

Class Struggle Against Budget Cuts, Layoffs, Tuition Hikes Democrats Spearhead Capitalist Attacks on Public Education

“Recovery is here – or just around the corner,” claim the pundits paid to sing Wall Street’s praises, echoing Herbert Hoover from Great Depression days. “Not around here,” say students being forced out of school, workers being laid off, families foreclosed and evicted. Whatever way the arrows point on tomorrow’s stock market charts, which have little to do with the grim reality under the flickering numbers, we will get worse than nothing unless and until we join with the workers and oppressed to mobilize the power to take it.

That goes double when it comes to public education. Even before the current economic crisis, it faced a sustained attack from the capitalist ruling class; now the attack has turned into a full-scale onslaught. Spearheaded by the Democrats, from the Obama White House on down, this bipartisan assault is being felt around the country:

- At the City University of New York, annual tuition hike, plus budget cuts, TAP cuts – all courtesy of Democratic governor Paterson and the Democrats who control the state legislature. Social programs wait for the ax to fall, as weeks after the deadline the budget has yet to be voted.

- At one CUNY campus after another adjunct teachers are being laid off, while classes are overfilled to the bursting point and it’s harder than ever to get the courses you need.

- At colleges throughout Califor-



glassheadian

Above: Igor of Class Struggle Education Workers speaks to crowd at March 4 walkout at Hunter College (City University of New York). Right: Demands of the CUNY Internationalist Clubs.

nia, tuition has been jacked up by a whopping 33 percent. That’s not a tuition hike, it’s a program to kick students from poor and working families out of school.

- In black, Latino and immigrant New York City areas, the drive continues

to close dozens of public schools and replace them with privately run “charter” schools. After angry protests by students, parents and teachers, a court decision put the latest closings on hold, but billionaire *continued on page 3*



Tami Gold

Defeat Imperialist War/Occupation in Afghanistan and Iraq! Hey, Obama, Whadya Say, How Many Kids Did You Kill Today?

By Charlie Morán

On April 12, U.S. troops opened fire on a passenger bus full of civilians near a check point in southern Afghanistan (Kandahar province). Five civilians were killed and as many as 18 were wounded (*New York Times*, 12 April). That same day, hundreds of demonstrators went to the site where the wrecked bus was taken and angrily chanted slogans against the U.S. and Obama. A week later, a NATO military convoy in eastern Afghanistan (Khost province) fired on a vehicle carrying unarmed civilians, killing all four

passengers, including three teenagers. This makes at least 35 civilians reportedly killed by occupation forces since last summer. These are common and recurrent events in the every-day lives of the Afghan people. But the latest attacks on civilians by the U.S.-led forces were notable coming shortly after the release of a “classified” U.S. military video of a massacre in Iraq.

On April 5, the web site WikiLeaks put up the now-infamous video depicting the indiscriminate slaying of over a dozen people in the Iraqi suburb of New Baghdad, including two Reuters news agency staff. In the video,

U.S. helicopters gun down a group of people standing calmly in a Baghdad street. The helicopter team calls a video camera an AK-47 assault rifle, a tripod is labeled an RPG grenade launcher. Then they proceed to systematically shoot down the people who come to rescue the victims, including two children. We can hear on the radio the commander denying a request to airlift the wounded children to a U.S. military hospital, instead ordering them handed them over to the police of the Iraqi puppet government. Later on, the video shows the same helicopter firing missiles at a construction site,

where families were living in partly finished apartments. This was cold-blooded murder.

The video was “leaked” through the WikiLeaks website. The editor remarked on the jocular, matter-of-fact demeanor of the pilots as they mowed down their unarmed prey, describing it as just “a day at the office.” They call it S.O.P., “Standard Operating Procedure.” The Pentagon ruled the slaughter legal: the pilots went through the procedures carefully, and were properly authorized to murder those children with 30 mm bullets. After all, terror is an essential *continued on page 2*

Hey Obama...

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element of any imperialist occupation. In the movie *Disturbing the Universe* (2010), radical lawyer William Kunstler makes a great speech where he points out how most of the horrors you can name over the years were all done legally: “Jesus Christ: legal. Extermination of the Indians: legal. Sacco and Vanzetti: legal. The Holocaust: legal. Hiroshima and Nagasaki: legal. The Rosenbergs: legal. Vietnam: legal.” They followed the “rules of engagement.”

During the Vietnam War, antiwar demonstrators used to chant about Democratic president Lyndon B. Johnson, “Hey, hey, LBJ, How many kids did you kill today?” Now they should be chanting the same about another Democratic president, Barack Obama. But they aren’t. In fact, there have been hardly any sizeable antiwar demos since Obama became the candidate. Why not? Because the “antiwar” forces either openly or tacitly supported Obama. Iraq was called “Bush’s war,” even though the Democrats voted hundreds of billions of dollars for the war budget, year after year. We in the Internationalist Clubs have a different view. We don’t call for a “new, improved” U.S. foreign policy, we’re for the *defeat* of the U.S. imperialist war, and we seek to bring down the whole imperialist *system* through international socialist revolution.

An Everyday Occurrence

These massacres of civilians are a common occurrence in Iraq and Afghanistan under U.S. occupation. The one in Baghdad shown on WikiLeaks came to the attention of the media because two of the victims were journalists for the Reuters news agency. What about all the others? It took three years



Ahmad Masood/Reuters
Afghan students protest wanton killings of civilians, particularly youth, by U.S./NATO occupation forces.

for this video to be released, how long will it take to find out about all the atrocities the U.S. led forces have committed in the Middle East since 2001?

In Afghanistan alone, where the U.S. has admitted it’s losing the war, there have been more than 2,000 civilians killed according to United Nations reports. In the early morning hours of last December 8, U.S. forces killed 15 civilians in Laghman province. This set off a violent protest of hundreds of residents of nearby villages who took to the streets carrying the bodies of the slain to place them in front of the governor’s house. During the protest, Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers opened fire killing one person.

A day later, thousands of university students blocked the Kabul-Jalalabad highway protesting the killings. The official report from the NATO-led “International Security Assistance Force” (ISAF) claims that only

“militants” were killed. Again, demonstrators carried slogans against Obama, Afghan puppet president Hamid Karzai, U.S. forces and the Afghan army. A third protest took place in Kabul on December 10, carried out mostly by women, who were protesting against government corruption, war crimes and the Taliban.

Out of all of these atrocious massacres of innocent lives – in many cases of women and children – the most chilling and sinister was the execution-style killing of eight children on December 27 in Ghazi Khan village in the Narang district of the eastern province of Kunar. These children in grades 6th, 9th and 10th were dragged out of their beds in the middle of the night, handcuffed and then shot (*London Times*, 31 December 2009).

Recall that President Obama announced his decision to send 34,000 more troops to Afghanistan on December 1. This brings the U.S. total to 100,000, added to some 35,000 “allied” troops in the ISAF, and over 100,000 “contractors.” There were several protests the day after Obama spoke at West Point, but most – if not all – were tiny. In New York City at Times Square the protest only drew about 100 or so protestors. The organizers had no signs against Obama, even though he is the commander in chief of U.S. imperialism. But the CUNY Internationalist Clubs, along with the Internationalist Group and Class-Struggle Education Workers (CSEW) had the biggest visible contingent with bright signs denouncing Obama and the Democrats.

Certainly, even if the demonstrations had been larger, this alone would not have stopped Obama from escalating the war in Afghanistan. No ritual marches begging the government for “peace” or different budget priorities for imperialism (“jobs/books/education/health care, not war”) will stop this monstrous war machine. What’s called for is class war against imperialist war. Thus we fight for *workers strikes against the war*, and point to May Day 2008 when ILWU dock workers shut down every West Coast U.S. port to stop the war on Iraq and Afghanistan. Lenin and Trotsky showed the only way to peace: mobilizing the one power greater than U.S. military might, the international working class, to defeat “our own” government in this war on the road to international socialist revolution. We will have peace when the workers of the world take power. ■

Down with Racist War on Drugs! Abolish All Gun Control and Drug Laws!

Free Lil’ Wayne!

By Fred Bergen

The Grammy-winning rap music artist Dwayne M. Carter, Jr., better known as “Lil’ Wayne,” was sentenced on March 8 to one year behind bars. As he was taken in handcuffs from a Manhattan court to Rikers Island jail, hundreds of fans gathered at the courthouse to show their support for the popular artist. Inside, Mr. Carter pleaded guilty, in a deal with New York state prosecutors to reduce his sentence from two years to one with the possibility of release in eight months for “good behavior.”

But Carter is innocent! The “crime” for which he is serving time on Rikers – “weapons possession” – is not a crime at all. It’s even supposed to be guaranteed by the Constitution. On 22 July 2007, cops in Manhattan found Carter smoking marijuana after a performance at the Beacon Theater. On this basis they raided his tour bus and found a semi-automatic handgun. Prosecutors claimed that DNA evidence linked the gun to the rap star. So what? Carter didn’t so much as threaten anyone.

This is a *victimless “crime”!* The same goes for the charges he is facing in Arizona: a January 2008 police search of his tour bus at a border checkpoint allegedly found various illegal drugs and a handgun on board. An Arizona judge issued a bench warrant for Carter because he failed to appear at a hearing in that state – while he was in jail in New York! *We demand that “Lil’ Wayne” Carter and all those jailed under the “war on drugs” and “gun control” laws be freed, now!*

Carter is a wealthy music star and CEO who can hire a powerful legal defense. Good for him. In racist American “justice,” a black defendant needs a million-dollar “dream team” just to stand a chance. But most people convicted of drug and weapon offenses are poor black and Latino men who have no effective defense against the onslaught of police, prosecutors, prison, probation and parole officials determined to lock them away for as long as possible. After serving punishing sentences for their “crimes,” finding employment is nearly impossible.

There are *over two million people* behind bars in the U.S. More than one in three are black, although African Americans account for only about 12 percent of the U.S. population. Most blacks in prison are there for non-violent drug “crimes”: only about 10 percent of black prisoners were convicted of anything violent. This is not some incidental error in legislation that could be reformed away. The prisons, police and courts are the backbone of the capitalist state, an organized system of violence that maintains the rule of the minority who profit off of the masses who must work to survive.

It will take a *revolution* that unites workers of all races to put an end to this monstrous racist injustice system, just like it took a *civil war* to end slavery once and for all.

Liberals and reformists look to the mass civil rights movement of the ’60s as an inspiration for struggles today, whether its the “antiwar” movement, the gay rights

Revolution



Internationalist signs at protest in Times Square, New York City, December 2.

