to crush racism. Eventually, the hundreds would become the thousands. The harassment, invariably aided by the cops, that accompanied CAR's canvassing in Hyde Park and Southie deterred neither the volunteers nor the bulk of ordinary people in these neighborhoods who wanted to learn more about the program.

The CAR Outreach Committee went to work and received endorsements from several church groups as well as from the 30,000 member regional organization the American Federation of Government Employees. The AFGE leader who gave the endorsement later withdrew it when he became frightened of being identified with "radicals," but beforehand he had sent a copy of CAR's petition to every AFGE member in the Massachusetts area. Thousands of these workers were later to pla

role in CAR's major demonstration of the summer.

FREEDOM SCHOOL

The Roxbury Freedom School was conceived as a dual effort to promote multiracial unity and to provide instruction that could help compensate for the illiteracy fostered in the Boston public schools. It opened at the Charles Street A.M.E. Church on July 7. The first days of school were filled with numerous activities that proved the feasibility of integrated antiracist education. In one class students read and discussed a leaflet entitled "Racism Hurts Us All." In a history class led by a PLPer, the students wrote and performed a skit entitled "Strikers and Scabs" that had been adapted from a *Challenge/Desafio* article. Other courses included Art, Math, English, and Spanish. Trips visited local parks and swimming pools. A Freedom School basketball team formed. Free lunches were provided. By the end of the first week, over 60 students had enrolled, and their numbers were to grow as the summer progressed. Parents actively participated in all phases of school activity.

Meanwhile, CAR continued to combine mass work with militant action against the rulers. The week of July 14, Mayor White announced his \$30 million school budget cutback, claiming that 1,200 teachers, aides, bus moni-

tors, and others were unnecessary for quality education because the Boston public school population was shrinking. Naturally it was shrinking—the schools were that bad!

When White announced these cuts, not a peep was heard from union leaders or Boston's established loyal opposition (NAACP etc.). Only CAR raised its voice. On July 17, the project called a picket line in front of White's posh Beacon Hill home. As the group was assembling on the Boston Common, the cops came and told the demonstration's leaders: "The Mayor said not to let you picket his house, so we aren't going to let you." So much, once again, for "free speech" against racism in the cradle of U.S. democracy. About 100 CAR volunteers tried to march anyhow. And, the very next day, 200 CAR members held a sit-in in White's City Hall office, while another 70 picketed outside. White stayed away, but his aides and the rest of City Hall were in a panic.

Clearly, BOSTON '75 was becoming more than a pinprick in the rulers' side. So far nothing had succeeded in stopping or intimidating the antiracist fighters. Moreover, the newspapers, radio and TV began giving reports about CAR activities. CAR's actions, its mass sixpoint petition drive, and its inroads in the labor movement could no longer be concealed. No matter how much

the media lied, they could not disguise the most significant new element of class struggle in Boston: an integrated, organized force was throwing down a challenge to racist ROAR and its bosses in City Hall, on Beacon Street, and in Washington.

RACISTS UP THE ANTE

The CAR sit-in at City Hall was the last straw for White and his ROAR allies. They decided to try

to rid themselves of the anti-racist movement. The "new" approach was to trap the CAR volunteers into combat with ROAR at unfavorable odds, and then arrest the anti-racists on phony felony charges. The occasion they chose was a July 23 unity meeting at a Hyde Park's school. When a group of fifteen CAR members and Hyde Park residents arrived at the school, they found the meeting room occupied by 50

Page 4 CHALLENGE September 18, 1975



C.A.R. and P.L.P. members escorted....Guilty of fighting racist anti-busing fascists.

Boston: Troop's Terror Tactic Shaky-

Rulers Fear Anti-Racist Line

ROAR members with weapons. The fascists locked the school doors. Suddenly, the police appeared, and instead of evicting the ROAR trespassers, they ordered CAR to leave. The CAR members returned to their headquarters, followed by the police and some of their ROAR side-kicks. The cops arrested seventeen people, including a volunteer doing his laundry across the street!. The arrested anti-racists were taken to the Hyde Park Station House, where a lynch mob organized by ROAR and the cops chanted, "Give us the n.....rs!"

