

International Trotskyist

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS AND ANALYSIS

Imperialism: Hands Off Iran!

Down With “Austerity”: We Are All Greek!

HWRS Critique of FLTI

CRISIS OF CAPITALISM IN THE U.S.

Oil Disaster: Capitalists Unfit to Rule

Obama’s “Health Care Reform”

Police Brutality in Detroit

Final Sellout of NUMMI Workers

Attacks on Immigrants in Arizona

IN DEFENSE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

Balance Sheet of March 4th Protests

Education Crisis in Colorado

Oakland Teachers’ One-Day Strike

A Progressive Teacher Speaks Out

Where We Stand

Humanist Workers for Revolutionary Socialism (HWRS) is a revolutionary communist organization. We stand for revolutionary socialism because we base our program and policies on the dialectical materialist method, on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the documents of the first four congresses of the Third (Communist) International, and on the Transitional Program of the Fourth International. We term ourselves “humanists” because we also believe that in order for a socialist revolution to succeed, workers must transform ourselves and our psyches, transcending and overcoming the alienation we suffer under capitalism, at the same time that we attempt to transform our society.

We believe that capitalism is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the abolition of capitalism. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned to satisfy human needs. Only the socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state can achieve this goal. Only the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party and organized into workers’ councils and workers’ militias, can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat and workers’ democracy. We also believe that only a socialist revolution and a planned economy can make the changes in our production and use of energy that are essential to prevent, or at least mitigate, catastrophic climate change and other environmental degradation.

There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism. Neither the Democratic Party nor any section of it is a genuine friend of labor. It is a bourgeois party through and through. It is never permissible to give the Democratic Party electoral support, even critically, no matter how left they strive to appear. The misnamed Communist Parties that existed during the Cold War era were really Stalinist parties, reformist in program and practice. Their origin was the bureaucracy that ruled after 1927 in the USSR. Their strategy of alliance with the bourgeoisie (the popular front) inflicted terrible defeats on the working class worldwide. The restoration of capitalism by the Stalinist bureaucracy was a logical conclusion of the Stalinist strategy.

Capitalism has been restored in the Soviet Union and most other countries that were workers’ states. In the few remaining workers’ states, Stalinist bureaucracies rule over the working class. Capitalism has ceased to exist but the workers do not hold political power. To open the road to socialism, a political revolution to smash bureaucratic tyranny is needed. Nevertheless, we unconditionally defend these states against the attacks of imperialism and against internal capitalist restoration in order to defend postcapitalist property relations.

The building of a workers’ party is an urgent task for the American labor

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International Trotskyist

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movement. Such a party must grow out of the struggles of US workers, and base itself firmly on the trade unions and other organizations of the working class and its oppressed sections. In helping to build such a party, revolutionaries must argue for it to adopt a Trotskyist transitional program, although we will work in any genuinely independent working class party that develops.

Within the trade unions, we fight for the rank and file to oust the reformist and pro-Democratic Party bureaucrats, and to democratize the unions and win them to a revolutionary action program based on a system of transitional demands which serve as a bridge between today's struggles and the socialist revolution. Central to this is the fight for workers' control of production. In order to fulfill these goals, we will fight for a rank-and-file movement based on the principle of breaking with the Democrats and building a labor party. We are for the unions running independent labor candidates against the Democratic Party as a part of this strategy. We are for the building of fighting organizations of the working class: factory committees, industrial unions, councils of action, and workers' councils.

We fight against the oppression that capitalist society inflicts on people because of their race, age, gender, national origin, or sexual orientation. We fight racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, and fascism. We are for the liberation of women by connecting working class women's issues and struggles to workers' struggles, not through an autonomous "all-class" feminist movement. We are for the liberation of all of the oppressed, and believe that only socialist revolution can bring about real, lasting liberation, by freeing all humans from the alienation and stress imposed on us by capitalism. We oppose all immigration controls. We call upon the workers to give no quarter to racists and fascists, and to drive them out of our unions and communities. No platform for fascism!

We support the struggles of oppressed nations against imperialism. We unconditionally support the struggles of liberation movements in Latin America and elsewhere who fight the US and its agents. However, our support is critical and we politically oppose the nationalists (bourgeois and petty-bourgeois) who often lead the struggles of the oppressed nations. To their strategy we counterpose the method of dialectical materialism and the strategy of permanent revolution. That is, we believe the anti-imperialist struggle must be led by the working class with a program of socialist revolution and internationalism. In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are for the defeat of "our own" army and the victory of countries oppressed and exploited by imperialism. We fight against imperialist war, not with pacifist pleas, but with militant class struggle methods including forcibly disarming "our own" bosses.

HWRS disdains the centrism, opportunism, and sectarianism of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International. We strive to overcome, within ourselves and in our dealings with others, the alienated psychology that often results in substituting egocentric competitiveness for objective discussion and debate among the left and progressive movements. We combine the struggle for a re-elaborated transitional program, adapted to the circumstances of the 21st century, with active involvement in the struggles of the working class, fighting for revolutionary leadership.

**If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism ...
if you are an internationalist ...
if you are a humanist ...**

JOIN US!

Editorial: As We Go to Press

For the working masses, the words of Rosa Luxemburg – “Socialism or Barbarism” – are not cliché at all. The news consistently reflects this ugly reality. A village in Bangladesh is wiped out by mudslides due to deforestation of nearby mountains; 50 child miners die from lead poisoning in Nigeria from unsafe mining for gold; young workers at the Foxconn factory in China are so alienated by endless shifts and low wages that they throw themselves to death rather than face another day, ; and what can better illustrate the utter state of barbarism than the conditions in Haiti, where the people have been reduced to subsisting on cookies made of dirt – and that was *before* the earthquake hit.

Conditions of military domination, threats, and fascist intimidation are present everywhere workers stand up and fight back. From Honduras and the Media Luna in Bolivia to Gaza and Johannesburg, the multinational corporations require the brutal services of anti-worker thugs. Journalists, trade unionists, and human rights activists are murdered with the same impunity accorded the drones that slaughter civilians over Waziristan, and the Zionist commandos who murder civilian humanitarian workers in international waters. U.S. and Japanese imperialism are using South Korean security as an excuse to step up their rhetoric and threats against North Korea. U.S. imperialism in decay is as dangerous as a wounded bear; it is likely to lash out at North Korea, and assert its power in the Sea of China and Straits of Taiwan, in its effort to keep China encircled militarily.

The extractive industries, from mineral mining to oil drilling, devastate the landscape and destroy indigenous populations and their heritage. Agribusiness devastates ecosystems, pollutes water supplies, and poisons our food. Increasingly, it is becoming clear to workers in the advanced countries, as well as the billions living at or below subsistence levels around the world, that *capitalism must die* – our very survival demands it!

When HWRS revived *International Trotskyist* last year, our members, like many other workers in the U.S. and the rest of the developed world, found their children’s schools being cut to the bone; their livelihoods threatened by layoffs and furloughs; and their workplaces rendered ever more inhumane by speed-ups and increased workloads. Our comrades in the oppressed communities struggle against police brutality, gang injunctions, endemic poverty, and disintegrating educational resources. To our young sisters and brothers in the inner cities and ghettos, capitalism offers few choices beyond one of the short roads to early violent death: the gang life, prison, or the military.

The cops murder oppressed youth with impunity. Even innocent little girls in their beds at night are not safe from the bosses’ killer cops. We must never forget seven-year-old Aiyana Stanley-Jones, killed May 16th by a Detroit police squad while it showed off for the media. The murder trial of Oscar Grant’s killer, BART cop Johannes Mehserle, is turning into a judicial whitewash. The first concession to white racism was moving the trial out of the Oakland, where the execution style murder was committed; this was followed by permitting Mehserle’s defense lawyers to exclude all blacks from the trial jury. Once again, the courts have shown us there is no justice for the oppressed in the courts of the ruling class. The way this is being handled, the courts are setting us up for another Rodney King type episode.

We know the cops work for the capitalist class, ultimately protecting the thieves and speculators at Goldman Sachs and the big polluters at BP. That is why the police are preventing media from getting close to the Gulf oil spill; that is why they enforce foreclosures when workers lose their homes to unscrupulous lenders; and that is why they show up at every picket line to help the bosses herd the scabs or lock out the workers.

All the while, Obama’s regime has maintained the historic long term war against the

oppressed and our best class struggle fighters. From J. Edgar Hoover to Obama, the legacy of Cointelpro persists; undercover operations against leftists, workers, and community activists have continued unabated throughout the Bush years and into the present. Workers and the oppressed can have no expectations that Obama will take action to free Mumia Abu Jamal, the Angola 3, the Cuban 5, Leonard Peltier, Lynne Stewart, or any of the hundreds of other fighters who took a stand against imperialism, ultimately to be set up, framed, isolated, vilified, and left to rot in the bowels of imperialism's prisons as a punishment for speaking and acting in the interest of the oppressed. Only the independent mobilization of the working class can affect the freedom of our imprisoned fighters. To all class warriors rotting in imperialism's prisons, we send up a war cry from the 1970s; following the Attica massacre, the chant on the street was the same one we echo today: "Put the pigs in the pokey and the people on the street!"

The masses are awakening from the illusion that a black president will serve the oppressed and the working class. As they become increasingly aware that the Democrats act just like Republicans, the great expectations of the electoral campaign are fading, and at best, they hope Obama will do less harm to their lives than a McCain would have. Considering that Obama just passed essentially the same health care plan that Nixon proposed, protecting the insurance companies from the will of the people, the persistence of the delusional hopes that propelled him into office is uncertain. Between chronic unemployment, ongoing wars, and the failure to act quickly and decisively after the Gulf oil spill, Obama may well turn out to be a one-term president. Indeed, as U.S. global hegemony erodes and its empire crumbles, so will administrations. No team of capitalist "experts" can contain the crisis capitalism has wrought. The archaic system is collapsing from its own contradictions, as Marxists have long foreseen, and working people are being made to take the worst of it. If Obama can not keep the people down, the bosses will look for someone they think can do the job.

Capitalism in its free fall is grasping at

straws. While Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke tells us that the recession is over, we see unemployment soaring in the advanced industrialized countries, peaking (so far) at 26 million (unofficial) in the United States. For years, the IMF has ordered structural readjustment programs for third world countries that could not make their loan payments. Today, those same world planners are taking a hard look at the U.S. and European economies, and starting to require the same kind of budget austerity measures – that is, attacks on workers' living standards. In country after country, we are witnessing attacks on the social wage, on public workers, and on the beneficiaries of social programs. The credit crisis in Greece, Spain, Italy, and Portugal threatens even France and Germany, not to mention the much touted but ultimately non-existent "jobless recovery" here on the other side of the Atlantic.

The European bourgeoisies have launched attacks on their workers, but across Europe, unlike in the U.S., general strikes have been the workers' response. American union leaders, on the other hand, have done their best to demobilize the working class and prevent any actions from becoming generalized; they try to keep the unionized and other workers conveniently herded into the Democratic Party and off the streets. The public union leaders in California run from any mention of a strike; write concessionary contract proposals; direct the workers to brace themselves for the governor's threatened reduction of their salaries to minimum wage; and tell them the solution is to work to elect former Democratic governor Jerry Brown, rather than multimillionaire Republican candidate Meg Whitman, to replace Schwarzenegger in November. These union "leaders" have no faith in the power and creativity of the working class, or in its ability to be mobilized and fight.

All the while, the rest of the world is suffering ever more profoundly from the excesses of imperial capitalist power. The military response to the earthquake in Haiti has proven yet again that imperialism has nothing to offer the most downtrodden. The U.S. sent troops instead of resources to feed, cloth and house the people. They took control of the airstrips and

International News and Analysis

Down With “Austerity”: We Are All Greek!

So Greece hits the top of the news. Greece is the badboy of Europe. Overspender. Lazy. Mediterrean. Ancient. Needs modernising. Needs bondage and discipline by fat German bourgeois or IMF agents. What racist imperialist garbage!

Greece is a client state of the US and the EU powers - a former classical world empire crunched between the rise of imperialist powers in the last two centuries, invaded and occupied by the British and US to stop a revolution in WW2, and today a favoured tourist destination for the sleek Euro bourgeois, petty bourgeois and labour aristocracy. All of this colorful media spinning to turn Greece into a cot-case is just to disguise what is really going on - Greece is being made a scapegoat for the world capitalist crisis. Unless Greece is 'fixed' the contagion of loose living could infect the whole of the PIIGS and the EU. It would not stop at the Atlantic. Greek workers must die for the bosses to live.

Globally the bosses are panicked and desperate to make an example of the Greek working class to workers everywhere. To survive the global crisis finance capitalists have to make the workers especially in the weakest semi-colonies and client states pay for their crisis with austerity, a bullshit word for job cuts, wage cuts, pension, education and health cuts. Phase one of the crisis that began in 2007 was to force workers to pay for the public debts blown out by rescuing the banks. Of course this merely shifted the bankruptcy from the banks onto the state public debt.

So phase two that begun in 2009 is to force the workers to pay for bailing out the bankrupt states by the rescued banks, or by central banks that can print money and erode workers living standards by inflation. The bankers have shifted the blame from the private sector onto the national debts of the weakest states and

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held up the rescue operation, preventing delivery of urgently needed resources while they laid siege to the country.

When the US sends its drones over Pakistan, they kill more civilians than the Al Qaeda members they are supposedly hunting down. Hamid Karzai is asking Obama to back off, as the killing of civilians is, according to western media, supposed to be the Taliban's job; but ultimately the US drones (flown out of Nevada) are doing a better job of it. The trillion dollars worth of Lithium and other valuable minerals recently found to be lying under the mountains of Afghanistan may well get Obama to listen, because Karzai could just as easily sign over the rest of its mineral rights to Chinese imperialism, just as it has with the massive copper deposits now being developed. The attack on the Gaza flotilla by the belligerent illegitimate Zionist regime has rocked alliances in the Middle East that have stymied and blockaded the Palestinian revolution for years. Turkey has

backed away from its alliance with Israel, and Egypt has been forced to open the Gaza border crossing at Rafha. Iranian aid shipments are on the high seas, and Swedish dockers have taken up the Palestinians' call to hot cargo Israeli ships.

What is missing from the fight against the barbarism of decaying capitalism is an international workers' leadership capable of organizing and coordinating the proletarian revolution. The crisis of proletarian leadership has plagued the working class for generations now. The task of forging a revolutionary regroupment of Trotskyist forces, based in a relentless struggle against centrism and reformism as well as the search for a common method and program, must be the top priority of true Marxists in this time of growing capitalist crisis. Young workers must take up this debate and forge the new vanguard through their experience in the class struggle and the revolutionary process. The pages of *International Trotskyist* are dedicated to the advancement of Marxist theory and practice by the best fighters of the working class.

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are imposing massive attacks on workers living standards to 'balance the budgets'. That's why this is a revolutionary crisis, because for the working class to live, capitalism and imperialism must die. It is us or them. We are all Greece!

Whose Crisis?

First, who should pay for this crisis? Not the workers and poor farmers of the weak oppressed countries! It should be the bosses and their parasitic banks and their state functionaries who pay for the endemic crisis of capitalism. So let's destroy the myth that this crisis is an accident of badly managed capitalism that can be corrected by scapegoating some or other sections of society. It is not bad regulation, greedy casino capitalists, or banksters that are the cause of this crisis. Nor is it their greedy mates who run the state regimes in their client states. Nor is it workers resistance to austerity. They are but symptoms, effects of crisis. The cause is the endemic crisis-ridden nature of capitalism.

The biggest mistake by the so-called anti-capitalist left is to separate out capitalist production from the financial system and blame the crisis on the mismanagement of the banks. Thus phase one of the crisis begun in 2007 is seen as the result of money used for speculation on bad assets (subprime housing mortgages) instead of invested in production of value. What they overlook is that the surplus capital was gambled on speculation on 'toxic assets' because of the decline in the rate of profit in production.

Globalisation was more about buying and selling of privatised assets than investment in new production. The overaccumulation of capital that could not be invested in production to produce new value therefore had no alternative but to go into speculation on existing risky assets or lose all of its value. This is what Marx called 'fictitious' capital, because there was no new value being produced by workers

that could be exchanged for the mass of capital invested in 'fictitious' values. Such 'capital' was no more than bits of valueless paper. This desperate attempt to postpone the destruction of capital value by speculation in non-values went up in a puff of smoke in 2007 with the collapse of the banking system.

Sovereign debt crisis

The crisis was temporary halted by massive state bailouts of the biggest banks, and a huge devaluation and bankruptcy of the weakest banks. But the price was the loading of debt onto the balance sheets of the state central banks who underwrote bad debts and in the case of Britain actually nationalised some banks like Northern Rock. The Greek banking system was similarly bailed out, and the Greek state borrowed up its deficit to the point that it had to go to the biggest rescued bank, Goldman Sachs, for an 'off balance sheet' loan to hide its bankruptcy. So phase two of the crisis is now dramatically exposed (so much for the bosses cynical 'transparency') by Goldman Sachs which, rescued by US taxpayers money could buy up failed banks, and then buy up weak client states like Greece as if they were banks to be gobbled up.

So far from Greece being responsible for its bankruptcy, we can prove that the Greek state was a mere pawn of EU and US imperialism. Its job was to exploit Greek workers for imperialism. Imperialism loaned money to the Greek state to manage this semi-colonial exploitation. The EU and US (Goldman Sachs) banks make the Greek workers pay for this debt. For decades Greek workers resisted this exploitation by fighting for decent jobs (half are employed in the public sector) wages and pensions, education and health. They have been able to limit the loss of these gains to pay for the mounting state debt.