Visit the League for the Fourth International/
Internationalist Group on the Internet

<http://www.internationalist.org>

Write to CUNY Internationalist Clubs: cunyinternationalists@gmail.com

Revolution

Newspaper of CUNY students from the Internationalist Clubs, for the program of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky, published in accord with the Internationalist Group, U.S. section of the League for the Fourth International



Revolution is published by Mundial Publications, P.O. Box 3321, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008, U.S.A. Telephone: (212) 460-0983 Fax: (212) 614-8711 E-mail: cunyinternationalists@gmail.com

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April 2010

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mayor Michael Bloomberg and his (anti-) school czar Joel Klein intend to steam-roller ahead.

- In schools from Central Falls, Rhode Island to Kansas City, Missouri, the entire teaching force and staff have been fired. In a March 1 speech to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Obama praised the “strategy” of mass firings and the decision to “lay off the faculty and the staff.” His education secretary, Arne Duncan – top gun in the privatizing, union-busting crusade – talks of 300,000 teacher layoffs this year.

- Everywhere, students and graduates are sinking into massive debt, saddled with unpayable school loans, with no prospects of ever getting out from under. Student loans have reached \$100 billion a year, and already last year the default rate was the highest in more than a decade.

Who Can Defeat These Attacks, and How?

No way around it – the fight is political. And no fight can be won without knowing who your friends and enemies are, and what is really involved.

To defend public education, you have to fight the politics, parties and politicians owned and operated by those who run this society for their own profit. Pious slogans about justice and goodness are empty talk – what’s at issue here is power.

As the new face of capitalist class rule, Barack Obama and the Democratic Party used slogans about “hope” and “change” to

movement, or protests against racist police brutality. Liberal civil rights leaders spoke for sections of the tiny black middle class that sought influence within the Democratic Party. But the vast majority of black people in America are condemned to the most impoverished layer of the working class. Capitalism in its decline cannot create any other place for millions of black working people.

Since the bottom line under capitalism for everything from housing to “public” education is money, *de facto* segregation has never ended. The legal end to Jim Crow that was achieved at the cost of so much blood and sacrifice did not extend to the north, because it did not touch the foundations of American racism, which lie in the capitalist economy. The infernal regime of police, prisons and the racist death penalty, a system of persecution of non-violent “criminals,” is necessary for the capitalist rulers to keep a lid on this situation.

Every serious struggle of the working class and black people for liberation has encountered violence from the forces of the state and from KKK-style terrorists. From black soldiers fighting against slavery in the Civil War to the Monroe, North Carolina NAACP in the 1950s and the Deacons for Defense in Louisiana in the ’60s, armed self-defense has been vital for blacks. It is no less so for the labor movement. Gun-control liberals say the only ones allowed to have guns should be the police, like the University of Florida-Gainesville cop who shot Ghanaian graduate student Kofi Adu-Brempong in the face on March 2. Proletarian revolutionaries oppose all restrictions on gun ownership and uphold the right, and underlining the importance, of organized workers self-defense. ■

Hunter Internationalist Club played leading role in 5 March 2009 campus protest, then joining with 75,000 teachers and municipal workers in march on NYC City Hall. Demonstrators picked up our chant, “Students and labor, shut the city down.”



hype their program of expanding imperialist war, occupation of Haiti, mega-trillion bailouts to bankers, health “reform” prescribed by the uber-thieves of the insurance industry... The onslaught against public education is part of the package.

Students need to mobilize massively to defend our right to education. But we cannot do it alone. The struggle for our right to be *in* class – instead of kicked to the curb by this rotten system – is a *class struggle*. We need to link up with the *power* of the working class, which keeps everything going in this society and can bring it all to a stop.

To accomplish this, “student politics as usual” won’t cut it; in fact, it’s a bankrupt cover for tailing the Democratic powers that be. The truth is that defending our right to education will require struggles as convulsive as those that won open admissions at CUNY back in 1969 (a big gain for the working class, which the city’s rulers later dismantled), and mobilizations by key sectors of the multinational, multiethnic working class.

It’s been over a year since we launched the slogan “Students and workers, shut the city down” – which has caught on and is now chanted at many protests – to express the need for a class-struggle mobilization, pointing towards the fight to genuinely make education a right for all through a socialist revolution. How do we get from here to there? The first steps are to tell the truth about what we’re facing, putting forward a program to defend our *right* to education as part of bringing students and youth into the struggle to help build a revolutionary workers party.

This perspective is light years away from what’s preached by student and union bureaucrats, liberals and those groups that misuse the name “socialist” while tying students into pressure politics, opposing any clear break from the ruling class.

March 4 Protests and After

On March 4, there were significant protests against the attack on public education. In California a number of education unions carried out work stoppages, while students occupied buildings (and at UC Santa Cruz, an entire campus); in most other places, including New York, it consisted essentially of demonstrations.

It’s good that there is protest, and as discussed in our leaflets reprinted below, Internationalist Clubs activists, together with militants from the Class Struggle Education Workers, played a key role at the Hunter College rally on March 4. In doing so, we told the truth about the Democratic Party and the need for students to look towards

mobilizing workers power as the key to defending education.

In contrast, official protest organizers did their best *not* to attack the Democrats, and in fact allied with them, giving Democratic city councilman Charles Barron a starring role at the downtown rally in front of Governor Paterson’s office. Barron preached working *with* Paterson, vowing to broker a meeting with him by student and faculty union leaders – which he later “accomplished.” This means of tying protesters to the capitalist party that is running the government and attacking our right to education.

Reformist groups go on about building a “movement” to defend education, but by itself this is just a way to blow off steam. This is the stock in trade of such groups as the International Socialist Organization (ISO) and Workers World Party, whose bloc for March 4 continues as a catch-all coalition. A clue to their mindset came in spring 2009 when the ISO argued for waiting to hold the main rally against the CUNY tuition hike until *after* the vote on the hike had been held. This makes no sense for anyone seeking to actually *stop* the attacks, but did fit in to the perspective of using student anger for endless “movement-building” on a reformist basis.

In the aftermath of this year’s March 4 protest at Hunter, on-line discussions have multiplied, often focusing on how building occupations fit into student protests. In some circumstances, occupying a building can be a useful tactic, *if* it is part of mass protest, has significant outside support (particularly in light of threats of police repression), is seriously prepared and organized, and has clear objectives. (See “Inside the New School

Occupation” *Revolution* No. 6, April 2009, or on line at <http://www.internationalist.org/nyunewschooloccupations0902.html>.) Much of the Internet debate, however, has consisted of grandstanding from anarchists posing under the name of “insurrectionists” (as if!) on one side, versus tidy preachments of respectability from social-democratic reformists on the other.

The anarchists accuse the respectable reformists of just wanting endless empty protests – which is true. The social-democratic types (prominently the ISO) accuse the anarchists of engaging in adventurist stunts with no mass backing – also true. In this war of words between estranged cousins, neither side poses the slightest idea about mobilizing the *power* of the working class. Despite occasional lip service to workers as one more constituency group, both have a narrow student-centered outlook. Strikingly, *both steer clear of the crucial political question of how “alliance” with Democratic politicians chains protesters to the capitalist system. Anarchists and the more open reformists share a program of class collaboration. The classic historical example – on a far bigger scale and with catastrophic results – is their joint service to the bourgeoisie in the “popular front” that led workers to terrible defeat during the Spanish Civil War.*

Today, the task of breaking from the party of Paterson, Duncan and Obama is on the order of the day and urgent in every field of struggle. What it means is joining in the effort to build a revolutionary workers party. The longer this is put off, the worse things will get. Beginning on page 4, we reprint Internationalist Club statements on the events of March 4.



CUNY Internationalist Clubs greet TWU transit workers during October 2009 union march and rally. Transit workers’ 2005 strike paralyzed traffic in NYC.

Democrats, Republicans Put In the Knife – We Need a Class-Struggle Workers Party

Students and Labor: Shut the City Down Stop the Assault on Public Education

MARCH 4 – Across the country, public education is under attack. Last fall, the University of California ordered a whopping 32 percent increase in student “fees.” UC faculty and staff held a one-day strike in September. A three-day system-wide strike in November joined with angry student protests and occupations. A one-third increase in the cost of attending college is not a tuition hike – it’s a purge. A class and race purge, because large numbers of poor, working-class, black and Latino students will be pushed out of school.

In New York, the same thing is happening – only in slow motion. Last year, the Democrats in Albany rammed through a 14 percent tuition increase. This year, Governor Paterson has a bill to allow the CUNY Board of Trustees to raise tuition annually, beginning with an increase of up to 10 percent this year! Think you’re going to cover the increase with TAP financial aid? Think again – Paterson’s budget calls for a \$75 per student cut in the Tuition Assistance Program.

Democrat Paterson’s budget calls for \$84 million in cuts to CUNY senior colleges, and \$285 per full-time student at the community colleges. Republican mayor Bloomberg’s budget calls for \$25 million in additional cuts to community colleges. All this despite a record increase in CUNY enrollment. Altogether, Paterson wants to slash \$2.7 billion from education and health care, while Bloomberg is threatening to cut 2,500 teachers’ jobs, and lay off 18,500 city workers.

To top it off, the Metropolitan Transit Authority, that den of real estate speculators and experts in double-entry bookkeeping (in their case, two different sets of books), are filling a “newly discovered \$400 million budget gap” by ordering 1,000-plus layoffs of transit workers, including 500 station agents, and canceling public school students’ free Metrocards. The cuts target every section of working people, while the bankers award themselves \$150 billion in bonuses.

Bottom line: the budget cuts and tuition increases affect YOU. Thousands of CUNY students could be forced to drop out. California education unions, students,



Morgan of Class Struggle Education Workers, speaking at March 4 rally at Hunter College: “Let’s talk power. We’ve got to organize, students and labor. Transit workers, in 2005, shut the city down. The Democrats, the Republicans, they’re organized. We have to make our own power. We’ve got to start now.”

faculty and staff have called a March 4 national “Strike and Day of Action to Defend Public Education.” In New York, CUNY and SUNY students along with faculty and teachers unions (PSC, UFT) are protesting outside Governor Paterson’s Manhattan office, then marching to MTA hearings. The time for labor and students to act is now. **All out on March 4!**

BUT to effectively fight the assault on public education, it is essential to understand where it is coming from, and what are the forces that can defeat it. As in every serious battle, we have to know who are our friends, and who is the enemy. To begin with, we are in the middle of the most serious economic bust since the Great Depression of the 1930s. The attacks on public education are part of a broader offensive to make workers pay for the capitalists’ crisis.