But the next day, CAR members were back on the streets of Boston, picketing the West Roxbury Courthouse while the seventeen were being arraigned, canvassing and rallying in the streets, and running the Freedom School. The forces of racism were growing desperate. The antiracist movement was conducting business as usual.

WHITE-ROAR AXIS

It is worth noting the relation between ROAR and Boston's ruling class, particularly Mayor White. White had impeccable liberal credentials. He had entered politics as part of the Kennedy machine. He had been mayor since 1967. He was on excellent terms with ROAR. Six days after ROAR endorsed White's plan to take personal control of the

school board, ROAR leaders started getting jobs on the city payroll.

By late 1974, White announced that he would give ROAR city funds to oppose the busing program. White reminded ROAR of the services he had provided for the racist movement, including taxpayers' funds for an anti-busing appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court; advocating a change in the Massachusetts Racial Imbalance Law, which calls for integrating the public schools; and asking "... my staff to assist you as much as possible in staging your rallies."

ROAR could not survive without White and the rest of the ruling class. The patronage dispensed through Hicks to the other petty nazis served to ensure the loyalty of the open fascist forces to the big bosses. Left to its own devices, ROAR was little more than a gaggle of savage but inept slobs. It constituted a significant presence only insofar as it received publicity from the bosses' media, protection from the bosses' cops, and payoffs from the bosses' coffers.

The decision to unleash the combined forces of ROAR and the official state apparatus on the BOSTON '75 volunteers was made at the very least on the highest level of the Boston city government. By the end of July, the antiracist campaign had begun to have a telling effect on the city's

political climate. The rulers could no longer lay claim to complete mastery of the situation. The schools were due to open in another month. Thousands were responding favorably to the CAR program. If CAR's volunteers had enough daring to sit in at the Mayor's office—after—they had been victimized by a major frameup, what would they do next? More ominously, from the bosses' viewpoint, what would happen if some of the thousands who were signing the petition began to take action to win its demands?

CARSON BEACH I

Motivated by fear of this threat and following the recipe they had already developed for fascism, Boston's combined racist forces decided to raise the ante once again. The pretext was an incident that took place Sunday, July 27, on South Boston's Carson Beach. Six black bible salesmen decided to take Sunday off. They probably looked for the nearest beach on a map and chose Carson. While relaxing on the beach, they were attacked and brutalized by a mob of batwinging racist punks.

This incident was the most serious racist attack of its kind in a summer that had already been punctuated by a series of gang assaults against black people. Immediately, the press, the police, and the Mayor's office moved in to add more grist to the racewar

mill. Instead of apprehending and imprisoning the racists, the cops and newspapers suggested the absurd idea that a handful of black men had gone to Carson Beach for the purpose of provoking a fight. A ROAR leader was quoted in the *Globe* as saying "We've always welcomed good colored people on Carson Beach but we won't tolerate black militants and communists." However he added that no "colored" people ever came and blamed CAF and PLP for Sunday's incident. The bosses had made their point. Jim Crow was the law of the land in Boston.

CARSON BEACH II

The following Sunday, a similar fascist assault took place when, according to news reports, an even larger gang of batwielding racist attacked first a black taxi driver and then a Puerto Rican family in the vicinity of Carson Beach. The next day, the *Globe* and the *Herald* once again carried interviews with ROAR officials, who lied to justify these barbaric acts by asserting that CAR and PLP had distributed a leaflet that called for denying "honkies" access to the beach.

Mayor White and the police chiefs made fatuous utterance about allowing all citizens freedom to use the beaches but, once again, no arrests occurred.

The NAACP made a few cautious statements but issued no ca-

for action. The union leadership stayed mute.

CAR issued a call for "Beach Liberation Day" and urged masses of black, Latin and white Bostonians to go to Carson Beach the next weekend and assert their right to use it without being assaulted by ROAR's racist stormtroopers.

As soon as CAR issued its call White said that "free access" to the beaches did not include "provocative" demonstrations.

