

...BUT WHY THE HOSPITAL?

On Friday evening, April 9th, 175 members of the Palo Alto Police Force and the Santa Clara County Tactical Squad launched a brutal attack on a peaceful sit-in that was taking place in the administrative corridor of the Stanford Hospital. The sixty unarmed protesters fought courageously for 45 minutes against battering rams, clubs and mace before being driven from the hallway. The next day, Palo Alto police agents raided the office of the Stanford Daily looking for incriminating photographs.

Why such a massive show of force to drive out and arrest a group of peaceful demonstrators? Check out the issues that prompted the sit-in.

On February 22, Sam Bridges, a black brother, hired on with the hospital engineers as a janitor. Sam learned fast that the hospital is just like any other institution in capitalist America - racist to the core. Nearly all the doctors and administrators are white while most of the janitors and maids are black or brown. Sam began rapping to other brothers about the hospital's racist hiring policies. For this, he was first called to a so-called "Job Understanding" meeting, where he was told that not "under any circumstances" would "a discussion based on a person's race, religion or political beliefs" be allowed. Sam kept right on rapping. After several other cases of harassment, Sam was fired by the hospital administration.

Shortly after that, it was learned that Dr. Jose Aguilar, a Chicano neurosurgeon and the only Chicano on the medical school staff, had been denied tenure (meaning that he would be fired) on the grounds of "incompetence." His fellow doctors agree that Dr. Aguilar is a fine physician and neurosurgeon. He was fired solely for his attempts to find and train Chicano medical students and his work at the People's Medical Center in Redwood City.

In response to the racist firing of Sam Bridges, the Black United Front (BUF), made up of the Stanford Black Workers Caucus, the Black Students Union and the community-based Black Liberation Front, was formed. Six demands were presented to the hospital administration, calling for Sam's reinstatement and for the recognition of workers' (particularly Third World workers') rights. When the hospital administrators refused to meet all the demands, the sit-in began. It continued peacefully, without disrupting patient care in the hospital, for 30 hours. Then came the police charge on Friday evening.

But this still doesn't explain the savage police response to the sit-in. If this were simply a labor dispute to retain a lost job, even a black worker's job, other means would have been used to end the demonstration. But this was no ordinary labor struggle. For in challenging the institutional racism of the Stanford Medical Center, the Black United Front and its supporters are in fact attacking a pillar of American Imperialism - the racist, capitalist medical system.

Medicine, a "pillar of Imperialism?" Sounds far-fetched, but it's true! The American medical system serves largely the needs (and lines the pockets) of America's white, rich rulers at the expense of poor and working people, especially black, brown and other people of color.

U.S. HEALTH CARE SERVES THE RICH

The United States is the wealthiest nation in the world, yet its health standards are far from the best. The US ranks 14th in infant mortality; 33,000 babies under one year-old died in 1969 in this country. The US ranks 12th in maternal mortality (death of mothers at birth). Men live longer in 17 other countries. The reason for these surprising statistics can only be found in the nature of the American medical system, for this system is in fact a medical industry whose purpose is to produce good health and fat profits for the wealthy white people who own this country, rather than to keep the masses of people alive and in good health.

The medical business in this country is Big Business. In 1969, over \$62 billion was spent on medical care in the USA. The cost of medical care is kept up by soaring prices of drugs, hospital supplies and equipment, nursing home expenses, and health insurance. The big companies who produce these goods and services profit from the misery of human beings. The rich can afford all these expenses. But poor people, especially people of color, cannot.

In order to turn out extremely well-trained doctors to serve the medical needs of the rich, the American Medical Association has set needlessly high standards for admission into the

medical profession. Those students who don't meet the AMA's standards, but who nevertheless would be perfectly qualified to serve the basic medical needs of the people, are not allowed to practice medicine. So while the rich get plastic surgery, the rest of the country suffers from a lack of certified MD's. Restricting the number of practicing physicians also keeps doctors' prices up and so most doctors pull in fat incomes.

With too few doctors, located in areas far away from the ghettos and barrios, medical care in the USA is designed to cure rather than prevent disease. People wait until they are sick before they go to see a doctor. The public health care that is provided (for black and brown people in particular) is in some cases clearly genocidal in effect. Forced sterilization of poor women is the best example of this.

In a socialist country like Cuba, there is good medical care for all the people. Every town has complete medical facilities, and nation-wide inoculation campaigns are used to prevent disease.

In this country, medical research very rarely leads to better health care for the average citizen. Research is done, for example heart transplants, which only the rich will be able to afford. On the other end of the scale, almost no research is being done on sickle cell anemia, a hereditary blood disease found almost exclusively among black people. While the masses of the people of the world are dying of curable diseases, the life-span of the members of the US ruling class grows longer.

MEDICINE ON THE FARM

The American medical system as a whole, then, serves the rich few, not the many. The Stanford Medical Center and the complex that has sprung up around it are a part of that system and function in the same way. By taking on the Stanford Hospital, the Black United Front has come into conflict with some of the most powerful and ruthless men in the world - the same men who are waging and profiting from the war in Indochina.

The Stanford Board of Trustees, which owns the hospital, is made up of some of America's richest men. It includes officers and directors of giant oil companies with interests in Southeast Asia like Shell, Union, and Standard Oil of Indiana; big defense contractors like General Dynamics, Northrop, and FMC. When, under the leadership of Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard, they built the Stanford Hospital, they built an institution to meet their own medical needs. The doctors and facilities are the best - and most expensive - available.

Intensive care units run around \$195 a day, and semi-private rooms cost \$74 per day. Stanford demands a \$150 deposit in cash before it will even consider something as routine as a child delivery. Black and brown people from cities like East Palo Alto, East Menlo Park, Redwood City, and Mountain View as well as most white working people just can't afford the Stanford Hospital. The racism is most blatant in the emergency room where black and brown people with serious injuries are turned away if they can't pay.

After the hospital was built, a group of wealthy, white doctors from Stanford got together to form the Palo Alto Medical Research Foundation (which runs the Palo Alto Medical Clinic) under the leadership of Russell V. Lee. Lee's proposed hospital in downtown Palo Alto was voted down last summer, but he has another one in the works. The hospital will be the hub of a group of nursing homes like Channing House which have sprung up near Stanford to cater to rich, white, old folks. Black, brown, and poor white working people will again be left out.

BUF LEADS THE WAY

The struggle at the Stanford Medical Center is in fact a struggle against the whole racist American medical system. Consequently, it is part of the overall struggle of black and brown people for national liberation. It is also part of the world-wide struggle against U.S. imperialism. That explains the fascist police attack on the sit-in led by the Black United Front. Those who battled the police in the hospital corridor are the fighting allies of the Indochinese people. Their struggles are the same.

VENCEREMOS

MEET THE DEMANDS