Another key factor is that the U.S. is mired in an *imperialist war*. Washington doles out trillions of dollars to shore up Wall Street banks, while spending hundreds of billions to bomb Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and elsewhere. Once again, various leftists repeat their slogan, “money for education, not for war.” Unions and student governments send caravans to Albany to beg for “investment” in education. Won’t happen. Why not? Because

it’s not a matter of budget priorities, but of fundamental ruling-class interests.

The labor-initiated call for the March 4 actions says, “We can beat back the cuts if we unite students, workers, and teachers across all sectors of public education.” A second call for a “National Day of Action to Defend Education” by student and leftist groups appeals vaguely to “Take a Stand for Education!” While referring to the economic hard times, both calls ignore the fact that this is a *crisis of the capitalist system*. What will decide this fight is not pressure politics but *power*. A day of action uniting education workers – or two, three, many days of protests, marches and walkouts – would still be far from enough to do the job.

Moreover, the whole approach of building a “movement” on a lowest-common-denominator platform is aimed at winning the support of capitalist politicians, who can make a meaningless gesture “for education.” In New York, one of the invited speakers is Democratic city councilman Charles Barron. And a slew of calls, press releases and statements by organizers of the March 4 Day of Action studiously avoid a vital fact: the assault on public education comes straight from the top, from the Democratic Congress and Democratic president Barack Obama.

To defeat the attack on public education will take the power of a mobilized working class, politically prepared to take on the capitalist ruling class.

The capitalist attack on public education is not just because of the recession/depression. It’s also the result of a worldwide drive for privatization. In the late 1970s international financiers and money managers realized that their profit rates were declining. A drive to “open up” the Soviet Union and East Europe to capitalist markets offered a new area for exploitation. Ripping up unions allowed them to lower wages and raise the rate of exploitation.

And education could be turned into a

new profit platform. Vendors of “educational services” are making out like bandits. Outright privatization was tried, like Edison Schools Inc., but didn’t produce the desired return on capital. So they opted for semi-privatized “charter schools.” Hedge fund billionaires love them. In exchange for some tax-deductible seed money, investors get access to a steady cash flow of tax dollars.

In higher education, raising (or introducing) tuition is the name of the game. So following the guidelines for “market-oriented” higher education, the Mexican government signed on a World Bank loan of US\$180 million, stating that: “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” (quoted in *Marxism and the Battle Over Education* (2d edition), a special supplement of *The Internationalist*, January 2008).

The attempt to introduce student “fees” in 1999 set off a massive strike by the quarter million students at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), lasting ten months. Our comrades of the Grupo Internacionalista played an important role in the strike, sparking a worker/student defense guard to defend the campus occupation. Although the strike ended with the mass arrest of 1,000 students, the attempt to make students pay for university education was defeated.

The same forces are at work here. Six years ago, University of California executives promised BNY Mellon, a Wall Street bank, that they would jack up tuition in exchange for billions of dollars in loans to finance a construction spree. In early 2009, UC took on \$2.15 billion in tuition-backed loans. Interest alone on these newly contracted loans would amount to more than half the \$170 million in “savings” from furloughs imposed on university employees last year. And in November, the trustees fulfilled their promise to the banks by hiking tuition.

It’s not just about money. Higher education, and the rest of the school system, is being aggressively resegregated. As a result of the elimination of affirmative action, ordered by the U.S. Supreme Court, less than 4 percent of students enrolled at the University of California are black.

At CUNY, education used to be free – until the lily-white institution was opened up to minorities and working-class students via open admissions following the 1969 CCNY occupation. Ever since then, college administrators and capitalist politicians have repeatedly raised tuition. In 2001, amid the war frenzy accompanying the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, CUNY ordered “undocumented” immigrant students to pay out-of-state tuition. CUNY Internationalist Clubs grew out of the struggle that partially thwarted this racist attack.

At the same time, public schools are being closed and invaded by non-union charters. The program is carried out by billionaire mayor Bloomberg and his schools chancellor Joel Klein, but they are backed to the hilt by the White House and Congressional Democrats. Obama’s “Race to the Top” scheme demands that states allow more charter schools if they want federal education funding. What this means is that education entrepreneurs are running “public” schools like a private real-estate investment trust (REIT).

The *Village Voice* (23 February) re-

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In December 2005, 35,000 NYC transit workers paralyzed the center of international finance capital.

Lockdown U? No Police State at Hunter College!

Tami Gold



On March 4, Hunter College was crawling with NYPD cops, as CUNY administration sought to thwart campus protest.

MARCH 9 – Last Thursday, March 4, hundreds of Hunter students walked out to protest tuition hikes and budget cuts that are part of a nationwide assault on public education being pushed from the White House, the governor’s office and City Hall. Adjuncts, who face the threat of layoffs, and other faculty joined the protest too. Repeatedly, the crowd picked up the chant “Students and labor, shut the city down,” which we launched in the previous round of struggles to defend the right to education. Many would later head downtown to join citywide protests in front of Governor Paterson’s office and the MTA hearings.

“Whose school? Our school!” was one of the most popular chants. We are exercising our most basic *rights* when we protest hikes and cuts that amount to a “race and class purge” of CUNY. But the Hunter administration turned Hunter College into “Lockdown U.” For them, it was one big opportunity for a show of force; as a speaker from Class Struggle Education Workers (CSEW) told the rally, Hunter looked like a “correctional facility” last Thursday. Jails, not schools – that is what the bankers, real-estate speculators and other capitalists who control the city (and CUNY’s Board of Trustees) have in mind for working-class, black, Latino and immigrant youth.

So on Thursday a massive police presence swarmed the halls and doorways, seeking to intimidate would-be protestors and, actually, *everyone* in what the administration hypocritically calls “the Hunter community.” The cafeteria was locked tight; NYPD officers rushed to stop protesters from having any sound amplification outside the building; students and faculty expressed outrage at people being denied entry to campus for hours afterwards if they could not show Hunter ID. If you wondered what the CUNY administrators want to accomplish by installing turnstiles and “controlling access” to Hunter, you saw it in action March 4. *Welcome to “Turnstile World.”*

Last fall, campus cops told cafeteria workers they were “not Hunter employees” as they tried to block them from protesting the administration bringing in a company that tried to slash their health coverage. The response to March 4 should be to demand: **Cops off campus! No turnstiles!** The administration and Board of Trustees should be abolished and replaced by representatives democratically elected by students, faculty and campus workers.

A pretext for direct police intervention in the March 4 rally was provided by the actions of a small group of supposed “anarchists,” who assaulted and threatened activists involved with organizing the protest, including Childhood Learning Center defense activist Luz Schreiber, as well as the vice president of the Internationalist Club when she stepped in to defend Luz; a leader of the faculty union; and a spokesman for the International Socialist Organization, which also had its club office viciously defaced.

These provocations are the *opposite* of any real radicalism (including the views of sincere albeit mistaken anarchists). Predictably, they were eagerly seized on by the Hunter administration as an excuse to ramp up repression. When the provocation and police intervention opened up a dangerous vacuum at the rally, which could have broken down in chaos, we along with CSEW activists and others kept the rally going to maintain the focus on the struggle for “No tuition hike, no budget cuts, no layoffs.”

Since this incident, a furious exchange of e-mails and Facebook postings has opened up in which the “anarchist” supporters outrageously try to cover up the vile attack on Hunter activists, while some others go after “off-campus students” and pose the issue as one of “the Hunter community” against interlopers from other schools. Both the use of violence against demonstrators and railing against “outsiders” aid the administration’s attempts to seal off and clamp down on pro-

test at Hunter. The fact is that the assault on public education which CUNY students are facing is citywide and nationwide in scope.

The situation at Hunter and CUNY is tied in with the racist closing of 19 more NYC schools, the “educational colonialism” that implants charter schools in Harlem and makes PS 198 on 96th Street a shameful example of “separate and unequal” segregation, as exposed by the *Village Voice* (Feb. 23). It goes together with the images flashed on NY1 of a young black student being manhandled by a burly MTA guard as she was testifying against the plan to take away students’ Metrocards, and the looming layoff of a thousand subway and bus workers while service cuts target one community after another.

To **defeat** these attacks, we must ally with and help mobilize the **power** that actually can shut the city down, as shown by the 2005 transit workers’ strike: the power of the multiracial working class. But to do this, as Internationalist Club and CSEW speakers stressed, it is necessary to face the political issues in this struggle – first and foremost, the need for a thorough-going break with the Democratic Party, which from President Obama down to Governor Paterson is openly driving the current assault on public education.

In our March 4 leaflet (“Students and Labor: Shut the City Down – Stop the Assault on Public Education!”), the CUNY Internationalist Clubs noted that an approach

based on class struggle is worlds away from reformist groups’ “whole approach of building a ‘movement’ on a lowest-common-denominator platform... aimed at winning the support of capitalist politicians.... In New York, one of the invited speakers is Democratic city councilman Charles Barron. And a slew of calls, press releases and statements by organizers of the March 4 Day of Action studiously avoid a vital fact: the assault on public education comes straight from the top, from the Democratic Congress and Democratic president Barack Obama.”

So what actually happened at the rally in front of Governor Paterson’s office on March 4? While students from schools around the city were in a fighting mood, the rally there was a *routine* affair, with union and student bureaucrats making ho-hum speeches about “unity” while Democratic councilman Barron became the star of the show. He put out some militant-sounding phrases and then proceeded to openly *support Paterson*, claiming the budget-ax governor would work with students to reverse the cuts, and asking Paterson (and Obama) to please “represent us.” *Thus, exactly as we had warned, reformist organizers made a platform for class-collaboration with the very party that is leading the attack on workers, students, and the peoples of Iraq and Afghanistan today.*

The bottom line is: you really can’t fight to defend public education, to restore open admissions and no tuition, you can’t effectively oppose police repression, racism and war – unless you fight their cause: *capitalism*. This is true from NYC to Oaxaca, Mexico; from Puerto Rico to Paris to Port-au-Prince. That’s why in the mobilizations against the tuition increase and budget cuts a year ago, we appealed to and got the support of workers and unions from around the region, as we also did in the 2001 struggle against CUNY’s “war purge” of undocumented students out of which the CUNY Internationalist Clubs grew. This is a *class* struggle.