CAR's announcement provoked NAACP head Thomas Atkins, (who had told a CAR leader several months earlier: "We're going

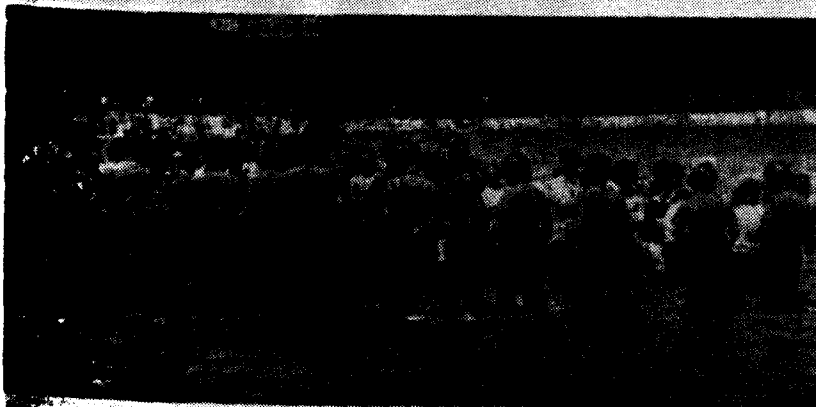
to drive you out of Boston"), to suddenly announce plans for his own "Carson Beach picnic" to be held in two days.

Despite Atkins's timing, which ensured that his event would be illorganized and, at best, modestly attended, two thousand black, Latin and white people participated in it.

CARSON BEACH III

As the demonstration assembled, a leader of the Trotskyite Young Socialist Alliance, urged the group to look upon what they were about to do as "an outing," a "picnic," and not a demonstra-

Boston: Carson Beach Swim-in 2,000 Confront Cops/ROAR



August 16. Placard's ugly head appeared over more openly here as could be seen by the formation of
crowd of cops at Carson Beach.

tion. He said he could guarantee police protection from the racists. A PLPer interrupted this treacherous drivel to state that the fight against fascism was no picnic, that this was a demonstration of anti-racist forces, and that if the action was attacked, it should defend itself without placing false hopes on the cops. The crowd cheered this speech.

A motorcade of about 200 cars proceeded to the beach, met by about 1,000 racists, whom the police had allowed to assemble on the beach. Eight hundred riot cops had positioned themselves between the two groups. As soon as the antiracists arrived within range, some of the racists began throwing bricks and bottles at them. The missiles were thrown right back. The cops then tried to force the antiracists off the beach, but under leadership from CAR members and PLPers, many antiracists linked arms and shouted militant slogans. A group of ROAR marshals broke toward the antiracist ranks, and the cops faked an attempt to stop them. Hundreds of black and white demonstrators chanted: "Let 'em come!" The ROAR thugs made a fast retreat.

In addition to ROAR and the uniformed cops, nationalist provocateurs attempted to divide the demonstration from within. They attacked several white antiracists as well as a number of black and latin people who opposed this ob-

vious attempt to cripple the anti-racist ranks. The provocation failed, as most of the demonstrators reaffirmed their commitment to multiracial unity and against ROAR.

The ruling class wanted to provoke a period of race war to exceed anything that had yet happened in Boston. White, Atkins, the nationalists, the Trotskyists, ROAR, and the police had all collaborated in organizing the Carson Beach "picnic" as a trap. The message: fight racism and you'll get killed. Only the courageous leadership of CAR members and PLPers and the militancy and solidarity of hundreds of workers and students succeeded in preventing a catastrophe.

The next day, rebellion broke out in different sections of Boston. The Carson Beach attack was the last straw for many black working class youth who had suffered their entire lives under racism and police terror. They fought cops with everything at their disposal. The police responded by running amok in ghetto projects, breaking into homes and unleashing trained killer dogs on elderly people and children.

The rebellion was somewhat tainted with nationalism. A few black youths stoned cars carrying white passengers or otherwise attacked white people. Given the racist atrocities that had taken place daily in Boston for years and

the absence until very recently of a mass campaign against them, this error was not surprising. The press reported the rebellion as "black-mobs-out-to-kill-whitey."

Meanwhile, ROAR escalated its fascist violence, leading indiscriminate mob attacks against black workers several nights in a row.