But now that the bosses' endemic crisis has gripped the world economy and exposed how weak the Greek economy is, the EU and

US banks make an example of it for the rest of the world. Greek workers must be forced to lose jobs, cut wages, pensions and education and health spending to pay back the imperialist banks and their ruling classes. This is how the imperialists want the workers all over the world to pay for their crisis! So in Greece we have a revolutionary situation that represents the potential for a revolutionary situation in the whole world. The sparks flying in the insurrectionary struggle in Greece can light fires in every major city in the world.

The union bureaucracy

The Greek working class majority is still under the illusion that PASOK (the main social democratic party) can solve the crisis because PASOK has since the war brought many gains to workers. The elected PASOK to power last year to defend their living standards. PASOK however is being made to solve the crisis at the expense of its working class base. Its leadership has agreed to the terms of the EU and IMF to cut pay, jobs and pensions by huge amounts. We have seen that in its year in office PASOK is incapable of solving the crisis except at the expense of the workers. This means that workers already fed up and angry will rapidly break from PASOK to the left. Standing between them and independent working class politics is the powerful Greek labour bureaucracy of the GSEE-ADEDY that backs majority PASOK and the minority of the PAME of the KKE.

The union bureaucracy is the main force inside the working class that acts as the agents of the bosses to trap workers on the reformist dead end road. It is the main union bloc backing PASOK that is holding back the revolutionary development of the radicalising masses. They have called for several 'general strikes' over the last two years, the most recent on May 5/6. However, they are designed not to allow workers to develop into a fighting movement. Rather they are designed to let off steam for 48 hours and to pressure PASOK in the hope



Greek workers marching to protest government austerity measures in May 2010. Their banner reads "We resist."

of minimising the attacks on the working class.

For two years militants have been moving left towards the KKE (Greek Communist Party) and the other 'left' parties but this is not a break from reformism or social democracy. The KKE is a reformist party with a rotten history of betrayal of workers revolution. The majority of Greek workers want a new left social democratic party to replace the sellout PASOK and the KKE may move into this vacuum. But it was the KKE that split the working class and allowed the imperialists to smash the revolution in Greece during WW2. They will talk left but neutralise the working class fight to make the bosses pay for their crisis. To give any support, critical or otherwise, to the KKE in this revolutionary situation is to betray the working class.

Syriza, Maoists and Anarchists

To the left of the KKE and the smaller left reformist groups are a number of small new left, Maoist, Trotskyist and anarchist formations that are taking advantage of the growing militancy. The May 5/6 48 hour general strike that followed two others in March and April got

half a million on the streets. None of the left parties are capable of offering much leadership. For example the broad left Coalition of the Radical Left (Syriza) is an anti-capitalist formation linked to the World Social Forum. It is limited to mobilising workers to pressure parliament to the left.

Some have reactionary programs like the Maoists who see this crisis as one that can be solved by the Greek 'people' breaking with the EU and fighting for their national independence.

In our view, Greek nationalism has a progressive element since Greece is a semi-colonial client state of the EU and US and is being nationally oppressed by the 'conditions' imposed by the EU and IMF to resolve 'its' crisis. However, to limit the struggle of the Greek masses to national independence would hamstring the revolutionary independence of the proletariat behind some or other 'progressive' national bourgeois or petty bourgeois leadership. The betrayal of the mass struggle in Nepal by the Maoists is a sad object lesson.

The anarchist formations have emerged as the most radical forces in the strikes and street actions.

They have a history of rejection of the Stalinist KKE traitors, and the Maoist stagist national revolution, for street action and spontaneous anti-capitalist insurrection. It is therefore, the youth activist rebellion against the older generation of Stalinist/Maoist bureaucrats. For that reason is it a powerful, progressive force that needs to be guided by a revolutionary program that overcomes the weaknesses of the anarchism. Anarchism fails to see that the revolutionary proletariat must be organised both democratically and centrally. Without any centralised command the working class is prey to disorganised individual terrorist actions and the covert action of state forces as '5th columnists'. The genuine hatred of anarchist youth for the Stalinist/Maoist bureaucratic dictatorships of the past and the betrayals of the Greek working class can only be turned into a consistent revolutionary direction by the revolutionary Trotskyist program.

Greek 'Trotskyism'

We can look at what Greek 'Trotskyism' offers, as well as several international currents who are outspoken on the Greek crisis. There are several international currents such as the Woodite IMT, Cliffite SWP and CRFI who have small groups in Greece. These groups have no real Trotskyist program to win over the vanguard and make the revolution. The IMT is busy sucking up to Chavez in Venezuela and his call for a 'Fifth International' that includes Hu Jintao! The Cliffites are semi-anarchist anti-capitalists who refuse to call for a vanguard party and armed workers militias.

The SWP talk about Greece rising up against IMF cuts and gives support to the anti-capitalist Antarsya program which demands on PASOK: "Disobedience against IMF and EU directives; Exit from the eurozone and the European Monetary Union; Struggle for an anti-capitalist exit from the EU; The immediate stoppage of foreign debt payments; Give money to workers not bankers; Nationalisation of banks under workers'

control; Demand the taxation of capital and immediate cuts to military expenditures; Ban lay-offs; Secure and decent jobs for all; Immediate increase to wages; Protect collective agreements; Legalise immigrants; Political asylum and shelter for refugees; Public social security, health system, and education for all." Just militant pressure on the PASOK regime to defend workers rights and living standards. Nothing about workers self-organisation! Nothing about turning a general strike into a seizure of power.

The IMT said that the May 5/6 general strike was an 'earth shattering' success and then calls for it to be extended to an "all out general strike until the government backs off". Again, militant language, spontaneous anti-capitalism, but no decisive break from reformist pressure on the government. The article takes a defensive line against those who blame the workers movement for the killing of three bank workers. There is no call to build workers councils with workers militias to coordinate and discipline the struggle and to defeat provocateurs. No call to bring down the government and for a workers government! Are they looking for a Greek Chavez?

The other longstanding 'Trotskyist' party is the Workers' Revolutionary Party or EEK which was until 1989 part of the ICFI better know as Socialist Equality Party and World Socialist Web Site (WSWS). Since 2008 the EEK has been the Greek section of the Coordinating Committee for the Refoundation of the Fourth International (CRFI). The EEK is ultraleft on the unions failing to make a distinction between the union bureaucracy and the rank and file members so cannot intervene inside the unions to put united front demands on the leadership for an indefinite general strike. While Trotsky condemned the unions in the epoch of imperialism as incorporated in the state, he always called for the rank and file

to break with the bureaucracy and to build fighting democratic unions. Since unions were the main organisations of the labour movement they had to be 'revolutionised' to form workers' councils and workers' militias. A genuine Trotskyist transitional program fights to transform the unions into organs of workers power. While the EEK calls for nationalisations and expropriations it does not have a program to transform the unions and build workers councils, workers and soldiers militias as organs of dual power. For example there is no call for an indefinite general strike.

Action Program

The transitional program starts with defensive demands against all attacks on worker and counters with immediate demands based on what workers need now, not what the bosses can afford. It is legitimate to put these immediate demands on the regime, but they must be backed by demands for workers to organise and fight independently of the regime warning that the regime (and its reformist agents in the working class) must defend capitalism and imperialism against the workers. Fighting for these immediate demands forces workers to organise to take control of production, to form workers militias to defend themselves from state forces, to split the army ranks to the side of workers, and to build dual power organs such as workers councils or soviets. It becomes clear as the struggle develops that there is no solution to the crisis for workers other than the seizure of power and the formation of a workers government that can socialise capitalist property and create a planned economy.

• **Fight all austerity cuts to jobs, wages, pensions, and state spending on health and education! For a sliding scale of hours and wages to create decent work for all!**

• **Form workplace councils of action everywhere! For a national congress of all unions and worker, students and self-employed councils of action to prepare for an indefinite general strike to bring down the PASOK government!**

• **For the occupation under workers and students control of all workplaces during the indefinite general strike!**

• **Form workers, students and selfemployed defence militias to defend the general strike! For soldiers committees of the rank and file to provide arms to the defence militias!**

• **For a Workers Government to socialise the banks, imperialist and national capitalist property, under workers control, and for a socialist planned economy!**

• **For a Socialist Republic of Greece as part of a Socialist United States of Europe!**

An action program for Greece cannot be advanced in isolation of the rest of the EU and the world. An insurrection in Greece will not survive unless it is supported by European workers who stop NATO from invading and occupying Greece as happened in WW2. Workers in Europe must defend Greece in their own action programs that cancel the debt to semi-colonies, and expropriate the imperialist banks. It is necessary to build a revolutionary international workers party that can unite the vanguard workers in every country behind an international program for world revolution.

**For a World Party of
Socialist Revolution
based on the 1938
Program of the Fourth
International!**

The foregoing article is reprinted with permission from *Redrave*, the blog of the Communist Workers Group, New Zealand. It was posted on May 7, 2010, and is available online, with links to sources, at <http://redrave.blogspot.com/2010/05/greeks-arnt-we-all.html>.

Iran: U.S. and Chinese Imperialism, Hands Off! Down with the Regime!

In a cold-blooded act of astonishing brigandage, Israeli Defense Forces commandos attacked and seized a Turkish flag passenger vessel in international waters on May 31. It had been public knowledge that the vessel and its peace activist passengers were intent on breaking the Israeli blockade of the Palestinians in Gaza with a cargo of food, medicine, and cement. In the few moments it took the commandos to murder nine civilian activists and injure a dozen more, a year or more of U.S. diplomacy aimed at isolating Iran for Israel's benefit was shot to pieces.

Appearances can deceive. An American U.N. resolution placing a more restrictive embargo on trade with Iran was passed shortly thereafter, with the ostensible aim of crippling an Iranian quest to join the exclusive nuclear-armed club. However, Chinese and Russian votes for the Iran embargo came only after two rounds of modifications to the fine print provisions, which permit Turkish and Brazilian enrichment of Iranian nuclear fuel. And in the wake of the attack, Turkey and Brazil declined to join the embargo altogether, with the Turkish government downgrading its diplomatic relations with Israel so steeply that even veteran U.N. watchers were taken aback.

Suddenly, the Netanyahu government in Jerusalem finds itself under immense international pressure to curtail its Gaza blockade. Its first response to this pressure seemed like a bad joke for domestic consumption: it announced that it was willing to permit the entry into Gaza of "snack foods" (!). Realizing that this did not play well internationally, and that in some quarters it was seen as insulting and barbaric, particularly coming when the Egyptian government opened a Gaza frontier checkpoint to permit humanitarian aid, the Israeli government is now squirming, trying to appear to change its blockade policy.

Readers of *International Trotskyist* will want to understand what these developments mean in a larger context, particularly in terms of the collision of interests between the rising and declining imperialist powers. To that end, we reprint (with permission) the following article from Redrave, the online organ of our New Zealand comrades in the Communist Workers Group, whose analysis here renders the complex Iranian international situation decipherable. It was posted on March 15, 2010, and is available online, with links to sources, at <http://redrave.blogspot.com/2010/03/us-and-chinese-imperialism-hands-off.html>.

Imperialists fight over Iran

Iran is now the prize in a major confrontation between the two main imperialist blocs. On the one side is the US and its allies, Israel, France and Great Britain. On the other side is China and Russia along with its allies in the SCO - India, Pakistan and Iran. In the middle balanced between the two main blocs are France, Germany and increasingly Japan where the new JDP is challenging US domination and

looking towards China.

Let us define each of these players and see what their stakes in Iran are.

The US sees Iran as a dangerous, unreliable state that can tip the balance of power in Central Asia. Not only is it a major supplier of oil and gas, it sits on the border of this resource rich region and the main routes for oil and gas out of central

Asia.

The US and its NATO allies (with France and Germany largely absent) are occupying Afghanistan and spreading the war against "terror" into Pakistan. To the West is the US occupied client state in Iraq and its main ally in the region, Israel. The US bloc needs to control Iran to ensure control of Eurasian oil and gas.

The Russia China bloc

The China Russia bloc controls Eurasia (as territories that were formerly parts of the USSR and Communist China). Despite some headway by the US in winning these states away from Russia and China, it has suffered a reversal in recent years and is making little headway to gain access to oil and gas. Both Russia and China have major agreements with these countries for energy supply. Meanwhile the Nabucco pipeline is still an expensive pipedream.

Not only that, China is actively pursuing oil and gas fields and or building projecting pipelines in Iraq, Iran and Pakistan under nose of the US. China is even opening a huge copper mine in Afghanistan, and strengthening its military defences of its border with Afghanistan. Recently China added a long gas pipeline from central Asia to China. China made deals with the Central Asian countries to supply gas to China while the US is conducting a long and so far unsuccessful war in Afghanistan. According to the New York Times: "The ambitious project runs 1,140 miles across three Central Asian nations to the Chinese border, linking Turkmenistan to the Chinese region of Xinjiang. Once inside China, it connects with a pipeline that can carry the fuel even farther east."

Iran is being singled out as a potential nuclear threat while Israel and India neither of which agreed to nuclear non-proliferation are tolerated if not actively supported, only because its regime is hostile to the US and aligned with Russia and China.

The Islamic regime in Iran is the only powerful Islamic state that is not in the US camp. Ahmadinejad is clearly aligned to Russia and China economically and politically. This extends to the Bolivarian ALBA regimes in Latin America led

by Chavez. Chavez sees Iran as a key ally in the fight against US imperialism which is increasingly tied to China and Russia.

Down with the Islamic regime

While Israel is targeting the Ahmadinejad regime and is keen to bomb Iran's nuclear sites, the US under Obama has preferred to discuss closing down the nuclear program under threat of more severe economic sanctions. Thus the US has backed Moussavi's opposition to change the Islamic regime through elections. The huge protests in July in response to the probably rigged elections were led by Moussavi and his supporters. Some workers organisations got involved also. A minority of workers and students began to challenge not only the Ahmadinejad regime but the Islamic regime set up in 1979 itself. The left in Iran backed the protests for democracy and some went further and called for workers to fight for socialism. With the suppression of the protests this wave of struggle retreated.

The recent upsurge of struggle in December has taken a significant shift to the left. Moussavi is no longer the leader. The main demands have shifted from democratic demands (cite them) towards socialist demands. So not only do we have a situation where the two imperialist blocs are gearing up in Iran for a showdown to control Eurasia, the working class is showing signs of rising up against both wings of the bourgeoisie, pro-China and pro-US. The problem is that the reformist left is backing the Ahmadinejad regime as part of the Bolivarian bloc linked to China and offering workers an illusionary hope that China can come to the rescue of the Iranian economy and meet the needs of the working class.

The Bolivarians' illusions in China

Now that Obama has revealed himself as just another ruling class bomber surging in Afghanistan, spreading the war to Pakistan and on to Yemen and Africa, who else can offer any hope to the Bolivarians that imperialism can be reformed? Chavez and Castro are looking to China to come to the rescue. China offers a solution because it is a rising power with the economic weight to displace the hated Yankee imperialism. What is more as an ex-workers state that retains a strong centralised Communist Party, China can break all the rules and become the model for 21st century socialism. All it needs is for workers to assert themselves and push the Chinese regime to the left. This is the position of the Chavez supporter James Petras who argues that China will become imperialist unless the workers pressure the CCP to the left.

We can see why the Bolivarians and Castroists look for the solution in China. China restored capitalism but with 'socialist' characteristics. These include a willingness to form political and economic alliances with semi-colonial ruling classes who pass themselves off as populist. Thus the left populist Bolivarians, Chavez and Morales, the centrist Bolivarians Lula, and the right wing Kirchner, all benefit from strategic alliances with China. It does not take much imagination to see how Iran can also benefit from its strategic alliance with China and Russia.

The ALBA dreams for a 5th International

This is where the reformist left that backs Chavez and his proposed 5th International come in to contain the masses behind

(Continued on page 20)

HWRS and CWG Split From FLTI

Introductory Note: HWRS, accompanied by the Communist Workers Group of New Zealand (CWG), formerly constituted a minority faction within the FLTI (also known as IFLT). In March 2010, HWRS and the CWG split with the FLTI and formed a liaison committee. The letter reprinted below was sent to the FLTI to announce the split and explain the reasons for it. The letter is also available on HWRS's website at the address below:

http://www.HumanistsForRevolutionarySocialism.org/IFLT_Documents/Split_Letter.htm

The reader is also referred to our website for links to the sources quoted in this letter, and for other documents elucidating our differences with the FLTI.

Dear Comrades,

We acknowledge receipt of the Majority reply to the Minority on China. We note that the FLTI Majority document 'In defence of Marxism' talks about the Minority not as comrades but "these people", "academic chatterboxes", "petty bourgeois servants of Obama" etc. We think that all this crude abusive language is defensive on your part because you cannot convince readers by your arguments that China is a semi-colony owned by Wall St. so you must label us revisionist enemies of the working class.

But that means you must slander us since you cannot prove we are Obamaists from our politics let alone our program. On the contrary the SCI in supporting the PFP to oppose the picket of Nancy Pelosi has chosen to side with Usec, PFP and Obama rather than the Minority. You cannot claim ignorance since the reactionary, dogmatic and arrogant position you took on this picket was explained to you several times.

The FLTI majority is no longer democratic centralist international but bureaucratic cen-

tralist. The bureaucratic nature of the SCI was demonstrated a number of times. For example, The SCI never convened a meetings of the IEC, which should happen at least once between Congresses. In addition to that, the SCI kept on changing its own composition, which is a violation of basic democracy in a democratic centralist international. The IEC is the highest body in between Congresses and in a healthy democratic international only the IEC has the authority to change the secretariat. Yet the SCI kept changing the membership of the SCI to fit the factional needs of the majority. By doing it the SCI ceased to represent the FLTI but it represented in a bureaucratic way only the majority. Further proof of this is that the SCI failed to produce an IWO that carries both Majority and Minority positions on China.