This is what we mean when we say that students must unite with workers to shut the city down. The will to fight is there, as you could see in the outpouring of anger against school closings from hundreds of black, Latino and working-class white students, parents and teachers at the January 26 hearings in Brooklyn, and in the heated opposition to the MTA plans for layoffs, service cuts and taking Metrocards away from students. What’s needed is leadership with a program to win. As Internationalists, we are working to help build such an international revolutionary leadership. An effective struggle to make the schools really ours, for all the working people and the oppressed – free of cops, tuition, growing inequality and administrations that are creatures of Wall Street – this can be accomplished if and only if it is part of the fight for socialist revolution. We invite you to join us in this fight. ■

Hunter Internationalist Club
9 March 2010

Message from Mexico

As our comrades at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) wrote in “A Message from UNAM to CUNY” (reproduced in the pamphlet *Defend Immigrant Students – Stop CUNY’s “War Purge!”* [2001]), reflecting on lessons of the 10-month Mexican student strike at UNAM:

“Karl Marx observed that in our time, every real class struggle is a political struggle. Thus, in order to win struggles today it is necessary to have the right politics and the right policy.... [There’s no use in] relying on the idea that the bourgeoisie would eventually give way to the reason and justice of the students’ demands. Yet the reason and logic of the capitalists is nothing but the logic of profit. What this means is that it is necessary to have a strategy of mobilization directed against capitalism’s key points.”
And this means, they continued, that for a student struggle to win, it must be “backed by class-struggle mobilizations (including strikes) of the working class itself.”

Letter to The Envoy

To the Editor
March 12, 2010

The Hunter Internationalist Club wishes to address your coverage of the March 4 student protest against the assault on public education (*The Envoy*, March 9-23).

We object to your sensationalist claim that the protest “turned into a violent rally.” The rally was *not* “violent,” and to spin it that way is scare-mongering. The real violence is being done by the ruling-class attack on our right to education, backed up on March 4 by police occupation of Hunter.

A *pretext* for direct police intervention in the March 4 rally was provided by the actions of a small group of “anarchists,” who assaulted protesters including the vice president of our club. These provocations are the *opposite* of any real radicalism. The Hunter administration used them as an excuse to ramp up repression.

It’s not a question of the “Hunter community” versus “outsiders,” as some pitch it. As students and faculty quoted in your articles commented, it’s the Hunter administration and NYPD who are turning the campus into a “police state.” Your coverage noted that many students and faculty were outraged at people being denied entry to campus for hours afterwards if they could not show Hunter ID. Cops threatened to arrest a student as soon as he tried to use a bullhorn outside Hunter West.

In our leaflet of 9 March (“Lockdown U.? No Police State at Hunter!”), we emphasized that this is the latest escalation in the drive to turn Hunter into a little sealed-off “national security state.” The installation

of turnstiles is a key part of their plan to “control access.” The response should be a struggle to *stop the turnstiles*. Meanwhile, the “crime” of possessing markers was reportedly one of the charges against those arrested on March 4. We demand that all the charges be dropped now.

The real story is that the government (from the White House to Albany to City Hall), ruling-class parties (Democrats and Republicans) and CUNY administration are attempting to drive out large numbers of students. Their tuition hikes and budget cuts are a “race and class purge” against black, Latino, immigrant and other working-class students. In attacking our freedom of speech on March 4, the Hunter administration tramples the most basic rights of us *all*. Throughout the city, the NYPD metes out racial profiling, stop-and-frisks and worse daily to countless youth (more than half a million “random” stops last year, over 80 percent against blacks and Latinos), many of whom live in fear that they could be the next Amadou Diallo. We demand: *cops off campus!*

To defeat the attacks on public education it is necessary to unchain the *power* of the multiracial working class. This is above all a political question, calling for a break with the Democratic Party, which from the President and Congress to the Governor and the state legislature is leading the war on public education, and the colonial occupation of Iraq, Afghanistan and now Haiti. Sincerely,

Kirstine Jungkurth, President
Hunter Internationalist Club

Internationalist Club Greetings to Puerto Rican Student Strike



Striking students outside entrance to UPR campus at Río Piedras, April 26.

Beginning on April 22, students of the University of Puerto Rico have been on strike protesting the attack on the university by Governor Luis Fortuño. Beginning as a two-day shutdown of the UPR, it has become a full-fledged strike and occupation of the main campus at Río Piedras in the San Juan area. The CUNY Internationalist Clubs sent the following message of solidarity:

To the students on strike at the University of Puerto Rico

From the City University of New York (CUNY) we send enthusiastic greetings of solidarity. Your militant resistance against cuts to the budget of the UPR, against the elimination of tuition exemptions and against privatization should be an inspiration to students, teachers and education workers who are under siege all over the United States. Here at CUNY we are also facing a wave of budget cuts, layoffs and tuition hikes. Under the guise of the economic crisis, the right to education is under attack, while Wall Street enjoys trillions of dollars in credits from the “bailout” of the banks.

We in the CUNY Internationalist Clubs, who fight for open admissions and no tuition, see defense of public education as a class struggle. The capitalists are seeking to reorganize the educational system

in their interests, carrying out a “race and class purge” which would limit access to higher education to an elite. In order to resist this onslaught, it is crucial to bring the power of the working class into play. Thus the support to the UPR student strike by the FMPR (teachers), UTIER (electrical workers) and UGT and CGT union federations has a tremendous potential to defeat the attack by the colonial government.

Joint mass action by the students and workers – in Puerto Rico, the U.S. and elsewhere – is key to winning. “Student power” is an illusion, but together with the working class we have the power. In our view, the demand for free, quality public education for all, along with other democratic demands (including for the independence of Puerto Rico) will only be assured when those who produce the wealth take power and extend socialist revolution internationally.

With your courageous strike and occupation, compañeras and compañeros of the University of Puerto Rico, you are making an important step forward for the international movement. From the heart of imperialism we extend our hearty embrace of solidarity.

Victory to the UPR strike!

CUNY Internationalist Clubs
April 26, 2010

the NYC labor movement, and because the union leaders are beholden to the Democratic Party. It was the Democrats in Albany who had courts and cops enforce the Taylor Law, ordering prison and crippling fines for strikers.

Today, Obama pushes the corporate education “reform” program of “merit pay,” charter schools, attacks on teacher tenure. He has now endorsed the firing of all teachers and staff at a Rhode Island school. At the time of the 2008 elections, the bulk of the reformist left (including the International Socialist Organization, Workers World Party and others) sought to promote the false “hope” in “change” from the popular new president.

The Internationalists, in contrast, said “No to Teacher-Basher Mc-

Cain and Education-for-War Obama.” We called to “Break with the Democrats – For a Class-Struggle Workers Party.” We’re not the only ones to see that there’s a class war going on. Mega-capitalist Warren Buffett said it, adding that “my class is clearly winning.” We aim to change that. ■



Caitlin of the Hunter Internationalist Club at March 4 rally: “We know what’s going on. 30% of Paterson’s cuts have been targeted toward higher education. Education is a right, not a privilege.”

Class Struggle Education Workers



Kirstine of the Hunter Internationalist Club at March 4 rally: “We need to mobilize. Students and labor, shut the city down! We have to break with the Democrats. We have to break with all capitalist parties.”

Students and Labor...

continued from page 4

cently profiled one school, PS 198/PS 77, that is literally cut in half by a *color line*: black and Latino students and their teachers are forced by police to go in the back door, while white students get out of their limos to enter the front door in a separate school for the “gifted”! The “gift” here is money.

We have denounced this charter school invasion as “educational colonialism.” Class Struggle Education Workers, a union tendency in the UFT and PSC, has actively fought to “Stop racist school closings.” The ordered closing of a score of public schools, including many of the largest high schools in the city, has sparked an outcry among black and Latino students and parents,

which exploded at a January 26 hearing of the mayor’s puppet education panel.

What’s needed is to galvanize the anger into a powerful class force that can defeat the privatizers and budget ax murderers of public education. A year ago, on 5 March 2009, as 75,000 teachers, municipal workers and students took to the streets against threatened cuts, the CUNY Internationalist Clubs chanted, “Students and labor, shut the city down!” This call was taken up by hundreds of CUNY students. This is not an “academic” matter: a citywide strike by a major union could stop the Wall Street budget hackers in their tracks.

The 2005 transit strike showed that we have the power. It was defeated because the transit workers were left to hang alone by

Mexican Students Defend Electrical Workers

By Alicia Paredes

The Comité Internacionalista is a youth group in political solidarity with the Grupo Internacionalista (GI), Mexican section of the League for the Fourth International. Located at the campus of the College of Sciences and Humanities in southern Mexico City (CCH-Sur), a junior college that is part of the National University (UNAM) system, the Comité seeks to win student youth to a program of international workers revolution. Like the Internationalist Clubs at the City University of New York, this includes concretely allying with workers in struggle. We print below the report of comrade Alicia on the work of the Comité Internacionalista in the struggle to defend the Mexican Electrical Workers union, the SME.

In Mexico, October 2 is commemorated every year as the anniversary of the 1968 massacre of students ordered by the government of Gustavo Díaz Ordaz to smash a tenacious student strike that had spread to campuses nationwide. The brutality of the Tlatelolco Massacre has become one of the defining events of the one-party regime of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) that ruled the country from 1929 to 2000. More generally, Tlatelolco has come to symbolize the brutal nature of capitalist rule in Mexico. Thus in times of social unrest, the annual October 2 protests are not just about events in the past, they intersect current struggles of the workers and oppressed. This past October 2 [2009] was no exception.

On the eve of the march, government spokespeople made clear threats against the SME through their semi-official mouthpieces in the media. That day, the “opinion” column in the Mexico City daily *Milenio* by Joaquín López Dóriga detailed the government’s political-military strategy to deal a mortal blow to the most important independent union in the country. In order to create a legal pretext to “requisition” (seize) the power plants of Central Light and Power (LyFC, which services Mexico City and the surrounding states of central Mexico), the government sought to push the workers into

striking by denying legal recognition of the elected leaders of the union. So in preparing our contingent for the October 2 march with slogans expressing our proletarian-internationalist politics, we included signs saying, “Defend the SME!” and “Government Hands Off the SME!”

As López Dóriga had foretold, on October 5 the labor secretary in the government of President Felipe Calderón, of the clerical-rightist National Action Party (PAN), announced that he was withdrawing official recognition of Martín Esparza, the leader of the SME. This was the first blow. Having been warned of the military operation set to take place should it strike, the union decided to act cautiously. Meanwhile, the Grupo Internacionalista called an emergency rally in the Philosophy and Literature Faculty of the UNAM at its main campus, Ciudad Universitaria (University City), for Wednesday, October 7. We warned that an all-out government attack on the SME was being launched, with the clear aim of destroying the oldest and most powerful independent union in the country.

We denounced the whole system of government recognition of union elections,¹ a mechanism for bourgeois control of workers organizations, and we stressed the urgent need to mobilize in educational institutions in solidarity with the workers facing attack

¹ Called the *toma de nota*, which supposedly is just “taking note” of who was elected. This procedure is regularly used by the government to arbitrarily impose or remove officials.