Some of the most serious physical and political attacks against BOSTON '75 took place during the week after the Carson Beach fight. The day after the beach incident a small group of CAR members were leaving a TV studio, when a ROAR goon squad of about 40 attacked with clubs and other weapons, including a machete. The antiracists fought back valiantly; they were able to make good their escape into a city bus thanks to the help of the white bus driver who slammed the door on the fascists and drove away. The CAR members went to Boston City Hospital for treatment. While they were in the emergency room, the cops showed up with the ROAR thugs and arrested the antiracists for "assault with a dangerous weapon."

BOSSSES' REDBAITING

In addition, the ruling class launched a red-baiting campaign. Suffolk County D.A. Byrne claimed that the violence at Carson Beach had been caused by "highly paid outside agitators" who had come to Boston to start

"racial disorders." He named CAR and PLP and said 18 special prosecutors would work 24 hours a day on the case. Deputy Police Supt. John Doyle told the newspapers that CAR members had thrown the first rocks at Carson Beach. And the lies went on and on. But the red-baiting campaign proved a complete fiasco. The task force of special prosecutors vanished as suddenly as it had appeared—without producing a single indictment. Most significantly, the workers of Boston didn't fall for the redbaiting. The organized fascist forces represented by ROAR failed to grow during the period after Carson Beach. Meanwhile, thousands of Bostonians continued to sign CAR's petition.

BOSTON '75's last major action was a demonstration planned for August 18, when the volunteers intended to present CAR's petition, with 35,000 signatures, to the regularly scheduled City Council meeting.

Weeks before, CAR had gotten a permit to march to Government Center. However, the mayor and the police had one more trick up their sleeves. Late Friday afternoon, three cops came to the CAR office with a letter from the traffic commissioner revoking the permit for the Monday march for no stated reason. The ruling class obviously thought that this timing would make it impossible for CAR to organize against the ban. Their

press announced that the march would not take place.

As usual, they were wrong. Early Monday morning CAR members and their lawyers went to court. The judge bent over backwards to help the police lawyers present their case. But they had no case, even by the lopsided standards of capitalist "justice." The cops' lawyer was reduced to arguing that since the commissioner had cancelled the march, it was too late to assign enough police to it. This he said despite the hundreds of cops stationed along the march route at that very moment—waiting to prevent it!

The judge faced the alternative between vindicating open fascism in a public courtroom or restoring the permit for the sake of the system's "democratic" facade. This time, the mayor and the police had gone too far, even by their own standards. The march took place, and it was one of the summer's highlights. Three hundred people participated in it. Thousands of workers watched from the street and shouted friendly encouragement to the demonstrators.

One speaker, CAR's chairperson, sent the crowd into a frenzy as he said: "We will turn ROAR into a mee-owl!" and then, pointing to Hicks, O'Neill and Co. who were watching from their cozy offices, led the demonstrators in giv-

ing these fascist cretins the collective finger.

The August 18 march provided a fitting climax to the BOSTON '75 campaign. Afterwards, most of the volunteers returned home to prepare for the new college semester. Some chose to remain in Boston to consolidate the gains made over the summer and to build both the Party and a permanent CAR organization in the city.

LESSONS AND WEAKNESSES

BOSTON '75 proved that a relatively small number of anti-racists can put the ruling class on the defensive and begin to turn fascism into its opposite if they are bold, take their line to the people, fight back every time they have to, and view each attack as an opportunity to make progress. Nonetheless, the project fell short of accomplishing a number of goals well within its reach. Future advances in the battle against racism and fascism depend today as much upon understanding and correcting these weaknesses as they did in 1975.

In the first place, the day-to-day work of BOSTON '75 was carried out by 150 volunteers at most. Given their numbers, what they accomplished was extraordinary. But their numbers could easily have been doubled if not tripled. The error did not lie in the lack of prior agitational material about

BOSTON '75. The project had been amply publicized. Rather, the error lay in the quality of anti-racist work that had preceded BOSTON '75 on the college campuses. Since its founding conference in 1973, the CAR organization had put forth a three-pronged strategy for students and intellectuals: organize against racist theorists, respond to major racist attacks in the community and elsewhere, and take the offensive against increasing devastation by racist college budget cuts.