Marxists must look at China and ask "what is it"? We can agree it is no longer a deformed workers state (with the possible exception of Cde Shaheed). Beyond that, "what China is", has to be decided by the Marxist analysis of reality, not by precon-

ceived theories or perspectives. Otherwise how can we pretend to be an embryonic Marxist revolutionary international?

We agree with you that Lenin's theory says that in the imperialist epoch the world is already divided. It can only be redivided by means of war. You then draw the conclusion that China cannot be a new imperialist power since it has not redivided the world by means of war. Lenin never meant to be dogmatic on the re-division of world. The latest crisis is bringing down all the small imperialist forces in Europe. We are clearly seeing a further decline of small imperialist countries such as Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece. China is clearly occupying their places and taking territories that were occupied by other old European countries. We have seen in the past that deep crisis can easily force a change in the order of the imperialist pack. This is what happened in depression of the 1930s that ended with the US taking charge of the imperialist pack.

But for you the question of China was already decided dur-

ing WW1 – either workers state or semi-colony. Any reality today must conform with the world as it was in WW1. WW2 is just a continuation with some redivision that does not change anything fundamental. Indeed, you say that the restoration of the workers states is really the delayed conclusion of WW2.

It is true that a new imperialism can only arise at the expense of existing imperialisms (and by means of war) but you overlook the fact that the October revolution 'divided' the SU (and subsequently the Deformed Workers States including China) from imperialism by means of war (civil wars and WW1 and WW2). Not as new imperialisms, but as workers states. Of course Lenin did not foresee the restoration of capitalism in the SU and the consequences that might have for imperialism. For him the revolution in the East would intervene, and as part of the international revolution boost the SU.

Trotsky predicted that without a political revolution restoration would result from the stagnation of the bureaucratic rule of the workers states. But there is nothing in Trotsky to say that the re-integration of restored workers states into the capitalist world economy would inevitably make them semi-colonies divided and oppressed by imperialism.

What Lenin could not have foreseen, and what Trotsky would not have excluded was that restoration need not reduce

the former workers states to semi-colonies; that the bureaucracy could make the transition to a national bourgeoisie without losing its independence. (Trotsky argued that restoration of capitalism in the SU would make Stalin's regime a "fascist" regime. He did not speculate beyond that.)

China was not defeated in a world war, invaded, occupied and turned into a lackey (like France, Germany and Japan - Germany still has 70 US bases in it). Restoration was forced on the bureaucracy by stagnation and imperialist pressure, but the bureaucracy had to defeat the resistance of the working class. The bureaucracy took responsibility for this counter-revolutionary defeat and as the result was able to convert itself into a new national bourgeoisie without military defeat or occupation.

We can see then, that China emerged from a DWS and was re-incorporated into the global capitalist economy not by means of imperialist war, invasion, occupation and partition but by internal counter-revolution. This has nothing to do with China's 'exceptional' circumstances, and everything to do with its transition from a DWS to restored capitalism. Certain features of the DWS carry over to Chinese capitalism, not as 'Chinese characteristics' but as the characteristics of 'state property' which Trotsky recognised would take the form of state capitalist prop-

erty.

In fact Trotsky in the *Revolution Betrayed* said that in regard to capitalist restoration that: *"In the sphere of industry, denationalization would begin with the light industries and those producing food. The planning principle would be converted for the transitional period into a series of compromises between state power and individual "corporations" – potential proprietors, that is, among the Soviet former proprietors and foreign capitalists."*

This is roughly what the situation today in China. The heavy industry remained in the state hands and it is slowly being dismantled and given to private corporations primarily Chinese capitalists.

These are the 'exceptional' circumstances that allowed the new bourgeoisie to 'inherit' as state property the means of production of the former DWS as the basis of its political 'independence' from imperialism.

For the Majority this 'independence' is temporary and must lead to semi-colonial domination unless there is a socialist revolution. The theory is decided and the program follows; defend China from imperialism, overthrow the Red bourgeoisie!

How temporary is temporary? The FLTI agrees that capitalism in China was restored between 1989 and 1992. It says in 2008 that China was still poised be-

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tween a semi-colony and socialist revolution. Now when the Minority affirms that China retained its 'independence' in 1992, the Majority says it *lost it* in 1979 when the Special Economic Zones were created, and when the Chinese banks went bankrupt in 1991 and were rescued by Wall St. That in fact, China is owned by Wall St and that Chinese workers are in a pre-revolutionary situation today confronting the Red Mandarins, and "Obama's" Red Army, who are the junior partners of Wall St.

Except the Majority's description of Chinese reality in the last 30 years is a fantasy. For the Majority the facts of China's rapid rise as an capitalist industrial economy, soon to be second only to the US, is an illusion, as China is really no more than a branch of the US domestic economy. The material basis of China's 'independence' evaporated sometime between 1979 and today and China's army, its banks, its factories etc are now part of the US global regime.

The Minority never said that China did not invite FDI to create capitalist export manufacturing. It was a strategy of the Chinese bureaucracy on the road to restoration to create a material base of its transition and its new class 'independence'. Thus the Special Economic Zones did not give US imperialism ownership of China's economy. China processes manufactures and supplies raw material and labor, but the majority of the profits do not go to foreign investors.

In exchange, China has won markets, foreign exchange, and technology transfer. Nor did China's banks go bust and get taken over in 1991. China's big banks are state owned. The state always has more than 50% ownership of each bank, in addition 25% ownership can be in private Chinese hands. Foreign banks

cannot have more than 25% ownership of a Chinese bank, and in no case does a single foreign bank have anywhere near 25% ownership. Thus, foreign banks are mainly advisors and administrators of funds and have no significant role independent of China's banks. Therefore, more and more of China's rapid growth is the result of Chinese capital accumulation to the point that over-accumulation has required the export of finance capital.

Why, if the US exports finance capital to China, is it not the case that China exports finance capital to other countries? What are the 'exceptional' circumstances that makes capital accumulation in China a proxy for US capital? The Majority tries to limit 'finance' capital to the US, calling China's FDI

... to describe China as merely a semi-colony today ignores the reality that China is a major capitalist industrial power expanding rapidly into the global economy. ...

'commercial' capital. It defines finance capital as 'parasitic' without realising that this is already part of the definition of finance capital. That is, finance capital is not just capital that is invested in 'usury' or loans to productive capital, but is a built-in component of productive capital since industrial capital is fused with banking capital. Chinese FDI is no less parasitic than US FDI.

Imperialist 'parasitism' is the extraction of super-profits due to monopoly prices which include unequal exchange of value i.e. appropriating unpaid values of commodities including labor-power. This appropriated unpaid value is called super profits or 'rent'. Imperialism replaces competitive capitalism, and shifts

the competition from the market to competition between imperialist corporations and imperialist states. This does not mean that new technology is unimportant. Instead of allocating capital on the basis of prices of production (i.e high tech labor productivity) monopolies buy up or suppress new technology as part of their rent-seeking. That is, new technology reduces the price of production and therefore increases the potential rent.

Therefore, FDI by both US in China and by China in many other countries, is the export of finance capital (banking capital fused with industrial capital) to gain rent. The US gains rent through unpaid value of Chinese labor-power and unpaid value of Chinese or other Asian raw materials, machine goods etc which they buy to produce the finished commodities. But US (plus Japan etc) FDI does not own more than a small minority share of the productive capacity of the Chinese economy which is typical for cross ownership between imperialist powers.

Chinese capital (state owned and private) which owns the big majority of finance capital in China reaps the same rents when investing finance capital in loans for oil and other raw materials, loans to build infrastructure, investments in ownership of foreign corporations, etc in semi-colonies and other imperialist powers. China does this precisely to gain ownership and control of the production of these commodities to increase superprofits (i.e. the unpaid value component, or rent).

We conclude that to describe China as merely a semi-colony today ignores the reality that China is a major capitalist industrial power expanding rapidly into the global economy. It is not a US sock puppet subordinated to a US imposed division of labor.

Some of the fake Trotskyists are stuck inside historical schemas and explain China's expansion as some mysterious aspect of a surviving Deformed Workers State. We, on the other hand recognise it as capitalism, and the expanded reproduction of Chinese capitalism can only take one form - imperialism.

Does this put us outside the pale of Marxism? Well only if it means we think Chinese imperialism is progressive. You slander us to suggest that we side with US imperialism alongside the Bolivarians, Maoists, Stalinists, Castroists. This is cheap demagoguery to bolster your historic schema.

We clearly say over and over again that China is as reactionary as US imperialism. US imperialism is still hegemonic and its

ing class by the Red Mandarins in the name of "socialism" and the Fifth International.

We say wakeup and call for the Chinese workers in a confrontation with the US to turn their guns on their own ruling class, and in every proxy war between the US and China, we say call for the independent struggle of workers and poor peasants led by a revolutionary party for the socialist revolution.

We call on the Majority to reconsider its method of dogmatically reproducing an historical schema based on the world in WW1. Yet we have seen no willingness to even consider the theoretical arguments put forward by the Minority. Instead the argument that China has made the transition from DWS to imperialist state is denounced as

ing class. We will undertake to print and distribute this IWO internationally.

Because the debate over China has revealed fundamental differences in method, in our understanding of imperialism, and in programmatic differences that put us on opposing sides in a war involving the US and China, the CWG and HWRS are breaking from the FLTI and its international center and forming a Liaison Committee to defend the fundamental principles and program contained in the 23 points document of the FLT.

A formal document which puts the position of the Liaison Committee will be written in due course. In it we will defend the 23 points except the existing characterisation of China. We will clarify our understanding of the 23 points and explain them in the context of the world situation in which China plays a significant role. We don't think that our break with the majority is confined to China. China is rather a symptom that reflects the break of the majority from Marxism and its dialectic method. We explain the majority method in the document *The SCI's Rejection of Dialectics Is Taking the FLTI into the Centrist Swamp* which is available on the HWRS website.

In the document we showed the centrist zigzag of the FLTI majority leadership the SCI from ultra-leftism (China is in a revolutionary situation, drop the demand for the Labor party in the US and instead call for a general strike in the entire US, etc.) to opportunism (uncritical alliance with pacifist JRCL-RMF to create a "bridge" to China). We think that the majority is reverting to the old Morenoite method from which the majority leadership originated. This is ultimately what we are breaking from.

CWG and HWRS

March 1, 2010

... the debate over China ... revealed fundamental differences in method, in our understanding of imperialism, and in programmatic differences that put us on opposing sides in a war involving the US and China ...

defence of its global interests must bring it into collision with an ascendant China. This is why we changed our position of China's dual character in which we could defend it from a direct US attack, to that of an rapidly emerging imperialist rival that could not be defended in any situation. That is why we are for the defeat of both China and US.

How is this different from the Majority? The majority must argue that the defence of China in a war with the US must be won by the Chinese working class fighting US imperialism in a military alliance with Red Mandarins who will use the war to instil Chinese chauvinism in the name of the Fifth international and with the support of the Bolivarian regimes. This could lead to the defeat of the Chinese work-

'Cliffite', 'Mandelist', cheeleading for Stalinism, Bolivarianism etc etc. The only development of the Majority position since July 2009, is the hysterical escalation in the political characterisation of the Minority from unconscious Stalinists to open enemies of the working class. The logic of such a characterisation is that the Majority must expel the Minority to defend its indefensible 'defense' of Marxism.

The Minority will not be publishing the official Majority document on China in its national papers. We have not published our own Minority document in our national papers. They are fully displayed in good English on our websites. It is the responsibility of the SCI to publish an IWO containing the debate as a duty to the international work-

The Labor Party in the U.S. and the Subjective Sectarian

Introductory Note: This article, which was written by Dave Winter of HWRS in February 2010, responds to a letter from Carlos Munzer of the FLTI (reprinted on pp. 19-20, after Winter's response). In order to present an accurate account of the original exchange, neither the article nor Munzer's letter, which was translated from Spanish by the FLTI, has been edited for grammar and style. The letter is also available on HWRS's website at the address below.

http://www.HumanistsForRevolutionarySocialism.org/IFLT_Documents/Labor_Party_Letter.htm

The reader is also referred to our website for links to the documents referenced in this letter, and for other documents elucidating our differences with the FLTI.

Few weeks before the HWRS and the CWG (New Zealand) broke from the FLTI we received a letter from Munzer, the leader of the FLTI, in which he criticizes HWRS for calling for a fighting workers/labor party in the US. As typical from Munzer, he completely falsifies our position on the labor party. He wrote that in "Where We Stand" we call for a labor party based **only** on the unions. This is a typical Munzer's method of falsification. In "where we stand" we states clearly that "*The building of a fighting workers' party is an urgent task for the American workers' movement. Such a party must grow out of the struggles of US workers, and base itself firmly on a revitalized and democratized trade union movement and on other organizations of the working class and its oppressed sections.*"

Munzer is a typical petty bourgeois subjectivist. He makes up positions that we never had and then he builds on his first lie a mountain of lies that is based on his first lie or delusion. So since HWRS supposedly calls only for a labor party based **only** on the unions, HWRS according to Munzer, is calling for a reformist labor party based on the labor aristocracy. We are also, according to Munzer, transforming a tactic to a strategy, we are now Pabloists no better than the LIT and Healy, etc., etc.

The reader should be familiar by now with Munzer's school of falsification. As the reader

can see we are calling for a workers/labor party based on the struggles of the workers and "*a revitalized and democratized trade union movement*". This can only take place if the bureaucracy in the unions is overthrown or considerably weakened. We, of course, call for a labor party based on the entire working class (*other organizations of the working class and its oppressed sections*). We are exposing the lies of Munzer because we state categorically in our program that "*Within the trade unions, we fight for the rank and file to oust the reformist and pro-Democratic Party bureaucrats, and to democratize the unions and win them to a revolutionary action program based on a system of transitional demands which serve as a bridge between today's struggles and the socialist revolution.*"

But even more importantly our program states that "*In helping to build such a [labor] party, revolutionaries must argue for it to adopt a transitional program based on Trotsky's 1938 programmatic contribution and, even more importantly, on his dialectical method in approaching changing situations in the class struggle*". (my bold) One of the things that ultra leftists and dogmatic sectarians like Munzer and Shaheed (WIVL) cannot grasp is that in each country the situation is not the same. For those people who rejects Marxism and its dialectical method the class struggle

and its parties evolve the same way all over the world as if we live in a society of clones. But the labor/workers' party in the US is not likely to develop the same as Workers' Party in Brazil or the Labor Party in England evolved. In Brazil the ruling class needed a reformist Workers' Party. So they found Lula and the unions' bureaucracy to establish such a party.

In the United State the ruling class has been counting on the unions' bureaucracy to quell the class struggle through the unions' support for the Democratic Party. The evidence for the last 80 years is overwhelming that the only time the US ruling class may change its mind is when we'll see massive struggles that we have not seen since the 1930's. There is overwhelming evidence that the Labor/Workers' party in the US could emerge only when there will be massive upheavals by the working class. It takes a very long time for American workers to move, but when the workers move, they move fast. That will be the time when class independence will stop being an abstraction. It will become real for the workers and so is the labor party. It is a tradition in this country that when conservative workers who normally vote for the Republican Party are in bitter confrontation with the state they become open to the idea of the labor party (for example, that what happened during a bitter strike in the Las Vegas hotels in the 1980s). It is different than Brazil because it is not possible here to build a reformist labor party through the services of the unions' bureaucracy and the left, that is, without massive class struggles. History illustrated it without a doubt. The experiment of the left wing of the unions bureaucracy and the left in the 1990's to build a labor party via the project of the Labor Party Advocate (LPA) failed miserably. This left wing of the union bureaucracy that built (with the help of reformist left) the LPA refused even to run labor candidates in the name of LPA because it would have annoyed the rest of the union bureaucracy and their friend: the Democratic Party.

Trotsky proposed a labor party in the US because a great number of workers were ready for class independence, but they were not ready to join the SWP. This has not change in regard

to HWRS (which is the continuation for Trotsky's method and the pre-Second-World-War's SWP) today. The consciousness of the working class remained roughly the same. A lot of them vote for the Democrats because they do not see the rise of class independence, and the rest of them stay home during elections for the same reasons. But only few of them are ready today to join a revolutionary organization. So the necessity to raise the tactic of the labor party has not changed since Trotsky's death. Whether it is correct or not will have to be tested when the sleeping giant, the American working class, will wake up and rise up in massive struggles against capitalism. We tried to explain to Munzer and Shaheed that it remained a tactic that needed to be tested (http://www.humanistsforrevolutionarysocialism.org/IFLT_Documents/Critique_of_FLTI.pdf), but to no avail as the reader can see from Munzer letter. There are many possibilities and we cannot predict what will happen when the sleeping giant will be fully awake. The stage of the labor party could be bypassed completely. If the working class will rise up by building new organs of struggles such as factories committees, inter-unions committees that run democratically by the rank-and-file and not the bureaucracy, neighborhood committees of the oppressed etc., we may drop the tactic of the labor party and call for Soviets based on these committees. If the workers will want to supplement their massive struggles with the establishment of a political party that expresses their class independence, that will not mean that the majority of the workers are ready to join a revolutionary party. In this case we'll fight for a Workers'/Labor party that is based on the workers organs of struggles, that is, the fighting rank-and-file of the unions and the oppressed. In such a case such a labor party will have different wings. The revolutionary wing could win the support of the working class and lead the workers to power through the method of class war and ultimately the final revolution. If the counterrevolution will win and will not need immediately the service of fascism, the bourgeoisie may decide to pacify the workers through the establishment of a reformist labor party, and they will use the service of the reformists.