Contingent of the Comité Internacionalista at CCH-Sur forms up during November 11 national work stoppage. Banner says there will be no solution from courts and Congress, calls for strike committees in schools and workplaces and a break with all bourgeois parties and politicians.

by the bosses. We organized a group of activists who went to the SME offices, and were able to get some electrical workers to attend the rally. Attendance by students and workers was rather limited, but we were able to establish initial contact with the electrical unionists. From that point on, the Comité Internacionalista at CCH-Sur began intense agitation seeking to mobilize students, staff and faculty at the campus in defense of the SME.

Dispensing with the legal pretext, on October 11 President Calderón took the decisive step in his union-busting drive: shortly before midnight, hundreds of federal police officers and army troops (backed up by Mexico City police) seized Central Light and Power installations in Mexico City, as well as in the state of Mexico, Hidalgo, Puebla and Morelos, expelling the workers who were there to keep watch over the plants. In the early morning hours, a presidential decree was published according to which the state-owned company was declared “extinct,” thereby eliminating at a stroke the jobs of 44,000 electrical workers. Claiming it was an “unprofitable” company that ate up more money than it made, the government hoped to put an end to the workers’ resistance, offering severance packages which the media lauded as “generous” and satisfactory.

The workers’ response was not long in coming. Already by 3 a.m. on Sunday, October 12, Insurgentes Avenue (the main north-south thoroughfare of Mexico City, a block away from the SME offices) was filled with electrical workers calling on their leaders to lay out a plan of action. A few hours later, on Sunday morning, there was a big march of electrical workers protesting outside the interior ministry (Gobernación) against the government’s draconian measure. The Comité Internacionalista and Grupo Inter-

nacionalista participated in the march, with signs calling to “Prepare a General Strike – The Blow Against the SME Is an Attack on the Entire Working Class,” and to break with all the bourgeois parties and forge a revolutionary workers party.

The Comité Internacionalista at CCH-Sur emphasized from the beginning the need to carry out work stoppages in the schools and educational institutions in order to prepare a strike by the workers movement as a whole, the only way to defeat the union-busting offensive by the bosses’ government. And we warned that this call for class-struggle mobilization was counterposed to the policy of class collaboration, specifically the subordination of the “independent” unions to the “popular front” around the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) and its erstwhile presidential candidate, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, widely known by his initials, AMLO. The leadership of the SME laid out its program of “struggle” focusing on legal defense in the capitalist courts and parliamentary pressure tactics by the “comrade deputies” of AMLO’s Broad Progressive Front (FAP).

Contrary to the demands of the union ranks – who in every assembly and demonstration chanted “strike, strike, strike!” – the SME leadership called for dialogue with a government that “dialogues” like Díaz Ordaz did in 1968 (with riot clubs and machine guns). Against this perspective, the Comité Internacionalista sought to mobilize students to shut down the schools, pointing to the need for a general strike in central Mexico. At CCH-Sur we organized several meetings and student assemblies, joining students in other junior colleges and university faculties who wanted to defend the electrical workers. That’s when the political battle began.

At the UNAM and its various affili-



Students march in support of electrical workers during national work stoppage, 11 November 2009.

ated schools a number of self-proclaimed socialist groups are active, including some who call themselves Trotskyist. The role they play is not that of organizers of working-class action against the attacks of the bourgeoisie, but instead they act as left-wing tails of the popular front. Their task consists of preventing radicalized students from taking up a program of class struggle that would break the “unity” with supposed “progressive” sectors of the bourgeois ruling class. This was made clear at CCH-Sur when collectives linked to the reformist Partido Obrero Socialista (POS – Socialist Workers Party) and the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT – Revolutionary Workers Party)² joined forces with the university network of support for López Obrador to impose the politics of the popular front. Together they formed a “Bloc of Organized Students” which dedicated itself to sabotaging any real attempt at mobilizing the students in support of the SME.

In particular these supposed Trotskyists fought tooth and nail against the call by the *Comité Internacionalista* and other radical students for a campus shutdown in defense of the electrical workers. Leon Trotsky would have been revolted at the outrageous antics of these reformist imposters who abuse his name – although less so these days, as Morenoites and Mandelites fall over each other in calling for amorphous “anti-capitalist” parties which throw overboard any vestigial reference to Trotskyism.

Together with our comrades of the *Grupo Internacionalista*, we actively pushed for a massive student contingent to participate in the SME march called for October 15. Going from classroom to classroom, holding on-the-spot rallies in our and other schools, we were able to pull together a class-struggle contingent of dozens of students who chanted our slogan, “Neither PRI, nor PAN nor PRD – Workers to Power!” Responding to the widely popular slogan, “If there’s no solution, there will be a revolution!” we chanted, “If there’s no revolution, there won’t be a solution!” With dozens of red flags emblazoned with the symbol of the Fourth International, with banners and signs, we made use of the demonstration to stress the need for a genuine policy of class struggle to put a halt to the bosses’ offensive. We distributed thousands of leaflets putting forward this perspective.

Following the huge demonstration of October 15, when hundreds of thousands of people filled the streets in downtown Mexico City, a number of meetings and assemblies were held. At the end of October, a packed assembly at the SME headquarters was attended by workers from the SME and other unions along with many students and organizations. The thrust of just about everyone’s remarks was about preparations and setting a date for the national strike. The CI and GI called to break with the parties of the bourgeoisie and the popular front that has been built up around the PRD and AMLO, and to carry out actions together with unions and schools in order to prepare the way for a general strike.

It was agreed with other CCHs to shut down schools for one day, November 4, and to send out groups of students to other workplaces to agitate for the strike. The *Comité Internacionalista*, however, was the

² Followers of the late pseudo-Trotskyists Nahuel Moreno and Ernest Mandel, respectively. The PRT has long been part of the popular front, for example as a member of López Obrador’s Broad Progressive Front (FAP).



Marco Pelaez/La Jornada

Thousands of electrical workers rally outside Palace of Justice, calling on court to issue an injunction against the mass firing. The courts denied the request. SME leadership called on workers to look to Congress and courts, yet these are part of the apparatus of the capitalist state.

only group that carried out what was agreed upon. We made posters and handed out thousands of leaflets, explaining why we have to defend the SME and what was the only way to do so. We arranged for a group of electrical workers to go from room to room with us almost every day, as well as participating in the rallies we organized at the school. We called several meetings to begin to organize the shutdown of the campus. It was then that the Bloc of the POS, PRT and supporters of the PRD showed with pristine clarity its true character when it began agitating *against* the 24-hour shutdown that was being prepared. They argued that one couldn’t go over the head of the SME leadership, which was then promoting a national work stoppage for November 11, 12 or 13, and that one should join those actions and set aside any sort of “isolated” actions. Using this purported tactical pretext, these fake leftists began to organize *scabbing*.

We explained both to the members of this rotten bloc and to students in general that what was needed was not a “national civic work stoppage,” such as the SME leadership was promoting, but a general strike of the working class, and that such a strike could only be organized if the workers in the independent unions freed themselves of the bourgeois politics of their popular-frontist leaders and mobilized on a program of genuine class independence.

On November 3 an assembly was held that was attended by about 200 students in CCH-Sur, in which the two sides were clearly delineated with sharply counterposed positions: to break with the popular front and mobilize working-class action, as we called for (with the backing of an anarchist collective), or to subordinate the exploited and oppressed to a supposed “democratic” sector of the national bourgeoisie, as the Bloc advocated. The Bloc took the podium and began demagogically haranguing the students against the class-struggle position of shutting down the campus the next day.

The discussion was mainly between members of the *Comité Internacionalista* and the groups that made up the Bloc. The Bloc kept saying that any shutdown prior to the national work stoppage would “wear down the movement,” and that one had to follow the instructions of the SME. We pointed that the SME leadership, with whom we were in contact, had never opposed having a walkout on November 4, and on the contrary, some felt this could serve as a

spark for the nationwide action.

The initial vote count by supporters of the Bloc was carried out in a sloppy and underhanded way. The Bloc declared that the position of opposing a campus shutdown on November 4 had won. But it appeared to us (the students who supported a shutdown) that we had the support of at least half those present, so we loudly demanded a vote by written ballots. That was done, and when the vote went against them, the members of the Bloc stalked out of the assembly.

All afternoon there was agitation on campus as the two sides appealed to the students: we, on the one hand, calling for shutting down the campus along with the other CCHs, and the Bloc seeking to prevent this by any means. Their scabbing was backed by the campus authorities, who not only provided them with a sound system but also quickly reproduced a scab leaflet free of charge for the Bloc which accused those of us who favored a shutdown of being violent and anti-democratic. From their administration-supplied loudspeaker, the Bloc chanted “¡Paro no, paro no!” (No shutdown, No shutdown!). Professors in league with the CCH administration joined with the Bloc in agitating against a shutdown, while the *Comité Internacionalista* and anarchist collectives which supported a walkout mobilized intensely.

At 8:30 p.m., an assembly had been called to discuss what had occurred in the afternoon. Campus officials went around to classes rounding up students to vote against a shutdown. At the assembly, the supporters of the PRT and POS along with various professors close to the administration called for not carrying out “desperate actions,” accusing us of being against the SME and attempting to carry out a shutdown without its authorization! There was a new vote, and this time with the active participation of the authorities and a conscious effort to appeal to the most backward elements in the student body, the opponents of a shutdown won.

During the discussion, a member of the POS claimed it was a “lie” that other CCHs were going to shut down. But the next morning it turned out that the CCH in Azcapotzalco in the northern part of Mexico City did carry out the 24-hour shutdown. So we dispatched a brigade composed of supporters of the *Comité Internacionalista*, the *Grupo Internacionalista* and other students. We spoke with the activists at the CCH-Azcapotzalco, and faced with the threat of

a violent attack by *porros* (thugs backed by the administration) we went to a picket line of the workers at the Colegio de Bachilleres, a preparatory school, who were on strike and who agreed to send a group of workers to the CCH to guard the campus occupied by the students.

In the following days, the *Comité Internacionalista* kept agitating for a general strike, while the Bloc distributed a leaflet calling us ultra-leftists and irresponsible. A number of SME workers went to the CCH-Sur and together with us continued going from class to class and holding rallies. Many of them voiced their support and appreciation, and later this contact enabled us to hold forums in the school while the *Grupo Internacionalista* set up a Marxist study group with electrical workers.