On the campuses where CAR and its supporters in PLP carried out this program, large numbers of students and teachers became involved in the process of fighting racism; some militant actions took place; and the CAR organization grew. The problem was that these cases constituted the exception rather than the rule.

The result was predictable. How could CAR grow if it didn't fight racism? How could the party pull the mass movement toward the left and crush the growing fascist threat if it provided weak leadership on this question? Important political developments such as this are not rabbits to be pulled out of hats.

Because CAR and the party had not fought hard enough against the racist theoreticians, racist attacks in general, and the budget cuts, the hundreds of students

who could have been won to BOSTON '75 through these campaigns never materialized. The 150 who did come to Boston did not represent a significant new force of students won over to the anti-fascist movement in the course of recent struggle. The foundation for a breakthrough had not been laid.

This weaknesses forced BOSTON '75 to operate with narrower limitations than were objectively necessary and led to other shortcomings. Although the mass response of Bostonians to CAR's program and politics was excellent, the campaign never became as broadbased as it could have with a greater number of volunteers from various backgrounds. Other than through street agitation, no real attempt was made to reach workers in key industries in the greater Boston area. If CAR members and PLers had fought harder against racism locally in the two years prior to BOSTON '75, many more volunteers could have been signed up months in advance; the preparations could have been better organized; plans could have been made to get jobs in politically useful industries; a campaign to house the volunteers with antiracist Bostonians could have been launched.

The same criticism applies to the campus activities of BOSTON '75. Although most of the volunteers were college students, very little consistent student work took

place aside from regular bullhorn rallies at several schools. A planned petition campaign against racist budget cuts never really got off the ground. Attempts to enlist active support from antiracist professors were perfunctory at best. Here again, a larger group of volunteers who had already gained experience in fighting racism at home could have enrolled in Boston summer school programs and worked out strategies in advance.

The mass campaign that did take place around the sixpoint petition was the glue that held BOSTON '75 together. The 35,000 signatures gathered on it provided an eloquent statement of the needs and sentiments of most Bostonians. The figure represented an impressive accomplishment. However, it was far lower than the figure that could have been reached even if the number of volunteers had not increased. In the first place, the campaign was slow to start, and valuable time was lost in June. Secondly, like most things, the campaign was uneven once it did get underway. If 100 people had collected 20 signatures a day for 40 days, the drive would have reached 80,000 signatures. The figure was possible. Doubling the amount of signatures could at least have doubled the number of fresh local antiracist activists and new CAR members. It was within BOSTON

'75's grasp to make a good thing better.

PLP'S ROLE

Finally, a point should be made about the role of the Progressive Labor Party in the project. By spearheading the drive to smash the resurgence of racism from the first moment of the great working class ghetto rebellions of the 1960s, the PLP helped create a favorable climate for the development of CAR. By organizing the 1975 May Day March in ROAR's own bailiwick, the PLP helped put the fascists on the defensive and gave heart to antiracists everywhere. Furthermore, PLP gave full organizational and political support to BOSTON '75 itself. Many of the project's volunteers were also PLPers. As members and leaders, they canvassed, conducted agitation, fought the fascists when necessary, and participated in the countless other tasks vital to the campaign.

However, as in every case where the party tries to combine the fight for reforms with the fight for revolution, an opportunist danger develops. Many party members and leaders became so preoccupied with the daytoday CAR work that they neglected the task of creating an independent presence in Boston for the PLP. The most common formulations of this error were the questions: "How can I put forth CAR's program and the party line at the

same time?" or "How can I both sell *Challenge* and circulate the petition?" Experience showed that those who did both did more of either than those who didn't. The party's line linking racism, ROAR, and the economic crisis to the bosses' plan for war and fascism was the only explanation that could move the workers and students of Boston beyond the struggle for immediate demands to an understanding of the need for crushing the profit system. The fight against fascism cannot succeed unless under *all circumstances* the primary goal of the communists who help lead it is to destroy capitalism and build the revolutionary party.

