

Kaiser Permanente Shows Capitalism in Action

HEALTH CARE WORKERS MUST BREAK CHAINS OF WAGE-SLAVERY

LOS ANGELES, Jan. 16—Healthcare workers are planning a one-day strike against Kaiser Permanente for January 31, 2012. The National Union of Healthcare Workers staged three one-day strikes in 2011 against Kaiser, the largest Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) in the US. The statewide September strike of over 21,000 workers was the largest in Kaiser's history.

Kaiser proposes to reduce its employee health coverage and to eliminate workers' only defined-benefit pension plan, while it rakes in \$billions. The average annual CEO pay for California's largest HMOs is \$7.4 million. Kaiser CEO George Halvorson, the highest earner at a supposedly non-profit HMO, took home \$7.9 million in 2009.

This capitalist system, where even health care workers can't afford health care, has got to go!

Don't US capitalists need a healthy workforce any more?

Yes, but with the large reserve of unemployed and growing elderly population, many workers have become expendable. The nature of capitalism, especially during its current crisis, means that the bosses pay workers less while forcing them to do the work of two. The bosses are also finding ways to reduce costs, (meaning cuts) in health care, directly affecting Kaiser, along with cuts in social welfare and education. The bosses pay service providers the bare minimum to keep the work force alive and well enough to return to work.

Since 1938, Kaiser has profited from pre-paid health care, in partnership with the federal gov-

ernment and Kaiser Steel. It flourished during World War II when it contracted for the care of workers building aircraft and warships. After the war, large labor unions joined the partnership, fattening profits even more. After the HMO Act of 1973, Kaiser worked to regain lost profits by attacking workers' benefits. The AFL-CIO agreed to a "Labor-Management Partnership" and "Unit-Based Teams" to keep workers from fighting back. These "partnerships" ensure Kaiser's profits.

Today, Kaiser's options to maintain its 7.5% profit margin are rate hikes, reduced quality of care, driving down Kaiser employees' wages and benefits, or reducing executive pay. Federal regulators limit rate hikes because of the costs to other capitalists. Care has already deteriorated (www.nuhw.org/caredenied). Now Kaiser employee benefits and pensions are under attack. The only option Kaiser is unwilling to consider is reduced executive pay! However, even this wouldn't resolve the problem, which is much larger than Kaiser alone.

Unions, reforms are no solution.

Unions serve the bosses by negotiating the terms of our exploitation, rather than eliminating our exploitation. Even if we win reform struggles, capitalism was not designed to meet our needs. The 1/2 of 1% will continue to make their profits off the other 99 1/2% of us. Any gains we make will be reversed at the next chance the bosses get. Not just because they are "mean" or "greedy" but because capital accumulation is the defining principle of capitalism. The dog-eat-dog competition among bosses (US, China, Mexico,

etc.) means they must constantly drive down the cost of our labor power. We are wage slaves under their system. Instead of seeking the highest bidder for our labor-power, we need to get rid of our chains.

We need a society where health care only exists to benefit the working class.

Under capitalism, health care and all products are treated as exchange values (commodities). They must be useful or seem useful in order to be sold, but usefulness is not the most important thing under capitalism. "No sale, no use." We all need healthcare, but billions go without it.

Only Communist Revolution will solve our problems.

Under communism, money will no longer exist and therefore products (including health care) will no longer need to be exchanged for dollars, euros, or yen.

Capitalists will not surrender without a fight. They constantly spread anti-communist propaganda and use racism, sexism, and patriotism to divide us, trying to ensure the survival of their system. But because their system forces them to attack workers, it helps to create its own gravediggers.

Help fight for a world where workers will share all that we produce! Fight for a world where no one will have excess while others starve. Help spread the truth about capitalism and the vision of a better tomorrow by distributing *Red Flag* and the ICWP manifesto *Mobilize the Masses for Communism*.

Our children and grandchildren deserve a communist, share-and-share-alike, world.