A week later, on November 10, the union of workers at the National University, STUNAM, voted to join the national civic work stoppage the next day, stopping work at 12 noon. Also on the 10th there were student assemblies and the call for a campus shutdown on November 11 won. The day began with a march by the STUNAM and groups from CCH-Sur to the National Pedagogical University where a brief rally was held with the workers who joined the march. The *Comité Internacionalista* had a banner reading, “Against the Bosses’ Attack, General Strike! Break with AMLO and His Bourgeois Popular Front! Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!” This enraged the PRT, which attempted to censor us: one of their supporters who claimed to be a member of the SME threatened our comrades, almost getting to the point of physical violence. After we returned to campus after the march, an assembly was held where the STUNAM denounced these threats against the CI. The SME electrical workers went further, saying the fellow who had made the threats was a “phony,” and chased him off campus.

The political battles have continued since then. We were able to win to the *Comité Internacionalista* a number of the students who wanted to do something to defend the SME. For many, the struggle made clear what our revolutionary program means. They saw the popular front in action, working hand-in-glove with university authorities to prevent a walkout, and clearly understood the need to fight against it. They have also seen the need to forge the revolutionary leadership that the working class urgently requires.

Today the struggle of the SME electri-
continued on page 10



Poster of *Comité Internacionalista* calling for November 10 student assembly at CCH-Sur to shut down campus the next day in solidarity with the SME.

Revolution

Fascist Provocation Thwarted at Mexico City Junior College

By Alicia Paredes

On Friday, February 5, posters appeared at the College of Sciences and Humanities campus in southern Mexico City (CCH-Sur) announcing a supposed study group on Adolph Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. The organization which called the event, the "National Socialist Party of Mexico" (which has led a shadowy existence for the last decade), said it would carry out the event in a CCH classroom where they would discuss "raceology," the supposed "science" which these latter-day Nazis claim shows the "superiority" of the Aryan "race" over the rest of humanity. Clearly this was a provocation and a threat to students, workers, faculty and staff at the College.

The lessons of history are clear: fascism is not a marginal group of crazies with screwball theories but a means by which the bourgeois ruling class seeks to mobilize the enraged petty bourgeoisie for counter-revolutionary violence. In the face of such a provocation there must be an immediate response: mobilize the exploited and oppressed to root out the fascist danger before

it can organize and send its shock troops to destroy workers organizations.

Faced with this threat by the "PSNM," the Comité Internacionalista set out to mobilize students, workers and professors at the CCH. We put out a leaflet (excerpted below) which was widely distributed on campus. We got a solid response: on February 10, dozens of students and professors together with workers of the Mexican Electrical Workers Union (SME) and the Union of Workers of the National University (STUNAM) at the campus came out to stop this provocation. The "study group" never took place, and the fascists didn't dare show their faces.

But the next day, fliers from the same Nazi outfit were shoved under the doors of the cubicles of the Comité Internacionalista and an anarchist group threatening our spokesmen personally.

It is no accident that such provocations are occurring in the context of one of the most important struggles waged by the working class in Mexico in decades. For the last seven months, electrical workers

have been resisting the attack by the bosses' government under the right-wing National Action Party (PAN), which dissolved the state-owned light and power company in order to break the union. But despite the heroic resistance of thousands of electrical workers, the struggle has been hamstrung by the SME leadership's subordination to the "popular front" tying the workers to bourgeois parties and politicians.

Seventy years ago, Leon Trotsky wrote that the popular front and fascism are the last recourse of the capitalists to head off workers revolution. In recent years, as workers' struggles have spread from Oaxaca teachers in the south to miners at Cananea in the north, the leaders have sought to limit the unrest by chaining the struggles to the popular front. Meanwhile, Mexico's rulers have sought to intimidate students with attacks by groups of *porros*, thugs (often armed) backed by university authorities and the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which for decades ran the country. In some cases in Mexico City, students have been killed by gunmen.

Historically, fascistic anti-communist groups in Mexico have started out on university campuses. However, at CCH-Sur, an attack by a dozens of *porros* in April 2008 was broken up as hundreds of students mobilized to drive out the goons and shut down the campus to protest university complicity. The Comité Internacionalista, which had been agitating on campus for student-worker defense against the *porros*, played a leading role in this struggle and sparked an assembly to organize a student-teacher-worker rapid response team.

The SME workers' struggles have stuck a chord on the campuses where hundreds of students have come out to show solidarity. Another object of the reactionaries' ire currently has been the issue of gay marriage, which was recently legalized in Mexico City. The Comité Internacionalista and Grupo Internacionalista say that to stop the fascists in their tracks it is necessary to mobilize the working class together with students, women, gays and lesbians and all those oppressed by capitalism.

Nazis Out!

On 10 February our comrades of the Comité Internacionalista at CCH-Sur and the Grupo Internacionalista de México mobilized over one hundred students, teachers and workers to stop a group of fascists from organizing on their college campus in Mexico City. We translate below excerpts from the leaflet of El Internacionalista.

Is the phantasmagorical "PNSM" a creature of the internet? A handful of wannabe storm troopers with genocidal fantasies? Whatever the case may be, the lesson of history is that the fascist danger must be crushed before it can grow. It's no coincidence that the Nazi scourge appears out of nowhere just when the reactionary bosses' government seeks to destroy the Mexican Electrical Workers Union (SME). The SME is the principal workers organization not under direct state control, and has been a bastion of opposition to the capitalists' privatization programs. At the same time, the union-busting *porros* in power have launched a campaign against the miners of Cananea, birthplace of the Mexican revolution, with an attack on "endless strikes" – which the regime itself provoked.

The fascists are not acting of their own accord. They offer their services to do the "dirty work" of powerful capitalist class forces. Therefore, to confront this provocation, denunciations issued from the ivory tower are not sufficient, no matter how numerous and necessary they may be. To respond forcefully we must turn to the only power capable of breaking up the fascist danger: the workers movement. *Shoulder to shoulder with the workers of the SME, STUNAM (UNAM Workers Union) and other unions, students and professors must massively mobilize to sweep away this provocation and kick the fascists out of UNAM.*

Historically fascism has been a mortal threat to the organized workers movement, and to all who fight for democratic rights. The result of the Nazi nightmare has been seared

onto the memory of the world, with its extermination camps where 12 million died, 6 million Jews and also Roma ethnic minorities, gays, and leftists. But it is rarely explained how it all began. The fascists – Mussolini in Italy and later Hitler in Germany, served as shock troops for capitalists to strangle the ever more palpable spectre of proletarian revolution. The Communists were the first to be sent to the concentration camps.

Likewise rarely mentioned is how fascist rule was ended: after the German imperialist invasion of the USSR left 25 million Soviet citizens dead, the Red Army succeeded in defeating Hitler's *Wehrmacht*, trampling the swastika underfoot and unfurling the red flag over the Reichstag in Berlin. The USSR achieved this despite the terrible role played by Stalin, who sabotaged the defense of the Soviet Union. Stalin executed the most experienced military cadres of the Red Army and ignored insistent warnings of the Soviet intelligence network, refusing to believe that Hitler would break the non-aggression pact they had signed.

In Mexico, the grotesque Nazi propaganda of "favored races" would condemn 90 percent of the country's population. Even so, there have been examples of home-grown fascism such as the ravings of José Vasconcelos¹ and his "cosmic race," a disgusting effort to justify the "racial superiority" of the "mestizo" Mexican bourgeoisie. Above all, *synarchism* would serve as a breeding ground for fascists with its shock troops of Golden Shirts, modeled on Hitler's Brown Shirts and Mussolini's Black Shirts. The synarchist movement was the declared heir of the *cristeros* who took up arms in 1926, at the call of the Vatican, to undo the separation of Church

¹ Vasconcelos was a nationalist and admirer of Hitler, president of the National University of Mexico 1920-1921 and Secretary of Education 1921-1924. He published *La Raza Cosmica* in 1925, and was sub-commandant of the National Synarchist Union, an ally of the Spanish Falange.

and State established by the Mexican Revolution's Constitution of 1917. The present government of Felipe Calderón seeks to rehabilitate the *cristeros* and bury all that remains of the Revolution of 1910-1917, even removing it from the history textbooks.

In reality, Mexican governments have turned to fascist and fascistic elements time and again against the left: *El Yunque*, the *Tecos*, the MURO² are all linked to the National Action Party (PAN) of Calderón and former president Vicente Fox, whereas the

bonapartist Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) preferred to use shock troops directly organized by the state apparatus, like the *Halcones* (Falcons), the *Brigada Blanca* (White Brigade) and the Olympia Battalion. Nor should we forget that the founder of the National Revolution Party (PNR, which became the PRM, Party of the Mexican Revolution, and later the PRI), Plutarco Elías Calles, copied Mexico's corporatist labor laws from Mussolini's Italy.

It would not be surprising, then, if the Nazi provocation in CCH-Sur were authorized in one way or another by the administration, or that it benefits from the protection of the campus police force, Auxilio UNAM. (Its sponsorship of *porro* groups



is another reason why this police force should not be part of STUNAM.) In recent years, various fascist groups have attempted to organize at UNAM. During the student strike against the increase in student fees in 1999³, the "Party of Mexican Eagles" (PAM) crept out of the shadows trying to stimulate anti-Semitism, taking advantage of the hatred of the strikers for the cynical rector (chief executive) of the University Barnes de Castro. Thus graffiti appeared at various locations on campus attributed to the PAM saying "Death to the Jew Barnes." Therefore, comrades of the Internationalist Group responded immediately by calling on the student assemblies to paint over these

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³ See the Internationalist Group pamphlet, *Mexico: The UNAM Strike and the Fight for Workers Revolution* (March 2000).

University of Florida Cop Shoots Immigrant Student in Face Defend Kofi Adu-Brempong!

Drop All charges! Cops Off Campus!

On Tuesday, March 2 at 8:17 p.m., a University of Florida Police "Critical Incident Response Team" arrived at the campus residence of Kofi Adu-Brempong. Adu-Brempong is a black immigrant from Ghana who is studying at UF Gainesville for his Ph.D. and taught undergraduate geography classes. According to police, he had been showing signs of emotional distress over fears that he would be deported.

Police said they came in response to a 911 call by a neighbor who reported screaming coming from the apartment. Adu-Brempong told them through the closed door that he was OK and asked them to go away. Instead, the officers evacuated neighboring apartments and told other neighbors to stay indoors. Then the cops burst through the door and began to shock him with a Tazer stun gun. Then they shot at him with bean-bag bullets. Finally, officer Keith Smith shot two live rounds at Adu-Brempong's head with an M-4 assault rifle.

The police claimed that this whole incident took place over 1-1/2 hours. The story from the victim and the neighbors is entirely different. Adu-Brempong was unarmed and says the police didn't even warn him before they opened fire. A video by a neighbor indicates that it was only 52 seconds between when police broke down the door with a battering ram, entered with their guns drawn, and fired five shots.