These were some of the key weaknesses in BOSTON '75. We mention them here because nothing is perfect and because antiracists and communists have everything to gain by grasping and correcting the faults in their practice.

A RESOUNDING SUCCESS

With all its shortcomings, BOSTON '75's accomplishments derailed the fascist offensive planned for the beginning of school. The day before the schools opened, ROAR led a demonstration of 3,000 people at City Hall Plaza, down 80% from their demonstration the year before. Sporadic racist violence characterized the 1975-76 school year, but it never reached 1974-75's

proportions. ROAR's public activities dwindled to a series of poorly attended antiintegration "mothers' prayer marches." Hicks soon abandoned politics altogether. Shortly after BOSTON '75, the ROAR organization was dead in the water. The militant alliance of anti-racists and communists in CAR and PLP had killed it.

ROAR's demise provided the greatest of that summer's many political lessons. It showed that fascists can be beaten even when they are protected to the hilt by the bosses' state apparatus and made to seem invincible by the bosses' media. The battle of May Day had already exposed ROAR as a paper tiger. In the ensuing months, the tiger lost its fangs and claws. The BOSTON '75 volunteers were relatively few in number. Most had little experience in politics or class struggle. They were young, the majority in their twenties. They had to live on a shoestring. They confronted the daily fury of the ruling class's dictatorship. *Between June and September, the volunteers saw the inside of Boston's jails more than two hundred times.* Some people were arrested twice or even three and four times.

Yet they won a clear strategic victory. They proved that a small force of determined antiracists can shake the foundations of capitalist power, if they have revolutionary communist leadership

which puts forward a political line that corresponds to the deep needs and hopes of workers, and acts boldly and militantly.

The boldest of that summer's rallyingcries was the chant: "In Boston Seventy-five, the racists won't survive!" ROAR did not survive, but racism remains alive and well in Boston and throughout the world, because capitalism continues to survive. In the generation since 1975, the former ROAR member and South Boston Marshall Raymond Flynn has become Boston's mayor. The bosses' racist economic attacks have ground down every aspect of workers' lives. Unemployment has soared through the roof. The collapse of the schools continues. Racist violence continues to occur on a daily basis. The most oppressed working class sections of virtually every major city have become virtual concentration camps. The economic devastation of workers is worse than at any time since the Great Depression. Racist terror has become the order of the day from New York to California. The decline of U.S. imperialism, which had well entered its initial stages in 1975, has rapidly intensified.

The Party has also grown. In the years following BOSTON '75, it led scores of thousands in pitched battles with the KKK and the open Nazis. Its cadre are more firmly

embedded in the working class and the mass movement than ever before. Its political line has developed and sharpened. With PLP leadership collectives and clubs now established in a score of countries and on several continents, it has made significant strides toward leading a new international revolutionary movement that fights for the immediate abolition of the wage system and for egalitarian communism immediately after the seizure of power.

As for the BOSTON '75 volunteers, many remain in the Party today. Some have become important Party leaders. Some have children now in the Party. Others, a few, decided to abandon the movement. They spent the best, most productive moments of their lives on the hot streets of Boston seventeen years ago. Others left for a while, recognized their mistake, and returned to the movement. The Party welcomed them back with open arms. A new generation of youth, mostly working class, have entered the Party and have begun to lead it.

BOSTON '75 belongs to the living history of the Party and the working class. For three months, against great odds, communists and antiracists turned a great city upside down. In the future, we—and the workers—will turn the entire world upside down once and for all.

THE HEROIC WE, THE HESITANT I, AND THE TAKING OF COLOMBIA POINT

The dawn was rosy, the day was May Day 1975, and about 25 of us PL'ers found ourselves surrounded by fascists with a plan. Motorcycled members of Boston's Tactical Patrol politely removed—"for your own protection," they smiled—the wooden beams supporting our communist banners. Next they confiscated whatever steel-tipped rubber truncheons and *Chalenge/Desafio*-covered steel pipes

they could discover. Finally they left us alone, retreating with their great grins and little guns to the rear of the deserted shopping center.