We are not prophets and we cannot tell in advance exactly who the American revolution will develop. What we know for sure is that since Trotsky proposed the Labor Party in the US as a tactic for the SWP the consciousness of the American workers have not change that much. The basic question of class independence has not been resolved and the tactic of posing it to fighting workers has not been tested seriously. Trotsky expected the American workers to surge with massive struggles. But the victory of American imperialism in second-world-war and the betrayal of the international revolution by Social Democracy, Stalinism and the new Mensheviks, that is, the majority of the fake Trotskyists, kept the American working class relatively asleep.

But we are expecting big changes. American imperialism is in decline and it is battling to keep its world domination against the rising Chinese imperialism that is based on a much cheaper labor than the US capitalists' labor. Thus now we are witnessing brutal attacks on American workers, that were not carried out for many decades. American workers will have to fight back or be reduced to dust. We have confidence that the workers will fight back. When this happens we will test the tactic of the labor party. For now we should keep on raising it as a necessity for class independence, that is, for a genuine break from the Democrats. For if the workers will not fight for a class independence, they will be crushed.

Dave Winter

**Letter from Carlos Munzer (FLTI)
to HWRS, February 20, 2010**

We have seen you have uploaded in you web site an article included in the first issue of HWRS paper, International Trotskyist that we salute again. In this article called "where we stand", you define that you fight for a labour party based on the unions of USA.

You have already posed that slogan in other statement, a slogan we do not agree with, but we consider it a tactic. But the fact of stating it like a strategic program for a period has opened a huge difference. This program has not

been approved by the foundational congress of FLTI and its resolution on USA.

To tell you the truth, we do not see a CIO getting filled of millions of workers like in the '37s Trotsky said. We neither see that the outcome of the class struggle in USA has been defined due to it is not possible to build a revolutionary party before a "labour party based on the trade unions". What is worst, today that slogan means a united party with trade unions that do not represent more than a 5 or 7 % of the US working class. This would leave out million of unemployed workers and those who live of food coupons of 3 dollars per day to survive and would expel immigrant workers from its ranks, that is, those immigrant workers expelled from the country by the republicrat regime whose frontier with Mexico is guarded by the fascist gangs.

You would call to build a party with the AFL-CIO bureaucracy with the entire treacherous left, servant of Obama that militate in the unions with the Trotskyists' program.

Trotskyists stated in '37 and not before in USA (a question to which Trotsky denied determinedly) the motion of LP (PT) for workers organizations with statutes and transitional program to support working class to break with rooseveltianos and conquer class independence from bourgeois parties. But we stated this as a tactic, as a concrete motion not as a strategy since WE FIGHT FOR SETTING UP AN INTERNATIONALIST FIGHTING LENINIST PARTY IN THE US WORKING CLASS.

In that way was SWP of Trotsky and Canon who fight for the Fourth International, the party for Insurrection and soviets.

You are transforming a circumstantial tactic and motion into a strategy and program.

We are attaching what we have of your web site for you to confirm us if it is or not your position.

In case this is a resolution voted by you, we propose to publish in your web site this letter of SCI of FLTI together with your statement.

FLTI fight for setting up and refound the world party of socialist revolution, in USA such a fight is to refound SWP of Trotsky and young Canon, their theoretical and programmatic leg-

acy based on the foundation congress of the Fourth International. We fight for this by being in the opposite side of the renegades of Trotskyism-servants of Osama-, the castrist bureaucracy, the left of AFL-CIO bureaucracy and sellers out of the million workers march and struggle against the war of the US working class.

The FLTI fights in USA to set up an internationalist revolutionary party of the US working class, which fights constantly for the revolution in USA at worldwide level.

We fight for an internationalist revolutionary party in USA, which first “national” task in USA is to declare that the enemy is at home, and to make as own each combat of the oppressed people against its own imperialism.

We think that it is sad that our comrades of the HWRS transform a simple circumstantial tactic into a strategy. To transform a tactic like the entrism in something that last decades, as the Pabloism did. Or like the Labour Party (LP) tactic, which put Healy and The Militant current for 40 years inside the Labor Party in England, the LIT inside the LP of Lula as a boot-licker of the church for 20 years. In the same way, we see today the entire left of the World Social Forum, like the PTS, MAS and even the left wing of the anti-capitalist parties as Tendencia Claire in France, or the Lambertism before, to call for a Labour Party to hide that what they really want to do is the party of Kautzky, Jean Jaures, of the reform and the betrayal to the proletariat.

With the slogan “Labour Party”, that is a Labour Party based on the unions, the COB bureaucracy of Bolivia supported by the renegades of Trotskyism dissolved the factory committees, the popular assembly, and the picket

lines, embryo of the militia of the revolutionary process of 2003-2005. As well as in Brazil in the 80’s, they opposed the LP to the soviets or to the embryos of the organism.

In Brazil’s case, you should know that the rising of the Labour Party was the abortion that imposed the church and the Stalinism to the coordination of more than 5000 factory committees that in the late 70’s and beginning of the 80’s they made the bourgeoisie and the military dictatorship in this country to go crazy.

For that reason it is a crime to transform the slogan or tactic of the Labour Party, as well as the tactic of the intervention in the bourgeois parliament, or the entrism, i.e. an episodic tactic into strategic for the whole period.

In these conditions, your tactic slogan of LP, stated as a strategic, does not educate the US working class or the world working class to break with the reformism, it does not educate in the class independence either. It is a limit to the revolutionary and internationalist grouping of the best of the US working class.

We call you to reflect on this point. We call you to not transform circumstantial tactics into a strategy, so your first action paper can be a decisive step forward in the constitution of the revolutionary nucleus in USA

We do this with the spirit to help, from our humble point of view, to clarify a great confusion that you have made up. It is in your hands to solve it.

We hope you receive this amendment as a contribution of your SCI comrades.

Carlos Munzer

(Iran, continued from page 12)

the populist regimes. Chavez wants to retain the China-Russia-Bolivarian and Cuba bloc intact including the Iran Islamic regime. For Chavez this is possible. For him the Islamic regime is dictatorial only because it is under attack from US imperialism and the economic boycott it has suffered. The

people pay the price of this economic blockade with cuts to living standards, and their protests are met with police and para-military force. Chavez argues that the regime can adopt the path of the CCP which while using force to suppress strikes and riots, is trying to meet popular demands by infrastructural spending.

China's road to socialism

then represents a model of what is possible for both semi-colonies like the ALBA countries and Iran, Pakistan etc and for isolated 'socialist' states like Cuba and North Korea, to meet at the point of 21st century socialism.

Thus the left of the Bolivarian movement in Iran, the Woodites who are cheerleaders for Chavez in Venezuela are calling to pressure the Ahmadinejad regime

to the left with a 'constituent assembly' to unite all progressive classes in Iran behind a democratic or popular front that is anti US but pro-China. The left Bolivarians serve to tie workers to the democratic and popular fronts of the nationalist populist regimes. As those regimes move right, like that of Lula in Brazil, the left Bolivarians like Chavez explain this is because of the demands of Yankee imperialism. China's economic expansion allows capitalism to be reformed and will allow its own regime and all those of its strategic partners, including Iran, to move to the left.

The dangers of the 'Chinese road to socialism'

China is no longer a deformed workers state. It is now a capitalist state. But there is nothing progressive about it. China has been able to use its legacy as a workers state to escape being trapped as a semi-colony of the US or Japan. Now it is embarking on its own imperialist expansion in an alliance with Russia. This means that the Bolivarian dream of a more democratic, progressive capitalism in China is doomed as a pipedream. China is no more progressive than any other imperialist power. It super-exploits its own millions of workers as well as those in the semi-colonies where it invests in mines, oil and gas fields and does deals to 'develop' the economies of these countries.

So in Iran, there is no way that workers will benefit from the Islamic regimes alliance with China and Russia. They will not see any more wealth staying in Iran or being distributed to the masses in the form of jobs, living wages or social welfare. On the contrary, while they live in hope that one or other imperialist power will rescue them in the name of democracy, or socialism, they will suffer the same fate as workers throughout the twentieth century that is to die from overexploitation, or in the wars that will be fought over control of Iran's raw materials and labour power.

Transitional Program for Iran

Iran is up for grabs by both imperialist blocs. The stakes are so high war is likely. This may begin as a proxy war between the two blocs if

Israel attacks Iran. But such a war would inevitably draw in Russia and China to defend their interests, not only in Iran but in Central Asia as a whole. So what must be the attitude of revolutionaries to such a proxy war?

A Transitional program for Iran poses democratic demands to defend Iran from all imperialist intervention by means of independent working class struggle. The basic democratic rights such as freedom of speech and association cannot be subordinated to any bloc with the regime against imperialism. Parliament is the democratic dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Only the working class can defend Iran from both US imperialism and Chinese imperialism. And it can only do this by means of armed struggle to take power and smash the capitalist state. This means we have to mobilise workers independently of the state for self-defence and to win over the ranks of the military.

For workers councils and workers militias armed and supported by rank and file military councils.

In relation to the US bloc we are for the defence of Iran, and for the defeat of the US bloc. To the extent that China or Russia intervenes directly we are for their defeat also. We have no objection to Iran using whatever military arms or material provided by Russia or China. But we make clear that these countries provide military assistance only to advance their imperialist interests in Iran.

However we do not give any political support to the regime. The national bourgeois cannot win independence from imperialism US or Chinese. It fears the working class will expropriate its property so it manoeuvres between the different imperialisms to make better deals with one or other imperialism.

We call on the workers militia to split the army and take control of the weapons to turn the anti-imperialist struggle into a socialist revolution!

For now the US bloc is blockading Iran and China promises

better deals. The Iran Islamic regime gains popular support in its confrontation with the US bloc. This will intensify in any war. But we must fight all attempts by the regime to manipulate popular support by claiming the US is 'fascist' while China is a 'socialist' or a 'progressive' capitalist power. They are both reactionary imperialists. Even in the short term there will be nothing 'progressive' for the workers and peasants of Iran from the bloc with China and Russia. Only socialism based on a workers state and socialist plan can meet the needs of workers and peasants.

Hands off Iran! It is necessary to demand independence of Iran from both imperialist blocs and the particular imperialist states that have interests or designs in Iran. But we know that such independence cannot take place with any sections of the Iranian bourgeoisie. Only working class power via the socialist revolution can guarantee real independence.

We are for the expropriation of imperialist property under workers control. This includes China's investments in the oil and gas fields and pipelines. Nationalise the land, distribute the land to the tillers; nationalise the banks fund the development of agriculture.

And as no fraction of the national bourgeoisie can be trusted to lead let alone win any anti-imperialist struggle, we call for the end of the Islamic Regime of '79 that came to power on the backs of the workers and then massacred them only to continue to do deals with imperialism!

For a Workers and Peasants Government! Expropriate the factories of the multinationals! Nationalise under workers control all Joint Ventures with imperialist partners!

For nationalisations under workers control of all capitalist property and for a national plan to organise production for need and not profit!

Crisis of Capitalism in the United States

The Deepwater Horizon Disaster: Oil Spill Shows Capitalists Unfit to Rule

During the OPEC oil embargo of 1973-74, war criminal Henry Kissinger is reputed to have quipped, "Oil is too important to be left to the control of the Arabs." We have a different perspective: Oil is too dangerous to be left to the control of the capitalists!

As we go to press in late June 2010, the oil "spill" (read: "gush") into the Gulf of Mexico from British Petroleum's exploded oil rig Deepwater Horizon has already become the worst oil spill disaster in world history, far exceeding the 1989 Exxon Valdez spill in Alaska, and even the 1979 Ixtoc disaster off the coast of Mexico – and there is no end in sight. Since April 20, when the actions of BP and its contractors set off the initial explosion that sank the oil rig – the deepest offshore oil drilling operation in the U.S., if not in the world – tens if not hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil have gushed out each day into the Gulf of Mexico, and onto the coastlines of Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi. In Florida, the oil has reached the pristine white beaches, many of the tourists are gone, and many thousands have lost their jobs. The same coastal areas of the Gulf that were pounded by Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and left to rot by the Bush administration, have been hit hardest by the oil spill, and have been left to rot by Obama, the Democratic "environmental" President.

Time has come and gone for stopping the gusher and cleaning the spill, but the government has merely pretended to put Obama's boot on BP's throat, all the while canalizing and damming up the righteous fury of the Gulf Coast residents with all the power of the Washington spin machine. Over and over, the true picture has been suppressed by BP spokespersons, government experts, the police, and compliant editors and publishers in the mainstream press. The Coast Guard has put force behind the spin, raising false hope in each of the parade of "fixes," killing priceless time and guarding the prerogatives and property of BP until two relief wells come to the rescue (maybe) in August. A million gallons of crude oil are being burned off on the surface daily, yet we see no mention of any

possible effects on public health in the region, or on climate change, and neither OSHA nor the EPA has attempted to intervene.

The vast area of ocean covered by the oil spill approaches 4000 square miles, the size of Delaware and Rhode Island combined.[1] In combination, the crude oil from the well plus the toxic chemical dispersants used by BP now pose a major public health danger to the coastal populations of the Gulf – as with Hurricane Katrina. At the same time, oil from the BP spill has begun to enter the ocean currents of the Gulf Stream. This could carry dangerous pollutants along the coast of Florida and the East Coast towards Europe and the rest of the world – where the toxic plumes could destroy entire fish populations around the globe. Hurricane season has already started, and severe storms pose a threat of even greater dispersal of the toxins and carcinogens now floating in the Gulf in vast quantities.

Almost all the public statements made by BP and the Obama administration about the spill have been nothing but an endless barrage of lies. BP and the government have done the bare minimum to stop the spill and clean it up, in order to minimize the damage to BP's profits. Initially, official estimates by both BP and the U.S. government put the figure for the size of the spill at between 12,000 and 19,000 barrels per day (at 42 gallons to the barrel). However, this proved to be at least five times less than the measurements made by university scientists and environmental groups, who severely criticized BP's mathematical analysis and arrived at figures that put the size of the blowout at a minimum of 70,000 barrels per day. And the numbers just keep on rising. After BP was forced to provide a high quality video of the spill, independent scientists estimated that it was releasing at least 25,000 barrels per day – and possibly as much as 100,000 barrels per day![2]

In stark contrast to the lies by BP CEO Tony Hayward in May 2010 that the impact of the spill would be "very, very modest," Deepwater Horizon is one of the worst oil spills in history. It amounts to

nothing less than a monstrous crime against nature by capitalism, specifically U.S. and British imperialism. The only way humanity can prevent such hellish environmental catastrophes in the future is for the working class in the U.S. and around the globe to rise up and get rid of capitalism, once and for all, through the socialist revolution. The earth's ecosphere will not survive more than a few decades unless the working class takes power and establishes socialism on a worldwide scale.

The explosion and fire that sank the Deepwater Horizon oil rig killed 11 workers. One of the last workers to escape the explosion was Mike Williams, a technician working for Transocean, the company that leased the oil rig to British Petroleum. In a television interview broadcast in May 2010, Williams exposed the central role played by BP executives in creating the conditions that led to the massive blowout of crude oil from the well. Immediately before the spill, BP executives arrived at the rig to oversee the completion of drilling by Transocean and the "plugging" of the well by Transocean's contractor, Halliburton. At a management "safety meeting" held on the rig, Transocean managers proposed to insert three concrete plugs into the well and keep down the massive pressure by using heavy drilling fluid called "mud." According to Williams, the BP manager responded, "Well, my process is different, and I think we're going to do it this way."^[3] What BP management wanted was to begin removing the mud before the last plug was set, and so speed up the operation to save money. Of course BP got their way, and what resulted was a massive blast of methane gas that set off the entire disaster.

From the very beginning, BP's attempts at closing off the gushing oil well have been half-hearted at best, and token at worst. Much like any other capitalist corporation, every single step BP has taken since April 20th has been motivated by its bottom line, the protection of its sacred super-profits (\$6 billion in the first quarter of 2010). This included its decision to put off a costly "top kill" operation to close off the oil well until well over a month after the spill – only to find that it did not work after all. In

this regard, BP is not especially greedy, anti-environmental or "evil" – especially in comparison to American corporations! BP is simply obeying the laws of capitalism's "free" market in extracting (and often spilling) oil solely for the pursuit for profit – and not to satisfy real human or environmental needs.

Oil slicks from the BP spill have already reached the Gulf wetlands and beaches, killing thousands of birds, fish, marine mammals, and oyster beds, as well as plant life. Still, BP continues to deny the existence of oil plumes. Plumes are huge curtains of oil that remain deep in the ocean and may not even



be detectable from its surface. For example, just one plume has been measured at 3 miles across and 1,500 feet thick, at a depth of 3,600 feet below the surface of the ocean.^[4] Plumes like these have the potential to kill hundreds of dolphins and whales, and millions of fish and other marine organisms. If this situation continues for another month or two, huge sections of the Gulf of Mexico could well become a dead zone.^[5] This could bring dire consequences for the ecology, the fishing industry, and tourism, not only in the U.S. states that border on the Gulf, but also in portions of the Caribbean.

Thousands of Gulf Coast fishermen and shrimpers who were made jobless by the BP spill have volunteered to become involved in the oil cleanup. But BP has not been willing to hire more than a small number of them – and only on condition that they first renounce their right to sue the company. These fishermen are likely to lose their livelihoods for many years, and BP offers them

\$5000 each! This barely pays the interest on their insurance costs. Most of them have received nothing as of yet. BP also refused to supply the fishermen with protective equipment, and now many of them have become sick from exposure to the crude oil and dispersants. To add insult to injury, BP threatened to fire workers in clean-up crews who turned up for work wearing protective respirators. EPA tests have shown that the combined effect of crude oil and dispersants, in the form of small airborne particles, is even more toxic than they are separately.[6] This may also explain why five offshore rigs were shut down soon after the spill when rig workers fell ill.