With a shattered jaw and a bullet lodged in his cervical spine, Adu-Brempong was chained to a bed at the University of Florida hospital and charged with aggravated assault on a police officer and resisting arrest. (No cop suffered any injuries.) Police guards would not allow any visitors until his sister-in-law came up with \$10,000 bail on March 30. They kept him shackled although Adu-Brempong is frail and walks with a cane because of a childhood case of polio. Now, in addition to the bail and legal expenses, Adu-Brempong has to pay medical bills since he is no longer in custody.

This wanton police shooting provoked widespread outrage on campus. On March 15, hundreds of students, faculty and other Gainesville residents marched through the University of Florida campus to protest. They presented a petition of demands to the



Protest at University of Florida April 6.

University president and trustees. On April 6, some 250 people rallied on campus and spoke with university and police officials. More recently, protesters rallied at the state attorney's office in Gainesville.

There should be an outcry around the country demanding that all charged against Kofi Adu-Brempong be dropped, *now*. This grotesque incident should also throw a harsh light on racist police violence. The cop who shot Adu-Brempong was a former city police officer who with a group of drunken cops went marauding through a black neighborhood throwing eggs at "suspected prostitutes and drug dealers." The cop who fired the Taser has used pepper spray on a woman stopped on a bike, fired a Taser at an "under-age drinker" at a concert and handcuffed a "jaywalker" to a stop sign.

It's also worth noting that UF Gainesville is where on 17 September 2007 campus cops "tazed" student Josh Meier for asking Democrat John Kerry questions after the former senator gave a speech on campus. Now there are demands for an "independent review board" of the police and an "independent grand jury investigation." Yet grand juries are run by prosecutors, and "independent" civilian review boards *cannot* make a dent in police violence, for the job of the police is to "serve and protect" the interests of the ruling class.

Racist police brutality is the foundation of the American capitalist order and won't be reformed away – certainly not by liberal coalitions with local Democrats, as Students for a Democratic Society and the International Socialist Organization are doing. Instead of calling for "dialogue," investigations and review boards, protesters should demand *all cops off campus*. The answer to racist police brutality is for the multi-racial working class to ally with students and the black, Latino and immigrant population in building a workers party to fight for socialist revolution. ■

Mexican Students...

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cal workers has been thrown back. The court cases promoted by the leadership have all been a bust, as we predicted they would be. In Congress, PRD and PT (Labor Party) senators and deputies have done nothing for the union. SME union leader Martín Esparza is saying that their struggle will be part of the presidential campaign of Andrés Manuel López Obrador ... for the 2012 elections! By then the electrical workers' jobs will be long gone. Now the leadership is promoting the desperation measure of a hunger strike.

More than 18,000 SME members have

honorably and courageously refused to accept the government's bribe of severance pay, and shown that they are willing to fight on. But the popular front has taken them far down the road to defeat. This struggle has shown many times over the urgent need for a leadership that bases itself on waging class struggle, not relying on false allies with a program of class collaboration. For those of us in the Comité Internacionalista who have gone through the battle with the reformist strikebreakers, the experience has only strengthened our revolutionary convictions. We couldn't have had a better lesson than in this "school of hard knocks." ■

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graffiti and denouncing the poison of racism and anti-Semitism.

So what is the shadowy "PNSM"? A recent report of the InterPress News Service (2 February) on the multiplication of fascist groupuscules in Mexico states: "The National Socialist Party of Mexico (PNSM) is active on the Internet ... [with an] ideology based on 14 principles referring to racial supremacy." Among its principles are that "democracy in the Western world today is the precursor of Marxism, which would be inconceivable without the former." So in order to annihilate Marxism they seek to annihilate bourgeois democracy and institute a genocidal fascist dictatorship.

This is not a matter of freedom of speech: fascism does not seek to convince with arguments but to overcome with violence. It organizes shock troops to destroy workers organizations, and student organizations that take the side of the workers as well. Just like the *porros* (some of whose groups proclaim themselves fascists), on occasion they receive financing of sectors of the bourgeoisie and act with the approval of the government or the school authorities who want to silence the voice of the workers movement and its allies on campus. Only the independent mobilization of the working class, side by side with students and teachers, can effectively eradicate the poisonous presence of fascist groups.

It is incumbent on all of us to stop the fascists before it becomes too late. We invite you to join the united-front demonstration to stop the fascists from entering CCH-Sur to spread their racist venom. Don't let them their provocation. They should get the hell out and never again set foot on any UNAM campus!

For a joint mobilization of the students, workers and professors to smash the fascist provocation at CCH-Sur!

Fascists, *porros* and cops out of UNAM!

No to the PRI, PAN, and the PRD: *Workers to power!*

Forge a revolutionary workers party that fights for international socialist revolution!

Arizona Racist Law...

continued from page 12

Africa's infamous "pass laws," requiring blacks to carry special internal passports, or fugitive slave laws in the pre-Civil War U.S. The comparisons make a point, but it won't just be a result of the Arizona law. *Every day more than 30,000 immigrants are detained in the United States and sent to more than 350 detention centers around the country.*

Racist forces around the U.S. are hailing the Arizona law as a model for the kind of anti-immigrant witchhunting they are demanding. Meanwhile, just about everyone to the left of Adolph Hitler is using the opportunity to pose as a false friend of immigrants by making a few mild criticisms of SB 1070. Because of President Barack Obama's description of the racist bill as "misguided," many immigrants' rights groups are calling on the federal Justice Department to carry out an "investigation" of whether it will violate civil rights. Others look to the courts to declare the law in violation of the U.S. Constitution, for preempting federal legislation on immigration. Many groups are calling to "boycott Arizona," now dubbed the "hate state."

Yet not all Arizonans are responsible for

this racial-profiling law: at that rate, why not boycott the U.S. as a whole for its racist laws and imperialist wars? For the biggest threat to immigrants is not from right-wing yahoos but from the *federal government*. The biggest immigrant hunters are not fascist Minuteman vigilantes but the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) police. Under Democrat Obama's "Homeland Security" chief, former Arizona governor Janet Napolitano, the Justice Department has set (and almost reached) a goal of 400,000 deportations a year, more than double the number in 2006 under Republican George Bush.

Now liberal Democrats led by New York senator Charles Schumer are circulating a 26-page "conceptual framework on immigration." Any "reform" they would pass would be a further attack on immigrants. The Schumer "concept" includes greatly expanding border patrols, increasing the number of ICE police, imposing thousands of dollars of fines on immigrants who seek to legalize their status and introducing a national identification card with biometric data. For undocumented immigrants, the U.S. is already a police state. The Democratic liberals' immigration "reform" would turn the country into a police state for everyone.

The Internationalist Group calls on unions to take the lead in mobilizing to defend immigrants against racist attacks. Class-conscious workers must fight here and now for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. Everyone residing in the United States should have the same rights. Period.

School Closings...

continued from page 12

They want to shut down large public schools and replace them with privately managed charter schools, which are advertised as being smaller and good for students looking for more attention in the classroom. But there is no evidence that students do any better in charter schools. Charter schools are not open to everyone. Unlike public schools, they can reject kids with disabilities, students learning English as a second language, homeless children, or anyone for almost any reason.

This means more racial segregation. Often, this segregation is up close and ugly. In New York, some public schools are forced by the DOE to "share" space with charter schools. At PS 123 in Harlem, charter school empresario Eva Moskowitz took over a whole floor of supposedly "underutilized" space to expand her private "Harlem Success Academy." Meanwhile, the children who demand the most help will be pushed into the remaining, overcrowded schools where they will most likely become another statistic that Mayor Bloomberg will use to justify further attacks on the public school system.

The real reason for charters is to undermine the teachers union – most charter schools are non-union – and to bring in millions of dollars in tax subsidies for hedge fund multimillionaires who invest in charters. The fact that these private entrepreneurs want to invest in charter schools may seem strange, since their children will likely never attend one. But they are becoming richer off the poor and working class families and their children's futures. The money being poured into the development of these schools will further impoverish public education, increasing the gap between the starved public schools and the exclusive lavishly-funded charters. We say separate

is never equal!

The DOE should be abolished and all schools placed under the democratic control of teachers, workers, parents and students.

CUNY Internationalist Club members took part in the demonstration against the school-closing PEP at Brooklyn Tech and helped to distribute hundreds of copies of a special issue of *The Internationalist* that included a bulletin “Stop Racist School Closings” from the Class Struggle Education Workers (CSEW), a trade union tendency in the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) in city public schools and Professional Staff Congress (PSC) at CUNY that is politically supported by the Internationalist Group.

It should come as no surprise that an economic crisis – a characteristic of capitalism – the budget gap is being used to advance the destruction of public education. Obama/Duncan’s “Race to the Top” funding has allowed team Bloomberg/Klein to continue to push their agenda to turn public education into corporate education.

Now Obama has come out in favor of the firing of every single teacher at the high school in Central Falls, Rhode Island, one of the poorest cities in the U.S. At the beginning of the January 24 public hearing, Klein repeated that the schools that will close are “the schools that are not meeting the standards we need to make for our children.” These words are meant to deceive worried families and teachers. The closings of large public schools will only continue. It is up to the working class to prevent these racist school closings.

The leadership of the UFT, which like the rest of the union bureaucracy supported Obama and every other imperialist war criminal from the Democratic Party, is celebrating the March 26 decision of a state court that declared the 19 school closings illegal. But the DOE ignored the ruling by mailing notices to every family planning to send students to the targeted schools next fall saying that they would be sent to a different school.

From the White House to City Hall, Democrats and Republicans are solidly behind this racist scheme to gut public education. The courts belong to the capitalist ruling class, not “the people.” ***It is urgent to act now, to unleash the power of the working class and to unite students, parents, teachers, and workers to fight for control over the public school system.*** At a March 11 forum sponsored by the Class Struggle Education Workers, a CSEW spokesman said that what it will take to stop the closings is to occupy the schools.

Students at CUNY, under sharp attack from the same capitalist politicians who are trying to crush the UFT, can play an important role in the struggle. We can link the parents, students and teachers to powerful sectors of the working class, like the NYC transit workers who showed what union power means when they shut down the whole city for three days in December 2005 with a strike. But the biggest obstacle to mobilizing this power is the fact that the unions are chained to the capitalist, budget-slashing Democratic Party of imperialist war through their leading bureaucracies.