The police helicopter pilot must have been happy too with his sky-seat view of this unfolding set-up: one sound truck with twenty-five of us seemingly defenseless guardians in an empty parking lot, isolated at the bottom of Columbia Point Hill—exposed to the racist wrath of at least one hundred heavily armed "sportsmen" hidden from our sight, gathering swiftly on the other side of the hill, equipped with baseball bats, hockey sticks, and rowing oars, incited by the flyers widely distributed the previous night throughout the South Boston Projects calling on all local bigots to protect their segregated white ghetto against the "coming invasion" of busses from all across the East Coast, integrated with thousands of black, Latin, Asian and white PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY members and friends determined to march that May Day.-

The grins on all the fascist faces would soon turn to grunts, however, for two reasons—one of which they should have realized and the other they could never come to know. First, in their glee at getting the weapons we had chosen to expose, they neglected to notice that all twenty five of us were attired in the latest of communist spring wear: spike-buckled

and take out an enemy leader, preferably the biggest boor we could find. As we began our gallop up the hill, our group-of-three leader pulled the two of us back, yelling: "Hey, wait up! I'm in charge here; I go first!" I was only third-in-command, thank god, and figured I could always rely on my numbers one and two. But as we met the enemy at the hilltop—since #1 insisted on being first and because I was slower than #2—I got there just in time to see the two of them being arrested by motorcycle cops who had tried to outflank us after they became astonishingly aware that we were advancing up the hill before ROAR had a chance to charge down it.

But I didn't have the luxury to contemplate the irony of my situation because I found myself face-to-chin with a hockey-stick-wielding behemoth about to beat my brains in, and I now knew why I'd always hated hockey. Instinctively I deflected the miserable stick with my left hand and whipped my unrolled belt at his disbelieving face with my right. Bleeding profusely from his puffy cheek, eyes agape in awe, he fled, dropping the hockey-stick, which I quickly picked up for the first and only time in my life, and which I naturally started using as if it were a more familiar baseball bat. As usual, I kept striking air only, but I nevertheless managed to empty the space around me of

enemies. How pleased I was to see them stepping over one another back down the other side of the hill away from the parking lot, beaten back toward the projects!

Next I noticed that this helter-skelter retreat was the pattern along the breadth of the hill, as by now all the cops were huffing to regroup behind us to block our return to the sound truck. I sensed my horror become elation when I felt the presence of the fattest beast in blue barreling up at me—baton drawn but gun holstered. I knew that evn slow-footed me would be able to bend below his blkcoated belly and disappear safely down the hill. I hurriedly helped to gather those of us who hadn't been arrest4ed or disabled so we could regroup for the counterattack which never came because by this time the buses—some with shattered windows but most unscathed—were rolling into the untaken parking lot and red-hatted reinforcements disembarked to guarantee the starting point's security for good.

Now that I found myself the titular head of the growing security forces, I followed the pattern instilled in me throughout the preparing for and carrying out of this assignment: I did what I could myself, and relied on others to do what I couldn't or didn't know how to do. Through quick and ongoing consultations with other arriving Party leaders, whatever

hesitancies I had about following through to ensure the integrity of the march itself dissolved as I subsumed any lingering fears and doubts in the Heroic We phenomenon I saw unfolding around me. Incoming comrades swarmed around the sound truck, congratulated us for successfully defending the command post, and took initiative after initiative to see to it that the personal safety and communal spirit of all our members and friends were maintained.

There was no need for me myself to solve every problem that was fast developing, or answer every question that was being asked. The Party Collective exhibited an almost instantaneous creativity under these still-tense conditions. But the main factor was that our mass heroism, based on our com-

mitment to egalitarian communism, melted away the enemy's menace and made May Day 1975 a signal event in my life particularly and in the life of the PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY in general.

A few comrades, it is true, ran up and down Colombia Point Hill, fought valiantly there, and then left the Party due to the rude, rough awakening of the threat of fascism that the day's events represented. But most of us twenty five defenders of May Day '75 have remained active PL'ers. The three of us, in fact, who were given the opportunity to lead this action are still responsible—these seventeen years later—in important ways for securing our Party's survival and growth under any and all conditions of fascism.

By C.P.