While a lot of attention has been focused on the role of the BP corporation and its executives, the liberal and environmental left in the U.S. has tried to downplay or ignore the close ties between BP, and the oil industry generally, and the Obama administration. Obama was the recipient of huge financial contributions from BP-controlled PACs and PB employees during the 2008 election.[7] BP continues even now to expend millions of dollars to lobby top Democrats in Washington, including Democrats close to Obama himself.

During the first two weeks of the BP spill, many even in the mainstream media commented on how Obama and BP seemed to be speaking with one voice. On April 2, 2010, just weeks before the spill, Obama stated that “I don’t agree with the notion that we shouldn’t do any [offshore drilling]. It turns out, by the way, that oil rigs today generally don’t cause spills. They are technologically very advanced.”[8] These remarks were made in response to a question about Obama’s speech declaring his



Cleaning oil off the beach, glob by glob.

intention to open up large areas of the U.S. coastline to offshore drilling.[9]

The administration continued to stand by this decision for two weeks after the rig exploded, and asserted that the disaster would in no way lessen its support for the lifting of a moratorium on offshore drilling off the Atlantic coast. As White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs maintained to reporters a few days after the rig explosion, “In all honesty I doubt this is the first accident that has happened and I doubt it will be the last. We need the increased production. The President still continues to believe the great majority of that can be done safely, securely and without any harm to the environment.”[10] Even as late as mid-June, Obama’s Interior Secretary stated that it was his hope that the moratorium prohibiting offshore drilling would last less than six months!

Obama continued to defend BP even in the face of scandals involving the Minerals Management Service, the department of the federal government responsible for regulating offshore drilling and other industrial activity of the oil industry in the U.S. While issuing “safety alerts” to BP and other oil companies to activate back-up switches on oil rigs (an option of last resort to prevent crude oil blowouts), the MMS did nothing to enforce its regulations. The director of MMS stepped down after the spill when it was revealed that MMS staff had accepted “gifts” from oil companies, such as tickets to sports events, lunches, and even sex parties with industry-hired prostitutes.

Opinion polls published in the first month after the BP spill showed that the vast majority of those surveyed were critical and even angry at the Obama administration’s response to the disaster – almost to the same degree as they were at BP. Even fellow Democrat James Carville of Louisiana pleaded with Obama a month after the spill, “Man, you got to get down here and take control of this, put somebody in charge of this thing and get this moving,” he said. “We’re about to die down here.”[11] While the pressure of public opinion caused Obama to shift his position and extend the moratorium on new offshore drilling permits – to a token six months – he has adamantly refused to budge on his insistence that BP remain in charge of shutting down and cleaning up the spill.

Like his Republican predecessor, Obama and his administration are 100% committed to supporting the industrial production of the oil companies, including offshore drilling, regardless of the destructive results to the environment. If supporting the oil industry was not on Obama’s agenda, why would his administration have spent billions, if not trillions, of dollars on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan?

The truth is that U.S., European, and now Chinese imperialism are all absolutely dependent on oil to fuel their economic exploitation of the planet and the working class around the world. This is even more true today, because the world is experiencing the worst capitalist economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Oil has become the lifeblood of modern day imperialism, and it is precisely for this reason that the Middle East and the ex-Soviet republics in central Asia are such critical areas of the world to imperialism. At the same time, the oil companies and other powerful multinational corporations, which are at the heart of the U.S. capitalist economy, depend for their very existence on the continuation of highly dangerous processes and unchecked pollution. The oil and petrochemical industries are one of the main sources of the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change and global warming.

The capitalists who own the means of energy production (such as offshore oil rigs, refineries, coal mines, and the like) are incapable of defending the environment and protecting humanity from the effects of environmental damage or climate change. This is because of capitalism's commitment to production for the sake of profit. In the market, need is measured not in terms of hunger, sickness or pollution, but in terms of profit. The capitalists of BP and other the oil companies have no reason whatsoever to avoid the pollution of the environment if this impedes the production of their profit. It is the job of Obama and the politicians of the twin ruling class parties, the Democrats and Republicans, to protect the interests of the oil companies and make sure that nothing does indeed impede their production of profits.

The recent observations by environmental scientists that oil from the spill has begun to enter the Gulf Stream, and that the BP oil gush has released huge amounts of methane into the ocean, underlines the urgency of this environmental catastrophe. Modern day imperialism has created the potential to destroy the whole global environment. Already the ice covering the Arctic Ocean has begun to disappear as a result of global warming. If the frozen methane that lies beneath the Arctic Ocean begins to thaw, it will release a greenhouse gas (methane-air mixture) that is 26 times worse than carbon dioxide in terms of its global warming effect. In other words, what the catastrophic oil spill highlights is the urgency of the environmental crisis created by global capitalism. The widespread destruction of fish populations by oil pollution carried by the Gulf Stream, and the other threats posed by climate change from greenhouse gas emissions, means that now more than ever, our

planet is facing a dire environmental emergency. To avoid the further destruction of this planet, all offshore drilling must stop now.

Workers at home and abroad must combine their struggle against the economic crisis of the capitalist system with environmental consciousness. The working class must fight for workers' control of the oil industry and of all industries that emit greenhouse gases. Workers must control heavy industry so we can implement the emergency measures needed to transform our current industrial technologies into green, environmentally friendly, sustainable technologies.

What this means today, in the aftermath of the worst oil spill in U.S. history, is that the oil and energy industries must be nationalized under workers' control, with no compensation to the bosses. To pay for the clean-up operations, we must demand hundreds of billions of dollars from the oil and energy companies who are responsible for the destruction of the environment in the first place. At present, despite all their promises, Obama and BP have hired ridiculously small crews of workers to clean up the vast areas of contamination of wetland, beaches, and open ocean in the Gulf of Mexico. We can already see that the serious cleanup objectively called for would require an international emergency effort on the scale of that undertaken during the World Wars. We demand that as part of an environmental public works program, millions of the able-bodied unemployed be hired at union wages and benefits, trained, housed, fed, and equipped with proper protective equipment, and deployed to scour the waters, the wetlands, the islands, and the beaches; to clean and rehabilitate injured wildlife; and to dispose of the waste in an environmentally sensitive manner.

The clean-up must be placed entirely under workers' control and carried out by workers' organizations in conjunction with independent scientists and engineers. Much more could be done through the creative use of existing technology and resources. For example, the trucks used to remove waste from portable toilets can be used to clean up oil spills by sucking oil into their holding tanks. The armed forces, with all their technology and equipment, can be put to much better use in cleaning up the oil spill than in killing hundreds of thousands of innocent people in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The operations aimed at plugging the well must be also be placed under the control of the oil and energy workers. Independent scientists from the oil industry and the government should coordinate the efforts, and all BP personnel must be subordinated to these independent scientists, who in turn must be accountable and under the control of oil and energy workers.

Finally, an investigation of this monstrous crime against nature and humanity must be carried out by committees of workers in the oil industry, working with scientists and engineers accountable to the working class. We call on the International Trade Union Conference, the AFL-CIO, and the United Steelworkers (now home to the former Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union) to form an independent, international workers' commission of inquiry into this totally preventable disaster. We would want them to interview everyone who ever worked on this project, and every living victim of the explosion and its results, and to gather information not only on the immediate environmental and economic effects of the disaster, but also on the long term health effects to cleanup workers and Gulf residents, and other indirect consequences. We call for a Workers' Militia to accompany them in their investigation, so that they will suffer no interference, obstruction, or obfuscation by BP or any government body. The Workers' Commission of Inquiry should report to an international workers' tribunal, primarily made up

of workers from the Gulf Coast states, as well as affected workers in other areas such as Mexico and the Caribbean, but also representing local fishermen and the unemployed. A workers' tribunal would establish culpability and bring charges, but also publish findings and assess true costs – including losses to the pension funds that invested in BP, representing the retirement dreams of many millions of workers.

In the end, only workers' control of the means of production can prevent the recurrence of such environmental catastrophes in the future. The entire energy industry, including the oil corporations and the Wall Street investors and banks that finance them, must be expropriated without compensation – that is, nationalized under workers control – and defended by a workers' government. In reality, this goal can only be achieved if the working class in the U.S. and around the globe rise up, and get rid of capitalism once and for all through the socialist revolution.

Hands off the workers helping in the clean up; no gag orders on participants; no interference with media access to BP personnel, cleanup workers, and Gulf area residents and locations!

Immediate, full replacement of wages and benefits for all those who lose work as a result of the disaster, directly or indirectly! Billions of dollars to fund retraining and create millions of jobs in remediation!

Provide appropriate protective equipment for all cleanup personnel. Provide health care for all, especially for cleanup workers and those affected by the spill. Provide multilingual health warnings at all affected beaches and fishing areas.

No cap on BP's obligation to pay for every penny of the cleanup cost and all damages to Gulf Coast workers, fishermen, and their families. Prosecute all BP executives and regulators whose decisions contributed to this disaster!

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Obama's "Health Care Reform": Neither Health Care Nor Reform

As many left organizations have already stated, Obama's so-called "health care reform" bill is totally unsupportable. Sources as mainstream as PBS's Frontline series have confirmed that Congress passed the bill only after the health insurance industry spent huge amounts of money making absolutely sure that nothing in it would threaten the industry's obscene profits. The legislation does nothing to guarantee affordable access to actual health care services, or to change the US's costly, inefficient health care delivery "system." Instead, its principal effect will be to redirect hundreds of billions of dollars away from individual workers and into the already bulging pockets of private, for-profit health insurance companies.

We will not repeat here all of the details about the bill's shortcomings that have already been discussed elsewhere. What we want to do is hit the highlights, and then make a few additional points that, in our view, have not been adequately emphasized by other commentators on this issue.

The bill requires people to purchase health insurance, but does not require employers to provide it. Moreover, the bill does nothing to guarantee that the insurance policies which people are able to buy will be affordable, or that copays and deductibles will be low enough to enable people to get access to health care if they need it. The highly touted subsidies for low-income people (which are, in effect, subsidies for the health insurance industry) will be available only to the lowest-income layer of the working poor; everyone else who does not have access to an employer-subsidized group policy will face a choice between buying expensive individual health insurance or paying a penalty. Even for the people who do receive subsidies, there is no mechanism to ensure that after paying their share of the cost of health insurance, they will have enough money left to pay for deductibles and copays – which the legislation allows insurers to set at whatever level they wish. The requirement that people with pre-existing conditions be allowed to buy health insurance does not ensure that the insurance companies will not cancel such

people's policies, or raise their premiums sky-high, if they start to need expensive care.

One of the bill's provisions is particularly ironic. It requires insurance companies to allow existing policyholders to purchase coverage for their children until age 26, an additional three years over the previous cutoff. The only reason this was even an issue in the first place is that between the skyrocketing cost of higher education and the high rate of unemployment among youth, more and more young people are being forced to remain economically dependent on their parents after they complete their education. Many recent high school and college graduates cannot find a decent job (or any job at all), and those who do find work are often so heavily burdened with educational debt that they cannot cover all of their living expenses. This aspect of the bill may be helpful to some families – particularly relatively privileged workers whose employers subsidize their family's health insurance – but they would not need that help if it were not for the decline of the US economy and the attacks on public education and workers' standard of living. Meanwhile, those whose employers do not provide health insurance subsidies for dependents, and those who do not have health insurance at all, will not be able to take advantage of this provision, even though their young adult children are even more likely to be without health care coverage.

Now for the broader perspective. First, by cementing the private, for-profit health insurance industry firmly into the system, and giving it billions of additional dollars to spend on "campaign contributions" (bribes) and "political advertising" (propaganda), the legislation makes it even less likely that any meaningful change in the private, for-profit nature of the US health care system will be possible in the foreseeable future. Thus, **this bill cannot be supported as a first step in the right direction.** On the contrary, it virtually guarantees that the health care system in the US will remain one of the most backward in any highly developed country.

Second, given that this bill's principal beneficiary is the health insurance industry and the other big players in the for-profit health care industry (i.e., hospitals and drug and medical equipment manufacturers), it is important to understand why the Republicans in Congress – who normally (like the Democrats) side with big business and the profit system at every opportunity – nevertheless opposed this bill. Marxists and even “progressives” should have no illusions that the Republicans' opposition must

mean that the bill does *something* right. Rather, the Republican opposition to the bill was a pure act of political gamesmanship. As the Republicans anticipated, the bill has infuriated and energized the extreme right-wing “Tea Party” political milieu, particularly because of its mandate that everyone purchase health insurance whether or not they need or want it. The Republican opposition to the bill had less to do with the legislation's actual content than it did with Republican hopes that when the “Tea Party”

types go to the polls in 2010 and 2012, they will reward the Republican Party by voting it back into office.

Finally – and here is the only silver lining in the cloud – there is a lesson to be drawn from this experience. The workers and their “progressive” petty bourgeois allies who wanted real health care reform are furious that Obama could not get Congress to pass even minimal reform proposals as the “public option,” and that he was willing to sell out women's reproductive rights and the rights of immigrants in order to achieve a purely political victory that does nothing to help the people who voted for him. This gives the Marxist left an opportunity to expose the Democrats, to urge workers to break with them and form an independent fighting workers'/labor party. Ultimately, the health care reform debacle pounds more nails into the coffin of workers' illusions in Obama and the Democratic Party, removing another road-



block to understanding that nothing short of a complete overthrow of the profit system is capable of achieving progressive goals such as universal, meaningful access to health care.

In short, the big bourgeoisie just laid down the law. No health care for the masses. So long as the rule of the capitalists continues, working people will not get adequate quality health care for all. Health care will not be won in the halls of Congress; it will be won only in hard-fought battles at the point of production. This will require mass strikes, coordinated across industries. Instead, our union “leaders” are busy negotiating away our health benefits and those of the new hires, thereby breaking worker solidarity between the young and the old.

True, the system is strangling on its own incompetence, but it needs a little kick over the edge. That kick can only come in the form of the self-organized working class creating new organs of democracy and action – at every job site, in every office, factory, school, and college, and in the community. Workers at the point of production organized can stop capitalism in its tracks, reorganize the economy and provide quality health care for all. We need strikes for health care. They may start as economic strikes demanding better working conditions for nurses or decent benefit packages for industrial and service workers, but they will only win when they become both generalized and political, embracing demands such as:

- **Free, high quality, lifetime health care for all, including all immigrants regardless of status!**
- **Free abortion and birth control on demand for women of all ages!**
- **Health care is a human right, not a profit center! Abolish the health insurance industry!**
- **Nationalize the health care delivery system under workers’ control!**

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Police Brutality in Detroit

Introductory Note: The article below was written by a teenaged Black woman who lives in Detroit, Michigan. This young woman, a member of one of the most oppressed communities in the U.S., has reached out to HWRs and asked us to help her advance her political education. We are honored to be working with her, and proud to include her impassioned statement on police brutality, printed below, in this issue of *International Trotskyist*. Our young comrade speaks from her own experience in one U.S. community, which suffers disproportionately from police thuggery, but the behavior she describes is familiar to oppressed people in every U.S. ghetto and barrio.

Detroit is the poorest and most pig brutalized city in the country, made up of nearly all Black and Latina/o people. I have seen my uncle get the shit beat out of him by the pig, and a woman who was beat with a club along with her infant in the sling (which caused it to die). My best friend was killed by the pig for claims that he was “crip walking,” so they said he was “gang affiliated.” I was treated like a toy when stopped by the police for no reason except being there.

SETTING THE SCENE

“Detroit police officers kill citizens at a higher rate than police in any other big US city, according to FBI statistics made public by the Detroit Free Press Monday, May 15[, 2010]. Detroit had a rate of 0.92 fatal shootings per 100,000 residents, far higher than New York and Los Angeles, two cities recently scandalized by revelations of widespread police killings and brutality.”

“Detroit, with nearly 1 million residents, averaged nearly 10 fatal police shootings each year between 1990 and 1998. By comparison, New York, with 7.3 million residents, averaged 28 fatal shootings a year during the same period—a rate of 0.39.”[1]

The fact that nearly whole of the city’s youth is either Black or Latina/o makes their chances of facing brutality even higher.[2] It’s not our fault; it is the direct result of the ruling capitalist caste’s drive to keep the masses under constant fear to remain exploited and oppressed.

As Lenin said, *“The state is a product and a manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms. The state arises where, when and insofar as class antagonism objectively cannot be reconciled. And, conversely, the existence of the state proves that the class antagonisms are irreconcilable.”* [Lenin, *The State and Revolution* (1917)]

WHAT IS THE PIG?