The CUNY Internationalist Clubs say that what we need isn’t corporate education “reform” but a socialist revolution that removes education and every aspect of society from the demands of profit. To do this we need to *break with the Democrats* and build a *revolutionary workers party*. ■

Hunter Cafeteria Struggle – Workers and Students Unite

By Caitlin

As the fall 2009 semester began at Hunter College, the Internationalist Club campaigned to mobilize student and faculty support of campus cafeteria workers – overwhelmingly black and Latino – fighting to defend their most basic rights and benefits. Last year, the Hunter cafeterias and coffee stand were turned over to a new company, AVI, a food service provider based out of Warren, Ohio. While jacking up food prices (in some instances by 100%), AVI refused to continue providing the same health plan and pension the Hunter cafeteria workers had been receiving for years. The workers faced a big reduction in benefits, and the “raise” the company said it was willing to give amounted to a pay cut.

On September 3, at the height of the lunch hour, the Hunter cafeteria workers courageously organized a work stoppage to protest AVI’s decision and to demand the recognition of their previous union contract. A video of the job action showed AVI management frantically trying –and failing –to get the workers to go back to work, after bringing in a Hunter security guard. AVI has non-union cafeterias at Sarah Lawrence (where a union organizing campaign has been in progress) and at Baruch College. Its actions at Hunter amounted to a threat to bust the union there.

Organizing Wins Wide Support

When organizers from the workers’ union (UNITE HERE Local 100) came to campus seeking student support, the Hunter Internationalist Club became the mainstay of the campaign to support the cafeteria workers. As one of our leaflets on the struggle noted: “Like Hunter students, the cafeteria workers are largely black, Latino, women, and others subject not only to exploitation but to many kinds of discrimination in this capitalist society. The Hunter Internationalist Club encourages you to work with us and all supporters of workers’ rights to help build active solidarity with the cafeteria workers – their cause is our cause too!” (Hunter Internationalist Club leaflet, 16 October 2009).

A member of Class Struggle Education Workers active in the CUNY faculty union (Professional Staff Congress) got the Hunter PSC chapter actively involved in the support campaign. Internationalist Club members helped bring the news to other groups and clubs, massively distributed leaflets, made announcements in the cafeteria and classrooms, and spoke on the campus radio station to raise awareness about the issues. Promoting active solidarity with the workers, our flyers encouraged students, faculty and campus workers to mobilize in support of the cafeteria workers.

On Monday, October 5, as a follow-up to the work stoppage, a large (well over 100 people) and spirited union rally was held outside the Hunter West building. “We’re going to fight to the end... Union, union, union!” one of the workers told the crowd. Internationalists helped bring out the large number of students who participated in the rally (which included some entire classes), and connected up with strikers from the



UNITE-HERE

Hunter College cafeteria workers in UNITE HERE Local 100, addressed an October 5 union rally. Student support helped beat back union-busting attack.

Stella D’oro cookie factory in the Bronx and other area unionists and immigrant worker activists so they would come support the struggle. Cafeteria workers, union organizers, students and faculty spoke to the crowd, denouncing the AVI management’s attacks and pointing out that the workers’ courage and commitment were an inspiration and example to those seeking to defend the right to education at CUNY. (See video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YVqpxb2KWQ0>)

During the rally, a delegation of cafeteria workers, along with some student and faculty supporters, was blocked by campus cops as they tried to enter an elevator en route to deliver petitions to Hunter president Jennifer Raab. The cops claimed the workers were “not Hunter employees”! (Eventually they allowed a small number of workers to take the elevator and deliver the petitions, as security guards hovered nearby.) At one of the meetings held before the rally to organize the support campaign, Internationalist supporters had warned that campus security guards are not “fellow workers” or potential allies, as their job is to defend the interests of the boss. At the next meeting, after the October 5 rally, several of the cafeteria workers referenced the incident at the elevator, pointing out that “what you said about the security not being our friends was right!”

When negotiations with AVI broke down, we helped initiate a plan to boycott the company. Unlike most situations where boycotts are ineffective at best, the Hunter cafeterias, serving a clearly defined clientele on a campus where support for the workers was running high, were vulnerable to this tactic. As the date the workers’ union set for the boycott drew closer, support was overwhelming, with retirees and alumni lunching in the cafeteria vowing to join students and faculty in shutting the place down if the company did not back down. After AVI was presented with over 1,000 signatures the Internationalist Club and others had gathered pledging to participate in the boycott, the company finally agreed to maintain the workers’ health benefits. The

workers’ determination, backed by an energetic support campaign, had beaten back this company attack. The company also agreed to modest raises. (The outcome was not a total victory, however: the previous pension plan was replaced by a union-administered 401(k) plan, which doesn’t guarantee specific benefits and would likely lose money in a stock market downturn.)

New Attacks from the Company

However, the company has not stopped its attacks on the cafeteria workers. On March 23, AVI called a meeting to announce that due to a “lack of funds,” eight of the 35 cafeteria employees are being laid off. In addition, one of the workers told us, “the company has been using all kinds of different ways to get rid of people.” As a means of intimidation and humiliation, it has imposed mandatory drug testing. Some of the salads and sandwiches that used to be made by workers at the Hunter cafeteria are now being outsourced and brought in from New Jersey to further the elimination of workers’ positions. And now AVI has started switching labels to disguise the products brought in from NJ. Another employee was dismissed on April 12, fired for allegedly miscounting a register.

As for AVI’s so-called lack of funds, the company plans to remodel the student and faculty cafeterias this summer, during which time nearly all of the cafeteria employees will be forced to collect unemployment (the ground-floor coffee station is to remain open). When members of the Internationalist Club spoke to workers at the cafeteria, one employee stated: “They say they’re not making any money, which we know is bullcrap.” Another veteran employee said: “They’re trying to bust our [union] shop, but they’re not gonna bust our shop!” As members of the Internationalist Club at Hunter College, we demand that those laid off or fired get their jobs back with full back pay. To fight the company attacks on the workers and their union, workers and students must unite to support the cafeteria workers and ensure a decisive victory. ■

Obama and Bloomberg Wage War on Students, Teachers and Parents

Battle Over Racist School Closings in New York

By Kirstine

On January 26, well over 2,000 angry parents, teachers and students converged on Brooklyn Technical High School to teach the mayor of New York City, Michael Bloomberg and his school department flunkie Joel Klein a lesson. The Panel for Educational Policy (PEP) had announced the closing of 19 public schools, on top of the 90 schools that have already been shut down since Bloomberg took control of the city school system in 2002. The meeting on January 26 was a formality and everyone knew it. The PEP, derided as a “puppet panel” and a rubber stamp for the mayor, is made up of eight mayoral appointees and one from each of NYC’s five borough presidents. The audience was furious with the closings, which hit large schools in working class black and Latino neighborhoods.

There were big contingents of students and parents from Paul Robeson, Columbus, Jamaica and Maxwell High School, all on the chopping block. Virtually every one of the over 300 people who stood in line past midnight to have their say spoke against the school closings. Chancellor Klein was greeted by five minutes of solid, uninterrupted booing. Then the PEP voted, nine to four, to close the schools anyway. All the mayor’s appointees and the representative from Staten Island voted in favor while the Bronx, Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens panelists voted against. This is what a mayoral dictatorship of the public school system looks like. The Mayor and his puppets couldn’t care less about public comments. This system only responds to power. **To defeat the attack on education and to stop the privatization of schools we need a citywide mobilization of union power to demand “Stop School Closings Now.”**

This is not a local New York City issue. The drive to slash and reorganize public education is being led by the Democratic president Obama and his administration.



Internationalist photo

Hundreds of angry parents, students and teachers turned out on January 26 to denounce the NYC Department of Education’s order to close 20+ schools, almost exclusively in black and Latino neighborhoods.

Obama’s “Race to the Top” competition is setting the agenda by dangling \$4.35 billion in front of cash-starved states. The “Race to the Top” is an echo of George W. Bush’s “No Child Left Behind” act from 2002, when mayoral control of public education began. Both push “standards” (teaching driven by the demands of high-stakes testing) and more charter schools. Both dismiss parental, student and teacher intervention in schools.

This troublesome similarity is not a coincidence. Democrats and Republicans share a bipartisan capitalist agenda to destroy public education. Schools that have fought to improve so that children benefit are now being closed so that union busting corporate education “reformers” could have a chance to win millions in federal funding through “Race to the Top.” Mayor Bloomberg and New York’s Democratic governor,

David Paterson, pushed for the school closings and an increase in the number of charter schools to qualify for the federal funds. But because the state legislature included provisions for community and legislative oversight on the charter schools, the federal funds were denied. The DOE’s drive to close the schools continues anyway.

This agenda is bad news for students, their teachers and their parents. The focus on high stakes “standards” tests forces educators to teach students to pass exams so they can go onto the next grade, while complying with mountains of arbitrary Department of Education (DOE) paperwork. Some of the schools that are to be shut down, such as Maxwell High School, have improved in the last few years, but because of changes in the DOE scoring system it did not reach the new standards.

The school closings will disrupt the education of many students. Since so many students are being relocated to new schools, they are likely to be put into overcrowded classrooms. Meanwhile, every time a school closes, half the teachers lose their full time positions and are tossed into the Absent Teacher Reserve. These experienced teachers are needed in the classroom, but most principals don’t want them because they command higher salaries and know their rights as union members. While schools get more and more crowded, the education “reformers” from the White House to the DOE offices say: close more schools and fire the ATR teachers left behind. This is a cynical maneuver to create more pressure for charter schools. Students and teachers are the pawns in their game.

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Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!

Mobilize Workers Against Racist Arizona Anti-Immigrant Law

Democrats’ “Concept” of Immigration “Reform”: A Police State for All

We print below excerpts from an April 29 Internationalist Group statement:

The passage of a spectacularly racist immigration law by the Arizona state senate on April 19, and its signing into law by the governor four days later, has provoked a wave of justified outrage across the United

States and internationally. Senate Bill 1070 authorizes police to stop people on the street to demand that they produce documents to prove their immigration status. Despite the pious claims by the racist politicians to the contrary, this means blatant “racial profiling” by the cops. In Arizona, anyone who “looks Mexican” is now subject to arrest. The clause in SB 1070 saying police “may not solely consider race, color or national origin” (our emphasis) means that those racist criteria can be a legitimate basis for stopping someone on the street. The

Internationalist Group not only denounces Arizona’s racist immigration law, we call for full citizenship rights for all immigrants.

Comparisons are being made, including by the Catholic archbishop of Los Angeles, to the racial laws of Nazi Germany, where people were stopped on the street because they “looked Jewish.” And if immigrants can’t come up with the required documents, “suspects” will be shipped off to concentration camps, and eventually jailed or deported. Other comparisons are to South

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Internationalist photo

At April 24 protest in New York City.