

ALL OUT FOR A MASSIVE STRIKE UNTIL VICTORY IS OURS!

As the strike deadline of Oct. 10th looms only two days away, the BART bosses, their capitalist backers, and their strike-breakers and police are ready. Are we?

This strike will not just be about money, or even safety and working conditions. It is compelled by current historical circumstances to become a *political* strike. The local and state governments, as the servants of the capitalists of the Bay Area and nationwide, are determined to break the spine of our unions. The Bay Area is one of the last remaining organized labor strongholds in the US. If we want to preserve it, labor had better wake up.

The bosses have already had two decisive victories in the Midwest. In Wisconsin, they have sharply limited public workers' right to collective bargaining, and forced public worker unions to get recertified annually and to collect dues directly instead of through payroll deductions. In Michigan—where the auto unions and the CIO were born, after bloody confrontations with the state—they have imposed a “right to work” or “open shop” law that undermines the entire historical strength of the unions.

The bosses already know that the coming BART strike is political. We had better realize it too. We are in a fight for our lives. We need to announce clearly to the public and the unions' allies that it is a new day, and workers will no longer tolerate attacks on our right to the compensation and benefits we deserve. This struggle is not just for BART workers—it is for *all* workers.

The unions alone cannot beat the bosses. To win, we need mass support from the working class communities. The unions can muster that support by turning this struggle into a *political strike* against union-busting, police murder, and ICE/La Migra terror.

There are three fundamental requirements for victory:

- 1. The three unions must have a unified joint strike committee, elected from the rank-and-file members,** and subject to recall by the rank-and-file if it does not do its job. Such a committee would be trusted by the members, and could meet on a daily basis to direct the strike like the command center of a fighting army. It could mobilize massive picket lines to enforce the fundamental fighting essence of trade unionism that the current union misleaders (and unfortunately, many workers as well) appear to have forgotten: Picket lines mean you don't cross them, and scabs who try to cross the lines must and will be stopped by any means necessary. It was this kind of militant picket line that enabled the unions to organize and to win good contracts in the past, and it is their absence that is in large part responsible for the decline of the unions over the last several decades.

A militant rank-and-file strike committee could dispatch militant picketers to all areas that need shoring up and support. For example, the BART bosses have been training scabs at Mare Island, and the unions have been unable to stop them. If we had a militant strike committee that could speak with authority to the rank-and-file, it could dispatch workers, joined by their supporters from the oppressed communities, to set up a picket line and stop the would-be scabs from training. A rank-and-file strike committee also would not let the firing of a union supporter like BART station agent George Figueroa pass without organizing a mass mobilization to defend him.

The union leaders do not want a militant rank-and-file strike committee, and they are doing their best to avoid any strike, much less a militant one. These bureaucrats have already signaled very clearly to the capitalist politicians that they are trying to avoid a strike. This is like telling your enemy in a war that you don't want to use your only really effective weapon! We cannot trust bureaucrats like these to carry out the kind of struggle we need to wage in order to win. We must form a rank-and-file strike committee even if we have to do it against the will of the union leadership and without their support. Because time is running out, it is not enough just to talk about a strike committee; if a strike committee is not already elected and ready to go by October 10th (the first day that the unions can strike, according to the bosses), the workers will be deprived of a basic tool to win the strike; and the bosses and their politicians will have their first victory.

Unfortunately, the Transport Workers Solidarity Committee (TWSC), the only independent solidarity committee involved in the current BART struggle, has merely talked about a strike committee. It has done nothing practical to help form one. That is because TWSC does not dare to defy the union bureaucracy on this issue.

When supporters of Humanist Workers for Revolutionary Socialism (HWRs) and Labor Black and Brown (LBB) asked TWSC, at their last meeting, to call for a meeting of rank-and-file workers from the three BART unions to discuss the formation of a strike committee, the leftists who run TWSC did not show any interest in doing that. There were BART workers and one union official at the meeting. If each of those people had actively and vocally campaigned within their own union for a joint meeting to discuss the formation of a rank-and-file strike committee, we are confident that dozens of workers, who are angry at the do-nothing bureaucrats, would have shown up for such a meeting. This would have been the first crucial step for the formation of a strike committee.