“... the primitive organization of a stick-wielding herd of monkeys, or of primitive men, or of men united in clans...” [Lenin, *The State and Revolution* (1917)]

“A low natured beast that has no regard for law, justice, or the rights of people; a creature that bites the hand that feeds it; a foul, depraved traducer, usually found masquerading as the victim of an unprovoked attack.” [Emory Douglas (see illustration, opposite page)]

THE PURPOSE OF THE PIG

What the bourgeoisie won’t tell you is the real reason they have armed forces: This “primitive organization of a stick-wielding herd of monkeys, or of primitive men, or of men united in clans” was formed to protect the wealth of the bourgeoisie, and more specifically to oppress (or in other words, beat the living daylights out of) the working-class, especially the majority[3], or the oppressed sector of the working class. As the economic and political crisis of capitalism is intensifying the masses are (rightly) growing more hostile towards the bourgeois state, questioning the illusion of the “American Dream,” realizing that bourgeois “democracy” is to be enjoyed by the few of the ruling class elite and not the oppressed masses; this increasing consciousness of the working-class of its oppression alarms the bourgeoisie. Therefore, it has become “undesirable” for the bourgeoisie to let the people off with warnings. So in the case of police shootings, out of every 35 people shot down by the pig, on average 17 out of 35 are Blacks and 16 out of 35 are Latina/os. In the working class Black and Latina/o communities this is a harsh day to day reality. This past October, Luqman Ameen Abdullah was shot dead by FBI agents after he allegedly fired at a police dog, killing it. This past March, a man was beat by the pig for **allegedly exceeding the speed limit**. This past May, 7-year-old Aiyana Jones was



Emory Douglas, "What is a Pig?"
(reproduced in **BLACK PANTHER: THE
REVOLUTIONARY ART OF EMORY DOUGLAS (2007)**)

shot down by the pig, *for simply being there*. *The Gang Squad harasses Detroit citizens like they stole something, on a day to day basis.*[4] The police also harass undocumented workers and threaten to deport our Latina/o sisters and brothers.

So a professional ass whupping by the pig costs taxpayers over \$50,000 each officer per year. Prisoners cost about \$31,325 each per year and only \$7,580 is spent annually for each student. What are our priorities? For the bosses and their bought-and-paid-for politicians, police officers whose main tasks are to beat the shit out of any Black or Latina/o youth they see on the streets are *obviously* more important than the education of the youth of the communities they are *supposed* to serve. *Detroit's finest!*

The bosses and their politicians in D.C. and Lansing, united in conjunction with the military and other armed forces, right on down to the local police department, are united in their work to protect the profits and security of the bankers on Wall Street at

the expense of the oppressed, working people and the poor.

Billions of dollars are found to put food on the tables of the pigs who terrorize our communities and to fund wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan; but they can't find enough money to keep our youth from being used as punching bags for the police, and having to turn to petty crime to stay alive survive in the streets. The pig gets a cozy job with benefits, making over \$50,000 a year, just for patrolling the streets looking for young Black and Latina/o youth to harass. Yet, right here in their shadow, our communities have an unemployment rate of about 25%. For every soldier on earth, the average military expenditure is \$20,000 yearly; for every school-aged child, the average public education expenditure is \$380. For every 100,000 people in the world there are 556 soldiers, but only 85 doctors. For every billion dollars spent to provide 28,000 jobs in military goods and services, the same expenditure could provide *57,000 jobs in personal consumption industries, and 71,000 jobs in education.*[5]

It is clear our Black and Latina/o youth have become expendable to the parasitic bosses and their lackey politicians.

***THE PIG IS NOT HERE TO PROTECT YOU!
ALL THEY HAVE TO OFFER YOU IS A GOOD***

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ASS WHUPPING, A NEVER-ENDING BARRAGE OF HOSPITAL BILLS, ENDLESS WARS AND PRISON! IF YOU DON'T WANT TO BE A PUNCHING BAG FOR THE PIG, USED AS CANNON FODDER IN IMPERIALIST WARS, TURNING A PROFIT FOR THE PRISON INDUSTRY, OR DEAD, YOU WILL HAVE TO FIGHT THEM BY ORGANIZING WORKERS' DEFENSE GUARDS AGAINST THE PIG AND OVERTHROWING THE MALE WHITE CAPITALIST STATE AND THEIR PUPPETS MASQUERADING IN BLACKFACE AND WOMEN'S CLOTHING. WE NEED A WORKERS' ECONOMY WHERE THE WORKERS OWN THE MAJOR INDUSTRIES AND RUN THEM THEMSELVES.

OUR PROGRAM

We need to fight for the following demands, which can only be implemented by mobilizing the working class, students, and the oppressed for a massive fight-back:

1. Full employment at prevailing union rates for all. To assure full employment, thirty hours of work for forty hours' pay must be implemented to spread the available work.
2. Failing industries (both financial and industrial) must be taken over (nationalized) under workers' control without compensation to provide adequate access to credit and to get the wheels of industry rolling again.
3. STOP LAYOFFS! When the bosses declare layoffs or attempt to close down a workplace, the workers' defense guards should assist in occupying the factories and the workplaces along with the workers, and assist in establishing and defending workers' control.
4. Housing is a right! Stop all foreclosures and evictions. Tasha Flowers, a Detroit single mother, was manhandled by the pig for exercising her right to housing for herself and her children. In the case of a foreclosure or eviction, it is up to workers' defense guards to stand guard and make sure that no one is removed from their home. We must move the homeless and those in overcrowded housing into housing vacated by foreclosures and the falling real estate market.
5. Quality universal public education at no charge from daycare and pre-school through the graduate level. Working people know that without a good education, our children have no future. Through education we can build a rational economy and divest the world of poverty and drudgery. Education should be under the control of teachers, parents, and students old enough to participate. In that way, we will assure quality education and not the mis-education, over-testing, and ruling class propaganda that currently plague our public schools.

In the case of a teachers' strike, the pig will be used to get SCABS (replacement teachers) into our classrooms. In case of a strike, workers' defense guards must unite with students and teachers and keep out the SCABS! In the event of a teachers' strike, students and parents join the strike for quality education! JOIN THE PICKET LINES! OCCUPY THE SCHOOLS.

6. Quality free universal health care at no charge from prenatal to the grave is long overdue. To accomplish democratic health care, all medical institutions must be placed under worker (Doctor, Nurses, Staff) control with community/patient participation. Workers' defense guards must defend political activists, and those otherwise harassed and brutalized by the pig from the threat of being manhandled or brutalized by the pig while recovering in medical facilities. (THINK: Remember how Brother Huey was shackled to a hospital bed, beaten, and brutalized in the hospital while recovering from being shot by the pig?)

7. Workers' defense guards must be forged by oppressed workers and their working-class allies to defend our communities, in particular Black and Latina/o communities, from police brutality. Defend the youth against daily killing and harassment by the pig. Free all the working class and oppressed political prisoners who rot in the prison-industrial complex!

8. Workers' defense guards must defend undocumented workers against attacks by the pig! End the ICE raids! Free all detained undocumented workers!

9. US troops out of Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and the rest of the world. Down with imperialist oppression. The defeat of imperialism is a victory for workers and the oppressed in the world.

10. We cannot count on Obama and the capitalists to clean up the environment and prevent catastrophic climate change. For them, profit always comes before the environment and the needs of the workers. But the time to stop climate change is running out. We must fight for workers' control of the entire energy industry in order to transform the current, outmoded technology of industrial production to totally green and sustainable technology. Meanwhile, it is up to workers' defense guards to ensure the environment is not destroyed by the pigs, by defending occupied energy and oil industries.

11. Break with the capitalist parties that employ the pigs! No cross-class coalitions. Fight for the autonomy of the working class! We need to build black/Latina/o workers'/labor defense guards based on protecting and serving the oppressed and the working class, especially our Black and Latina

(Continued on page 33)

NUMMI Workers: Sold Out by the UAW

*The following article, incorporating a leaflet by HWRS, is reprinted with permission from **Redrave**, the blog of the Communist Workers Group, New Zealand. It was posted on March 15, 2010, and is available online, with links to sources, at <http://redrave.blogspot.com/2010/03/sellout-of-nummi-workers-occupynow.html>.*

Feb 12, 2010: NUMMI union leaders orchestrated an event with Democratic politicians and other unions tops from the AFL-CIO, Teamsters, CWA, and AFSCME who gathered in Fremont, CA (Trumka appeared via video) to put the final nail in the coffin of the NUMMI workers' fight to save their jobs and ultimately to sell out up to 50,000 jobs in California. These sell out union mis-leaders came together to prove to the capitalist politicians they still intend to deliver votes despite layoffs and plant closures!

These dues sucking hacks paraded the capitalist politicians on stage while they chased union militants from the parking lot for calling for militant actions such as plant occupations. The back room deal making UAW tops have canceled membership meetings and instead put on this show to prove to the politicians that they can still be counted on to keep a lid on the workers anger about the piss-ass severance pay 14k-40k for years of work.

Then they wrap themselves in the American flag and turn this fight into a chauvinist movement of the

"victimized" American workers facing down the "mean" Japanese of Toyota who "lost their way" without saying one word about GM who ran the factory for decades before their failed joint venture with Toyota went south. Not one word about the failed bail out of the auto industry. Not one word about the methods which built the UAW in the first place such as factory occupations. Not one word about nationalization of the industry under workers' control. Instead they turn what should be industrial working class battle for jobs into a consumer boycott of Toyota products.

Right now the only way to save the plant is a full on labor battle using the only power we still have, the power to seize the factory and mobilize labor nationwide and internationally for solidarity actions. But these clowns in their khaki pants and UAW polo shirts have no plan to win. It is totally disingenuous to argue that a boycott can win in a period when workers can't afford cars in the first place. Those who can afford cars do not respect picket lines (in front of dealerships or factories)

and those who do respect picket lines cannot afford cars!

To no surprise fake socialist leader BL of the mis-named Voz de Trabadores, American section of the Morenoite LIT (Workers International League - a Latin American current that claims to be Trotskyist), have tail ended the bureaucracy with a promise to support this consumer boycott project in any way they can (maybe they should change their name to Voz de la Buracracia). Someone should tell the Morenoite International we have enough reformists and renegade Trotskyists in the USA; you could have kept this lot of poorly trained reformists and sent us some real communists instead (but alas your organization is buried so deep up the kazoo of the bureaucracy that you don't know up from down in the class struggle) and real communists run from your organization as fast as they can.

Counter to the rotten no-win strategy of the LIT and the UAW, the militants of HWRS point to the factory occupations in Argentina in 2001, the Chicago Republic Windows and Doors action in 2008, and the

(Police Brutality, continued from page 32)

women. We all know of people in our community who have been gunned down by the pigs. While we do not advocate or support wanton violence against the pigs, we know that only when black/Latina/o workers and labor unite to defend our communities from the pigs' violent attacks will our children and youth be safe. It falls to the working class to disarm the pigs and protect our community, and until they are all disarmed, we echo the cry of the survivors of pig violence: "The only good pig is a dead pig!" Without the pig in our communities many sisters

and brothers would be alive today. Remember Aiyana Stanley-Jones, killed by the Detroit pigs at age 7 while asleep in her home, May 16, 2010.

12. For a workers' government that can and will implement and defend all the above transitional demands. To accomplish these goals, working people need their own government. If we allow the capitalists to control the state via their government, they will continue to attack and ultimately destroy our social gains. To defend our gains, we need workers' power.

13. For independent working class tribunals that deliver justice independent of the bourgeois courts!

massive factory occupations which consolidated the power of the UAW in the 1930s.

HWRS brought this message to the workers of NUMMI: Organize a Rank and File Occupation Committee to Occupy the NUMMI Plant!

The bosses are about to lay off all NUMMI workers with severance pay that will not last very long. The question is, to whom does the NUMMI plant belong: to the brutal capitalists of Toyota and GM, who made huge profits off the workers' sweat and blood, or to the workers themselves, who are the ones who produce the cars? The workers at Republic Windows and Doors workers showed us the way: When a company wants to cut its losses and run, it can be stopped only if the workers occupy the plant. Workers have also occupied many abandoned factories in Argentina and elsewhere, in some cases turning them into productive factories run by and for the workers themselves.

The UAW rank-and-file had a long tradition of sit-ins and factory occupations in the 1930s. But today, the union bureaucrats only collaborate with the capitalists and their government, as they collect their fat paychecks and leave the workers out in the cold and on the streets.

Trumka did not and will not lift a finger to save a single job. He is just coming to town to make few militant noises and leave the workers with nowhere to turn on April 1st. He has the power to call for and initiate massive strikes and walkouts in solidarity with NUMMI workers, which is also the only way to stop future massive layoffs and plant closures. But he proposes to do exactly nothing to save your jobs. The UAW bureaucracy is not any better. They just recently forced GM workers to accept massive concessions, which include closures of many GM plants and layoffs in the thousands. If NUMMI workers take action, they will not be alone.

Only the rank-and-file workers can change the situation. We need to set up a rank-and-file occupation committee as soon as possible, so that we can make a plan to occupy the plant before everybody is too demoralized and it's too late.

NUMMI Belongs to the Workers, Not the Capitalists!

Form Rank-And-File Action Committees to Occupy the Plant!

Occupy the Plant and Refuse to Leave Until All Jobs are Saved!

Nationalize Toyota Without Compensation and Run It Under Workers' Control!

And that is why the UAW hacks chased us out of the workers' hall yesterday!

Update: May 28, 2010

Last week Toyota and Tesla announced a joint venture that they will open at the shuttered NUMMI plant in Fremont. They expect to hire 1,000 workers and start production by 2012 of 20,000 vehicles a year compared with the 500,000 previously produced. Tesla's CEO Elon Musk has stated that he expects to eventually hire 5,000 workers at the plant also creating another 5,000 jobs in the industries that supply the plant.

As for union representation Mike Hall at the AFL-CIO blog states "It was also heartening to read Musk saying Tesla was 'neutral' on any possible union organization drive—that Tesla will let workers decide for themselves whether they want a union. This kind of forward thinking will help Tesla hire the best workers and get this exciting venture off to a successful start." And UAW President Ron Gettelfinger welcomed the news, "Our union's hope is that this venture will give first hiring preference to former NUMMI employees who are already trained and highly skilled," Gettelfinger said. "We're thrilled," said Sergio Santos, president of UAW Local 2244 which just closed up shop across the street from the sprawling plant.

Following the loss of 4,700 jobs the best the UAW and AFL-CIO have to offer is that old cliché from the last presidential campaign, "hope." They hope that the logic of working with the experienced unionized work force will get the sacked workers their jobs back. But their hope ignores the other likelihood that Musk and Toyota's proclaimed "neutrality" on the union issue is akin to the neutrality of the "right-to-work" laws which under the guise of liberty prevent workers from forming solid union shops

Toyota has long been anti-union and the NUMMI plant was its only union plant in North America.

Toyota, employing 35,000 workers, has purposefully placed its plants in eight states all of which are far from traditional UAW strongholds. If it were not for the joint venture with GM at NUMMI Toyota in the United States would have been 100% non-union. In Japan the Toyota union is a business union, practically a human resource wing of management. There is nothing in Toyota's history that should give workers hope that a union will be welcome back to the joint venture without a hard fight.

If we look at what Toyota just accomplished it is amazing. Without even the threat of a fight from UAW they were able to sack their union employees, retain the plant and create the conditions to reopen with a non-union workforce. Much of the work previously done at NUMMI has been transferred to other plants such as in Ontario, Canada where non-union workers are struggling to form a union.

It was an upstart union in Japan, the All Toyota Labor Union, which exposed the safety hazards leading to the recalls. The All Toyota Labor Union formed in opposition to the in-house business union, which covers for the safety hazards which abound with an intense work pace and the use of non-union contract and temporary workers for one third of the positions. We have seen Toyota's union busting activities from the US to the Philippines, their lack of concern for safety as displayed on the shop floor, the delays on issuing recalls and their total disregard for the workers' communities and local jobs as was seen in the shuttering of NUMMI. It will take more than hope from stuffed shirts like Gettelfinger to enforce safe working conditions under union contract at the new Tesla/Toyota plant. It will take an active rank and file linking the struggle in Fremont to other Toyota workers across the nation and planet to win safe working conditions, fair union wages and benefits. A new leadership based on rank and file democracy, which is prepared to organize the unorganized, force the hiring of contract workers, and put an end to the reign of the non-union auto plants once and for all is needed to replace the overpaid bureaucrats of the UAW **who stood arm in arm with the Democrats** as the auto industry was collapsed last year and who did nothing of consequence to save the 4,700 jobs lost this April.

Anti-Immigrant Legislation: ARIZONA RAISES THE BAR

On April 23, 2010, Arizona Governor Jan Brewer signed into law Senate Bill 1070, in effect making racial profiling in regard to immigration status a mandate for all Arizona police. The law is scheduled to go into effect on July 1, 2010, barring any legal injunctions. The law requires Arizona police to check the immigration status of anyone as to whom there is “reasonable suspicion” that they are undocumented. It even enables citizens to file suit against the police for non-enforcement of the law.

Mainstream Reaction

This legislation has not only drawn opposition from the Latina/o community and civil rights and civil liberties groups such as the ACLU, NAACP, and Amnesty International – which would only raise eyebrows if they *didn't* oppose it – but has also caused sharp divisions among such established authorities as major municipalities in and out of state; politicians nationwide; and even some Arizona police and their unions.

Many Arizona police fear that the law will divert resources and undermine community relations, i.e., make a community that already mistrusts them view them as an immediate threat, and be even less likely to cooperate in investigations. Immigrant and civil rights groups characterize the law as having a racially discriminatory effect on perpetrator and victim alike in cases where actual crimes occur, as well as guaranteeing that Arizona law enforcement will engage in widespread racial profiling, which is essentially the only way the law can be enforced.

Multiple lawsuits are pending against the state of Arizona to prevent the law's implementation, including one by a Tucson police officer against the City of Tucson and the State of Arizona. Tucson responded by filing a “cross claim” against the State of Arizona,

supporting the cop's contention that the law is unconstitutional.

Resolutions calling for boycotts of the State of Arizona in protest against the bill have been enacted by the cities of Los Angeles, Austin, Oakland, Boston, St. Paul, West Hollywood, Seattle, El Paso, Boulder, San Diego, New York, and Columbus, and the SEIU has been prominently organizing opposition to the law. Boycotts originating in Mexico, which accounts for 30% of Arizona's exports, are particularly widespread.

An even greater threat to Arizona's economy would be a large-scale exodus of documented, undocumented, and U.S.-born Latina/os alike, a trend that is already beginning and is quite likely to grow. Even the loss of undocumented immigrants alone, which is the stated purpose of the law, would be a huge net loss to the Arizona economy. For all the shrill talk of “illegals” soaking up public funds, the fact of the matter is that nobody works more for less, and few groups, if any, receive such a small share of public services relative to what they contribute to the economy.

Obama's Immigration Policy

President Obama has also publicly expressed his dissatisfaction with the law, and on June 8, 2010, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton stated in an interview on Ecuadorian television that the Obama administration will be filing a lawsuit. As of June 20, however, the Obama administration had not yet made any official statement confirming this.

Moreover, Obama has consistently qualified his criticism of the bill with statements of sympathy with the motivations behind it, as well as promises to find a more appropriate alternative. “Our failure to act responsibly at the federal level will only open the door to irresponsibility by others,” stated Obama at a



Border Patrol agents arresting workers near the Arizona-Mexico border. These men have committed no crime; all they want is to go somewhere they can get work to support themselves and their families.

naturalization ceremony for foreign-born military veterans, held on the same day the bill was signed.

In keeping with Obama's distorted view of what it means to "act responsibly" in the immigration area, current projections are that the Obama administration will soon exceed the Bush administrations in immigrant detentions. The fact that key elements of Obama's constituency consider civil rights to be relevant has only served to bring forth Obama's formidable tightrope-walking skills. Thus, while on the one hand Obama is attempting to dissuade Arizona and other states from enacting "irresponsible" laws that are certain to generate widespread civil unrest (not to mention other problems), on the other hand his administration is sending National Guard troops to reinforce the Arizona-Mexico border in an attempt to demonstrate responsiveness to the right wing's supposedly "legitimate concern" (i.e., nationalist hysteria) about undocumented workers.

For a Fighting Workers' Opposition

This law has provoked sharp divisions within the ruling class, and thereby intensified the ongoing public debate. Approximately 100,000 people marched in Phoenix on May 29 to protest the law, while countless other actions have taken and will continue to take place nationwide. At the same time, right wing

politicians nationwide are pointing to the Arizona law as a shining example of the kind of change they'd like to bring to their constituencies, and the rest of the bourgeois spectrum of politicians is bending over backward to appease the white racist demographic without provoking dissent in their own camps.

SB 1070 will inevitably do a great deal of damage to Arizona's economy, and it is already generating a great deal of political and legal chaos, to the extent that many of its early supporters are already turning against it. But overturning or repealing this particular law cannot be the limit of any movement against it. Unlike the Obama administration and many "liberal" bourgeois politicians, we do not want "reform" of U.S. immigration laws. Not even eliminating abuses like the concentration-camp style detention centers for immigrant arrestees set up by racist Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio would be enough. We want open borders, and an end to the economic policies the plutocrats impose on the semicolonies, which are the real reason why people are forced to leave in droves in the first place!

In our view, it is time to take the immigration ball away from right-wing demagogues and their mealy-mouthed "opponents" in the Democratic Party. This legislation is just one of the most recent

manifestations, and the most outrageous, of the growing wave of right-wing hysteria that is crippling working class cohesion in the face of a decades-long, and-accelerating, deterioration of our standard of living. Undocumented immigrants are a frequent target of this hysteria, as they are a convenient scapegoat used by demagogues to redirect people's frustrations away from the real causes of their problems, and the vested interests behind them. It also takes advantage of the legacy of racism to divert the attention of the more backward elements of the white working class from the deterioration of their standard of living.

This law, and the social/political phenomena it exemplifies, represent a serious detriment to the workers' movement as a whole. Targeting immigrants puts an already highly exploited sector of workers in an even weaker position, while sowing disunity within the working class. Workers who understand the truth need to spread the word, loud and clear: It's a lie, it's a distraction, it's racist, and it's an attack on the working class as a whole! Immigrants didn't cause the financial collapse; immigrants didn't enact the policies that have eroded what little institutional power we have to resist capitalist exploitation; and attacking immigrants does nothing but facilitate the further consolidation of power of the wealthy few who exploit workers throughout the world.

We also need to mount a more effective opposition than just boycotts and protest marches. Protests alone will not carry the message home to the corporate class that we

will not stand for their attempt to use racist immigrant-bashing to divert our attention from the real enemy, which is the plutocracy that is driving down the standard of living of workers worldwide in order to safeguard its profits in the face of the global economic crisis.

The threat to workers' rights posed by the Arizona legislation is easily as grave as that which sparked the nationwide one-day general strike and boycott organized by latina/o workers against U.S. businesses and institutions on May 1, 2006. There is already a broad base of working class support and solidarity, beyond the Latina/o community, in opposition to this law and any others like it. That base must be mobilized to undertake more actions like the one in 2006. Only mass workers' direct action can defend immigrants effectively against racist scapegoating!

- **No one is illegal! Tear down the fence and disband the Border Patrol! Abolish the ICE!**
- **For free movement of all workers across the border! Full citizenship rights for all workers!**
- **Down with racism and racial profiling! No scapegoating of oppressed peoples!**
- **Organize mass militant action to protect immigrants' rights!**
- **Build a fighting workers'/labor party to struggle for a workers' government that will raise workers' standard of living! Abolish capitalism and the need for national borders!**

Immigration rights activists rally in Washington, D.C. in March 2010. Even a huge gathering like this was not enough to stop the enactment of the Arizona law. Only mass direct action by the working class can effectively force change.



In Defense of Public Education

Balance Sheet on the March 4th Student Protests, and What Next?

The protests against education budget cuts held on March 4, 2010 were bigger than the protests of September 2009. The militancy of the mass occupations of campus buildings in November 2009 was a step forward from the September protests, in the direction of seriously shutting down the universities. Yet the biggest achievement so far was what the students did at the University of California at Santa Cruz, where with great militancy and determination they completely shut down the university. They were, it appears, the only campus where a determined strike committee was formed in a conscious effort to shut the university down.

The occupation of Interstate Highway 880 in Oakland involved more people in direct action than the occupation of Wheeler Hall at the University of California at Berkeley (UCB) in November 2009. The level of militancy was high, but the situation was not well suited to drawing into action the thousands who had supported the Wheeler occupiers. Those who supported the Wheeler occupation would have done the same, but were corralled by the rallies to off campus sites.

In general things turned out to be roughly as we expected them to be. A lot of anger, a lot of frustration, and – what is more important – a lot of militancy and willingness to go beyond the limited goals of the organizers.

One good thing about March 4th was that the protests went beyond California and extended to other areas of the US. The best known university action outside California took place at Hunter College in New York City, where protesting students confronted nasty cops, and the students claim that they also confronted the International Socialist Organisation (ISO), which they contend was working with the police to stop the militancy of the students.[1]

Student protests are catching fire on a global scale, with many statements of solidarity coming from students and workers' organizations around the world. Despite the participation of many

individual teachers and other workers, however, March 4th was primarily a youth and student action. The unions were not as involved as they were last year; none had organized actual strikes. To a large degree, the union leaderships restricted the workers to participating in pickets before and after working hours.

East Bay and Oakland

In the immediate Bay Area, March 4th was mainly marked by marches and rallies. Real effective strike actions were prevented from happening by the reformist organizers and the Left. From UCB, buses took about 800 students to a futile rally with Democratic Party speakers and a day of lobbying in Sacramento to convince the class enemy to give more money for education. The main Left organization that diverted strikers to Sacramento and into the hands of the Democratic Party was the Revolutionary Workers Group/Speak Out Now, whose politics are not that different from the ISO's politics.

Our group, HWRS, concentrated its efforts in Richmond and the East Bay. In Richmond, we organized a March on Chevron as a build up to March 4th. Chevron's Richmond refinery ruins the health of thousands of local workers and youth, mostly black and Latina/o. At the successful march, young students from the middle school addressed the crowd, and the united front raised the demand to expropriate Chevron under the democratic control of the workers and the working class community. The East Bay March 4th Outreach Committee (East Bay Committee) rejected this slogan as too radical. That was not the opinion of the police. The Richmond cops took no chances, and sent a strong contingent of cops to stop the multi-racial youth and the geriatric marchers from entering "private" property, i.e., the Chevron refinery gates!

It should also be acknowledged that the heightened level of awareness and action against the cuts coincided with the victory of the Progressive Teachers slate running against the entrenched sell

[1] <http://takethecity.wordpress.com/2010/03/08/a-response-to-the-lies-of-march-4th/>

out leaders of the United Teachers of Richmond. (See “A Progressive Teacher Speaks Out” on pp. 51-53 of this issue of *International Trotskyist*.) Another positive consequence of the heightened awareness following March 4th is that it resulted in a strong level of parent and student support for two separate one-day teachers’ strikes at the end of April in Capistrano and Oakland, California (See “For an All-Out Strike to Fight Union-Busting” on pp. 49-50 of this issue of *International Trotskyist*.)

The East Bay Committee played a critical role in the Bay Area. It is controlled by reformists and organizations with a reformist orientation, such as the Socialist Party and Solidarity (USec), who were against real strikes and occupations. The centrists from a group of youth centered in Oakland, Advance the Struggle, vacillated but mostly ended up supporting the reformists. (For example, they supported the slogan “tax the rich,” and were willing to distribute a flyer drawn up by the East Bay Committee without demands and without a call for building occupations.) Our constant struggle in this committee was in part against their reformist demands such as “tax the rich,” which they modified (under our pressure and after months of debates with our organization) to “make the rich pay.”

But the main difference between HWRS and the East Bay Committee was our insistence that we needed to organize real strikes and occupations at UCB and Laney (an Oakland community college), versus the reformists’ insistence on a day of marches and rallies. We know for sure that the East Bay Committee discouraged the students from UCB and Laney from doing occupations of buildings, so that such occupations would not interfere with their planned rally in downtown Oakland. So while many

students at UCB and Laney participated in militant picket lines during the morning of March 4th, everybody knew that a two-or-three-hour morning strike is not a serious strike, and obviously the universities and colleges in the East Bay were not shut down.

Yet despite the acrimony between HWRS and the majority of the East Bay Committee, *we think that they did an excellent job for what they planned to do: to have a strong working class rally in Oakland that combined strong contingents of working class people and youth from the high schools mixed with the marchers from UCB.* It was indeed a good rally, well organized and very democratic, and at in which the principle of *no platform for bourgeois politicians from the Democratic Party* was upheld.

For good reasons, some of the youth were frustrated because they wanted more than a rally. They wanted to disrupt the system and try to shut it down. So a number of them went onto Interstate 880 and shut it down for an hour or so before they were chased out by the cops. The action resulted in a number of arrests and one serious injury (from falling off an elevated road). We salute the youth, of course, and defend them unconditionally against any attempt by the state to prosecute them. The subsequent discussions revealed that many onlookers stuck in traffic cheered the activists, who included university students, high school students, and union teachers. But we clearly understand that spontaneous actions at the last minute, even though understandable due to frustration over the lack of effective actions by the East Bay Outreach Committee, cannot be as effective as a planned statewide disruption of the capitalist system. To shut down the system effectively, we need *seriously*



**Building for
March 4:
Rally at the
Chevron
refinery in
Richmond,
California on
February 27,
2010.**



Students and workers defending the occupation of Wheeler Hall, University of California at Berkeley, November 2009

planned massive picket lines, which means scabs are not allowed to cross them; massive buildings occupations; and other direct actions by students and workers such as the blockage of Interstate 880.

San Francisco

In San Francisco, the situation was somewhat similar to that in the East Bay Committee, except that the dominant Left organizations were the ISO and Socialist Organizer (Lambertists). Both organizations opposed militant actions to shut down the universities. San Francisco State University (SFSU) is the most radical university in the immediate Bay Area. While the Left stopped the students from organizing an effective strike and occupations, the students tried to stop scabs and were very militant on the picket lines as they attempted to shut down the university for real. We need to bear in mind that both UCB and SFSU have many entrances, and thus only well organized mass picketing or occupations can shut down these universities.

The frustration about the lack of a well organized strike, and the emphasis on marches and rallies, was expressed by SFSU student leader Anastasia Gomes, who told the *San Francisco Chronicle* that the students should have stayed and defended the strike instead of marching to San Francisco's Civic Center. But the union bureaucrats, along with Alan Benjamin from Socialist Organizer, made sure that the strike turned into a long march from SFSU and other SF colleges to the rally orchestrated by the labor bureaucracy. While there were more than 5,000 people at the rally, the speakers mostly offered the usual standard reformist "tax the rich" solutions endorsed by the Labor Council in San Francisco, along with the views of the union bureaucracy as

advocated by Benjamin and company.

Some reformist organizations and centrists wanted to turn the March 4th protests into a campaign for the Democrats. They were out in force, telling the masses that what we need is to get a proposition on the ballot to overturn California's requirement of a two-thirds majority vote in the legislature to adopt a budget, so that the budget can pass by the simple majority of the Democrats. Sure, we support democratic reforms. But the massive attacks on workers and students have nothing to do with the problem of the two-thirds majority. In fact, the Democrats, including the liberals among them, voted *for* the state budget that unleashed these massive attacks on education funding.

Santa Cruz

Without a doubt the most successful actions took place at UC Santa Cruz (Santa Cruz). This was the only place where the students shut down the university completely. Santa Cruz is known historically to host the most radical students in the UC system, and the students showed again that this reputation is not for nothing. They organized and came prepared to shut down the university. They were equipped properly to stop scabs and any traffic of students or cars into the university. The cops and the school administration could not stop the students. The administration had to concede defeat and closed the campus down for the day.

We can all admire and learn from the determination and the collective action of the students. A strike is the basic tool of the students and the workers. It only works if it is organized well. It is the basic organ of class war, and to win we need to understand the power we are fighting against and tactically organize the strike accordingly. The Santa

Cruz students enjoyed an important advantage over many universities, however. There are only two roads by which students, workers and traffic can get into the university. The students shut them down tight and that was enough. Despite the logistical advantage, the students showed us that a determined strike committee enforcing its own discipline and centralization could mobilize a solid strike!

Across the Nation and Internationally

The mood and anger of the youth is palpable. While March 4th was the culmination of months of organizing, in April all it took was a call to action on Facebook to prompt tens of thousands of high school students in New Jersey to walk out for a strike.[2] In Puerto Rico, brutal attacks on a month-long student strike triggered an island-wide general strike to defend the students.[3]

It was not lost on the most conscious of the activists that last November 18th, on the same day when students were being beaten by the cops at UC Berkeley's Wheeler Hall, students in Bogotá, Columbia were battling riot police with Molotov cocktails, in their struggle to kick US imperialist troops and their seven bases out of the country. There have been numerous reports of students across Europe and Latin America taking actions to defend their education.

No one is foolish enough to think that the crisis we face in our schools, colleges, and universities is an isolated incident due to bad management in specific school districts, states, or nations. The most advanced students and workers are making the obvious connections between the cuts in education and the decline of an empire bogged down in a trillion-dollar war effort, and many are coming to the conclusion that capitalism itself is the culprit.[4] Capitalism is incapable of employing, housing, feeding, or providing health care to many workers, and unwilling to educate our children and youth. If we want an education for the next generation of workers, we need to sweep capitalism into the dustbin of history.

What's Next?

The movement to fight education budget cuts is clearly at a crossroads. It cannot continue as a protest movement forever. The main argument of the majority of reformists and centrists is that the state has the money, and the problem is that the capitalist state is greedy and the politicians want to give the money to Wall Street. From this logic it follows that protest movements like those in the 1960s are sufficient, since all we need is to put pressure on the capitalist politicians to give the money to human needs instead of giving trillions of

dollars to the bankers and their wars. This is an incorrect and a misleading assessment of American capitalism today.

American capitalism is in a steep decline, as expressed by a world crisis that will not be replaced anytime soon by an extended or robust period of boom. It is true that the capitalist system always has its priorities, and it always favors the bankers and their wars. But the money that goes to the bankers and war is no longer American money, since the US has the biggest debts in its history as it is losing its competitiveness to countries like China. Chinese imperialism is on the rise. It (and other powers like Japan) have financed Wall Street's debts in order to reign in the recession, in hope of preventing it from turning into a full-blown depression. Because of the rising, relentless competition between the imperialist powers, **American imperialism must inflict a historical defeat on the American working class** in a futile attempt to maintain its superiority and reestablish its profitability. The U.S. capitalist class has moved its manufacturing base to the third world or gotten rid of it. Without a manufacturing base, the U.S. cannot long remain the top dog, particularly since its main rival (China) has the advantage, due to the super-exploitation of its own labor that US national production cannot match.

To compete in this race to remain the top imperialist dog, the ruling class must enforce brutal attacks on students and workers. This is why HWRS continues to explain that *to defeat the attacks, we must have an indefinite general strike by students, teachers and state workers*, who have absorbed the worst attacks. (Most California state employees suffered a 15% cut in salary in 2009-2010, and it is going to get worse.) This is the objective reality, and it requires a massive response against the attacks by the bosses and their state. Yet we must recognize a major factor. *To organize such a strike, the union bureaucracy must be ousted and replaced by democratic rank-and-file bodies and delegates of state workers, teachers, the oppressed, and student organizations*. Only such bodies can organize a coordinated, sustained general strike. Without this, a sustained or even one-day general strike is not possible.