The bottom line is that without a militant, elected strike committee, the workers will lose the war against BART management and its armed police, who will try to break the strike. Striking without such a committee is like going to a war with a leadership that is incapable of mobilizing and directing the troops in a way that can lead to victory. A massive strike is a political and military war, and workers must be prepared accordingly.

2. We need a mass mobilization of the working class communities, and in particular, of the oppressed Black and Brown communities. To win, the unions must mobilize the oppressed communities to contribute their militance and strength to the picket lines. How? If the unions take steps to defend the oppressed working class communities against the rampant police brutality and murder that are victimizing them, then they will see the BART strike as their struggle. Common actions on the picket lines between BART workers and the oppressed communities will be a de facto first step toward establishing defense guards against attacks on the unions and against police brutality.

Mobilizing the oppressed communities will inevitably make this a political strike. By sending union members to defend the communities against police attacks and brutality, the unions would make it clear that this is a political strike for the sake and benefit of the entire working class. In return the unions would be guaranteed thousands of Black and Brown workers and youth on the picket lines and on the streets fighting for victory.

Recently, union leaders have started to talk about the need for solidarity with the oppressed communities, but they have done nothing concrete to mobilize the oppressed workers and youth. Instead, the bureaucracy stages phony rallies, at which they allow Democratic Party politicians to speak. The Democrats and the Republicans alike are enemies of the workers! The bureaucrats have given hot-air speeches saying that unions need the support of the “middle class” and don’t really want to strike. But when asked to allow families whose sons and brothers have been killed by the cops to address the rally, the bureaucrats said that there was no time left for the families to speak. So while the bureaucrats give token support to the idea of mobilizing the oppressed to support the unions, when it comes down to reality, they have torpedoed this critical requirement for victory.

- **All out for a massive general strike!**
- **All the unions and the oppressed communities: Defend the BART unions’ right to walk out and stay out until we beat our enemy!**
- **Defend George Figueroa! Stay out until he is reinstated with full amnesty!**

Humanist Workers for Revolutionary Socialism (HWRS)

Website: www.HumanistsForRevolutionarySocialism.org

Email us at: HumanistWorkers@ymail.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Humanists-for-Revolutionary-Socialism/80134436166>

October 8, 2013

Labor Donated

3. To win, we need to stop the bosses’ government from using anti-labor laws to smash the strike. Governor Brown has already demonstrated that he will do whatever he can to prevent a BART strike, and the bosses’ politicians are already talking about passing new laws to ban public transit workers from striking. If passed as an emergency measure, such a law could take effect immediately. A strike is unlikely to last more than few days before the bosses go to Sacramento and demand that the Legislature give them the means to crush it.

If that happens, the unions’ response must be: **Legally or illegally, we will stay off the job and on the picket lines until we win!** We must say NO to any sell-out and capitulation by the union leaders. Taking a militant stand, and defying any effort to use laws or court injunctions to break the strike, is the only way to turn the tide of repeated defeats that the working class has been suffering nationally. Not taking this bold move guarantees that the demoralization and defeat of the workers’ movement will continue. If transit workers are barred from striking, how long will it be before all public workers—or even *all* workers—lose that right as well? If BART workers do not defy injunctions, will the ILWU be able to in 2014?

We must start now to educate both the rank-and-file workers in the unions, and our allies in the oppressed communities, about the need to wage a militant strike, including staying off the job in defiance of any reactionary laws and injunctions. We understand that such a struggle could result in arrests of union leaders and militant workers. It also requires preparation for the possibility of physical battles with the police and any troops that the state sends to smash the strike. **This is how our brothers and sisters built the unions in the 1930s, and it is the only way that we can stop the total rout of the trade unions today.**

Ultimately, we need to prepare for a general strike. AC transit workers already rejected the sell-out contract that their union bureaucrats tried to impose on them. All efforts must be made to build solidarity with AC transit workers and coordinate our strike efforts. This could spark a massive solidarity strike by the entire union movement in the Bay Area. We need to defy and smash all reactionary laws, such as the federal Taft-Hartley Act, that forbid solidarity strikes. This is an all-out class war, and only one side will be victorious.