But the great response of anger and determination shows that we can shut down the universities if the reformists and the Left are removed from standing in the students' way. To shut down the universities, we also need the workers' and

[2] <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2010/apr2010/stud-a28.shtml>

[3] <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2010/may2010/unpr-m21.shtml>

[4] <http://www.gallup.com/poll/125645/socialism-viewed-positively-americans.aspx>

Pickets blocking Sather Gate, the main entrance to the campus of the University of California at Berkeley, on March 4, 2010. Unfortunately, the other entrances to the campus remained open. As a result, the university was able to conduct “business as usual” despite the picket lines.



faculty’s support, of course. If there is no official union approval, the rank-and-file must organize their own strike committees together with the students. We know that the workers will not cross solid picket lines, even if their union does not call a strike.

We have the forces to shut down the universities and keep them shut indefinitely until the basic demands are met. But first we need to agree that this is what we want. Our forces must be united. That means no buses to Sacramento that will weaken the strike and divert it into a rally to pressure the Democrats – a totally defeatist strategy. It also means **A STRIKE IS A STRIKE IN WHICH THE UNIVERSITIES ARE SHUT DOWN.** We cannot shut them down if we divert thousands of students to marches and rallies outside the universities. Doing this means that we will not have the forces to shut them down, and eventually most students will realize that the movement is only channeling their anger into protests; they will become demoralized and the movement will decline. High school students should be mobilized to either strike and occupy their own schools or join the strikes at the local colleges which they hope someday to attend. In the event that solid strikes cannot be mobilized at all, the schools contingents should converge on the college campuses that the statewide strike committee designates as priorities.

UNITY WITH THE DETERMINATION TO SHUT THEM DOWN IS THE MOST IMPORTANT INGREDIENT FOR FUTURE SUCCESS. It will have to be both centralized and de-centralized. What do we mean? We need elected bodies of delegates from each university, union, and high school to coordinate the statewide strike and ensure that it is done right. By decentralized, we mean that we need local creativity. In a real militant and powerful

strike, each university needs to take the local conditions into consideration. For example, we saw that at Santa Cruz there are only two entrances to the campus. So blocking them with massive pickets may be enough. But in places like UCB and SFSU, there are many entrances and areas through which scabs can walk in. So shutting the universities down depends on how much mass picketing the students will have. It may be necessary to use a creative combination of picketing and occupations of key buildings that guarantee that classes are not functioning.

We must bear in mind that many students and workers went to work and to classes because they did not see that March 4th was about a serious strike to shut down the universities until the demands are met. When it becomes clear that this is what we are seriously doing, many of the hesitators and the cynics will join us. And finally, HWRS insists that only an indefinite strike could force concessions from the ruling class. Those who say that we cannot pull together are giving up in advance. If we remain a small minority on this, we tell the students and workers: Don’t believe the reformists and the Left. One day of action at a time will lead eventually to a defeat. The ruling class use such actions as a safety valve to release anger. But if we remain a minority, we are willing to go through a “test.” If the majority wants to build for just another day of actions, let’s make this day a test of our strength by shutting them down for real.

Following March 4th, there was a predictable downturn of activity at the universities and colleges as students prepared for their final end-of-semester push. The warning by our group that one day of demos and rallies would not bring victory started to sink in. Much of the activism in April and May

revolved around dropping the charges against those arrested or cited during the previous actions. Yet the arrested students did not get much active support from the March 4th movement, as the activists were concentrating their efforts to “build” – and bicker about – the next conference. HWRS’s calls for coordinating the support and defense for the arrested students by common demonstrations and coordinating defense across the bay (between SFSU students and UCB students) fell on deaf ears. Committee meetings dwindled in size and energy, and a general malaise set in. The Bay Area regional meeting to prepare for the California statewide meeting was a bust. Only 50 people showed up, the lack of clarity as to whether the statewide meeting would be in Fresno or LA added confusion and demoralization. The statewide meeting was held in LA in, late April and only 150 people attended. The conference ultimately called for a day of action on October 7th around a set of demands weaker than those adopted by the Northern California regional committee back in January 2010. The reformist character of the “united front” was clearly manifested as “tax the rich” emerged as a key demand of the conference.

So despite a growing international awareness among the ranks of the activists, the reformist wing of the movement is still in control. It is yet to be seen if the post-March 4th miasma will persist in the fall when the students return, or whether they feel a new spark of energy.

The Governor has turned his attacks on the state workers and temporarily away from the colleges and universities, where he has already accomplished much of his wrecking job (tuition/fee hike implemented by the Regents last January, layoffs of staff in March and loss of lecturers, more crowded classes, and cuts in summer programs, diminishing both quantity and quality). Teachers and students K-12 will be feeling the pain as 20,000 teachers around the state will be let go in June at the end of the school year. Adult education, sports, music, art all are under the gun. The teachers are sacked when

the public is demobilized in summer, while there is no one to defend them. So when school starts up in the fall we will have overcrowded classrooms and missing curriculums again.

HWRS thinks that we need a few powerful demands for a broad united front that will draw hundreds of thousands of students and workers who will be willing to participate in a general strike until the demands are met. We need demands that can unite the many students and workers who are determined to shut the schools down until the demands are met. We all agree on basic powerful demands like the ones at the end of this article. They can be adopted as we suggest or in the way the delegates of students and workers resolve to make them.

HWRS believes that demands like these can unite and energize the movement. It should always be made clear, however, that even these basic demands cannot be won by electoral or legislative means. In fact, even an indefinite strike in the universities can only fully win its demands when it becomes the launching pad for a general strike by all workers in the state. What we need is to mobilize a massive general strike in which faculty, staff, and students unite to occupy the schools, and then create democratic general assemblies under whose authority the institutions are reopened and administered. Such a demonstration of the power of direct action would serve as a catalyst for state workers in strangled social services programs, and private sector workers in failing industries, to do the same.

When workers and students come together to forge organs of direct democracy and to challenge the bosses’ control of our institutions and economy, the government of the bankers and speculators is exposed as both vulnerable and unnecessary. **Only a revitalized and democratic workers’ movement, linked to the students, the oppressed, and the unemployed, can build the democratic rank and file organizations necessary to oust the capitalist system and form a workers’ government.**

- **Down with the UC Regents, the watchdogs of the capitalist state!**
- **Open the universities to the working class! For open admission and free tuition!**
- **Student, faculty, staff, parent, and working class community control over the entire public education system, from preK-12 through graduate school and adult education!**
- **No layoffs and furloughs in the schools, colleges, universities, and the state!**
- **Rehire all laid off staff and faculty!**
- **Restore the budget cuts in the state!**
- **Stop all layoffs of state workers and all the attacks on the unions and the oppressed!**
- **Down with Race to the Top and privatization schemes!**
- **Make education, full employment, and health care basic rights!**

The Future Is Being Cut! Colorado's Education Crisis

Around the nation, the recession is being felt with millions of job losses and unprecedented attacks on education. The U.S. continues two imperialist wars while waging an economic war on the American working class. Colorado is no exception, with the capitalist crisis taking a deep bite out of an already weak state educational system. Budget cuts, layoffs, furlough days, program cuts, increased class sizes and school closures are on the bosses' agenda for Colorado, from pre-K through grad school, with future fiscal years showing signs of the same pattern.

Why should our children suffer for capitalism's thoughtless greed for profits? While the Republicrats commit 51% of the budget to the military, the politicians tell our communities to brace for massive budget cuts. Clearly for Obama as it was for Bush before him, military occupations of distant third world countries and maintaining and expanding the nuclear arsenal, trump education and the overall objective knowledge of our youth.

Pre-Kindergarten through 12th Grade: A Summary of Massive Cuts

The cuts to K-12 education amount to nearly 10% of funding in Colorado and will be made by the Democrats and Republicans alike. When things get tough we know what the "Republicrats" do: cut our education, layoff the workers, increase military spending, and most astonishingly bailout the wealthy banks that created the woes for the working class – and all at our expense. This will continue until the masses build fighting rank and file organizations of parents, teachers and students, independent of the capitalist political parties and prepared to take militant strike actions demanding free quality public education for all.

The school boards and legislature are making the children of working class families pay for capitalism's hunger for profits. Along with layoffs and increased class sizes there is talk, in many districts, of shortening the school week to four days. The School Finance Bill (dealt with below) contributes to these drastic changes. If their forced poison budget cuts were not enough, the Federal government is making the states beg for sorely

needed funding in a cynically named "Race to the Top" competition.

Race on Your Knees

In 2009, the Federal stimulus provided \$4.35 billion in funds to a competition named "Race to the Top." The competition was established by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and supported by President Obama. The point of the competition is supposedly to reform the education systems of the states by bribing them with prize winnings. In the first round of R2T 40 states applied, 24 were eliminated and 16 states made it to the next round. Colorado was a finalist, but in the end failed miserably. It was a chance at \$175 million of desperately needed funds, but at the end of the first round Tennessee and Delaware were the victors, receiving a combined total of \$600 million. This is a case of reality mimicking reality TV.

The second round of R2T is under way right now (May, 2010) and it seems Colorado may not compete. The Colorado Education Association has come out and said they will not support a second run for R2T. Teachers Unions across Colorado are angry over Senate Bill 191 introduced by state Senator Mike Johnston (D): it would evaluate teachers by the performance of their students, regardless of limiting socio-economic factors). If passed the evaluations would affect wages and tenure. The Colorado Education Commissioner Dwight Jones was quoted in an article saying "We may have our work cut out for us [with] our unions across the state. I don't know if that decision [to not participate in R2T] is final. I'll continue to have discussions."

As self respecting students and faculty, we should not be "subjects" who have to reform our educational system to the feds liking. Like the funds Colorado received from the stimulus in 2009, RTT grants are temporary for the states that win them. With the education forecast showing more rain for the future fiscal years, we (the working class) cannot leave our future in the hands of the cynics that make states compete for desperately needed funding. While teachers are being fired and class sizes are increasing, military spending skyrockets and the bankers who caused the recession are awarding

themselves multi-million dollar bonuses, luckily for them they can now afford it. (Thanks Obama.)

Four Day Week

With massive cuts come drastic measures. The traditional Monday through Friday school week could end soon, as many school boards prepare to replace the five day with a four day school week. According to some, a four day school week would give teachers more time to create their plan for the next school week as well as giving families more time for extra curricular activities because of an extended weekend. Unfortunately, while those arguments may well have some legitimate points, there are many downfalls to that logic. If measures to shorten the week come to fruition in the name of budget cuts, the working class will suffer.

Obviously this would affect the students directly if their face time with instructors was cut by a day and the pressure to cram information into their head would be inhuman. Parents that work Monday through Friday will have to pay for day care (in this day and age it does not come cheap) leaving many families with a major dilemma. Nancy Karas the Superintendent of East Grand 2 School District said "With the economy the way it is, we have a lot of families that can't afford day care." With unemployment and underemployment still rising, parents are finding that with that comes more time to starve with their kids. Of course the four day week is being contemplated for a reason: this is thanks to the School Finance Bill which is cutting our children's education.

The School (No) Finance Bill

The School Finance Bill (SFB) must be fought against by teachers, students and the community. What happens when education isn't being defended by the working class? What happens when the only preparation the present leadership of the teachers unions have for the cuts, is which teachers they think should be laid off and where? We see a sick cycle of military spending increases, prison spending increases, and cuts to jobs and education. If we value education as something more important than prison and war, than we as teachers, students and the community must fight against the School Finance Bill.

On April 1st the Colorado Senate made the massive educational cuts official. House Bill 10-1369 (SFB) was passed, cutting a minimum of \$260 million which amounts to 6% of the expected funding for 2010-2011. Of course this figure is the minimum cut K-12 will have to endure. The Joint Budget Committee warned the legislature to be prepared to have to cut \$500 million. While the Colorado Department of Education said it will be more like \$509 million.

What most people fail to realize is that the slicing and dicing of education started last year. The stimulus was able to cover up the major shortfall in Colorado's budget due to the capitalist crisis. Last year the cuts amounted to \$130 million from the education budget in Colorado. This year the minimum amount of cuts will be \$260 million. Keith Owens, the Durango School District Superintendent who is firing teachers this July, was quoted in the Durango Herald saying "We will be coming back and talking about the cuts next year." That's grim, isn't it?

The Colorado Education Association, a teachers union boasting over 40,000 teachers, said that they may comment if the School Finance Bill got approved. We have found no comments yet released by the union leaders. The CEA is notorious for being a lackey of the Democrats. Now that the Democrats are cutting teachers directly from the CEA, the union bureaucrats stay silent. To believe that the teachers union leadership represents the interests of teachers is delusional, to support a party that puts the banks' safety before the importance of education is to be out of touch with the needs and security of everyday working families. Now that our pensions are in the toilet, we need our kids to be educated so they can take care of us in our old age!

The senator and representatives that sponsored the SFB were all Democrats. Business union leaderships like the Colorado Education Association have often hitched their trailers to the Democrats, a capitalist party that doesn't even pose as pro-labor. Our unions find themselves politically tied to useless allies in the face of the recession. The Democrat candidates will give a token hoorah for labor so they can bilk us of a chunk of our union PAC money to get elected, but then they turn their back on labor when they get in office (witness the collapse of EFCA and single payer health care). This is why the community should not turn to the bureaucratic labor leadership but appeal to the rank and file teachers and workers of the union to defend our youth's future against the SFB. To be effective, the teachers and workers need to take their union back and elect a fighting rank and file leadership, which will build working class solidarity based on the political independence of the working class and proletarian methods of struggle (strikes, sick outs, occupations) rather than continue to cower in the face of capitalist oppression.

Often we hear, "You have to support the lesser of the two evils." Is that why Unions support the Democrats? Our response is why support any evil? If you are one of the lucky ones that has realized by now that neither party represents the interests of the working class, but only the private economic interests of an elite minority, then you know we

need an alternative to this two party system. To combat the retrenchment, workers need our own political party which mirrors the interests and needs of the working class and which forges a transitional program to address those needs. Working families cannot afford the cuts it will take to quench the thirst of the ruling class.

We all have a stake in education. The SFB must be fought by the entire organized and united working class to send a message to the bureaucrats cutting education. The working class must not let capitalism destroy public education. Contrast the cuts in education, public services and the quality of life of the working class to the continuing imperialist wars, the mega-profits of the speculators, banks, oil and war profiteers. The only solution to stop this circle of madness, is to revitalize our movement through democratic rank and file control of the unions, militant strikes against privatization and charter schools, demanding free education, and teacher, worker, community control of education. Take away control from the corrupt school boards that dish out the damage under the pressure of the banks and their muscle: the federal and state government.

Cuts to Higher Education

Federal stimulus money that filled the major budget gaps last year are exhausted and not returning in 2011. This upcoming fall CU is raising tuition by 9% along with many other higher education institutions. A nonprofit of Colorado, CollegeInvest, which is supposed to help low income students, is actually withholding the funds they are supposed to give out to these students. The bursars of higher educational institutions are given no option but to decide how to administer cuts in funding and who to cut. This madness must stop!

The teachers have an opportunity to take part in the whole dirty business of a crumbling education system. In many higher educational institutions as well as in K-12 school districts, teachers have the opportunity to give input only into where and how the cuts will be taken, but not whether or why they are happening. This crisis was created by a decaying archaic economic system and its lackeys in the two parties have given teachers a choice: which knife do you want to stab yourself with?

The money from the federal stimulus was able to cover up the dire situation of higher education nationally for the past two years, but of course it's only temporary. Unfortunately, with the economy in the hole and unemployment rising faster than employment is increasing, the Democrats and Republicans continue to fail to find a solution to the future of higher education, simply because they can't

under the current economic crisis they legalized and are bound to along with its creators, their masters on Wall Street.

A survey conducted by the American Association of School Administrators found that 64% of school districts are taking a 1-25% cut to education this year. The survey also said that cuts would affect 78% of school districts in FY 2010-11.

The mainstream media usually forgets to mention why these cuts are necessary for this economic system. The education problem is an economic problem. In order to fix our bankrupt educational system we must change our economic system. Just as the capitalists no longer need an educated workforce (having moved production overseas), the working class can no longer sustain the level of exploitation needed to produce the massive super-profits demanded by the capitalist class. We must defend education, but we must realize why these cuts are happening to correct it. The bankers and bosses hope the working class focuses its attention just on education, health insurance, or the economy - without connecting the dots.

To save higher education, we must fight for a revolutionary society based on meeting human needs and creatively engaging human ability. As long as the majority works so they can reap a sliver of their labor and the surplus value goes into a financial system, which seeks only to accumulate and barely to compensate, then education will continue to be attacked. Now that the U.S. capitalist class is facing increasing inter-imperialist competition, an educated working class is no longer required, and an uneducated working class is more easily controlled.

CollegeInvest: a Corrupt Story

CollegeInvest is a non-profit that was created so kids from low income families can go to college. One would think that would be its main priority. But nothing is at it seems in this day in age and CollegeInvest is definitely putting the runaround on our less fortunate youth.

CollegeInvest was created by the Colorado Department of Higher Education in 2005. In order to be eligible you must live in a household of four that rakes in no more than \$40,000 a year. According to a Colorado state audit of CollegeInvest in 2009 the net assets of CollegeInvest was \$3 billion. CollegeInvest also has a trust fund, which is valued around \$67 million. To say the least, this non-profit has a lot of money, whose purpose should be to serve the needs of low income, qualified students around the state. Unfortunately, the non-profit provides less than the amount of funds assured it should provide to the community.

CollegeInvest distributed \$91,000 worth of

scholarships to 76 students in 2009 from its Early Achievers Scholarship Trust Fund, a whopping 0.1 percent of the fund. The required amount that should be distributed every year according to the policy, amounts to a miniscule 1.25 percent or \$3.8 million. This is disgusting considering that this money is supposed to benefit students, who without this financial help would never be able to attend college. CollegeInvest is supposed to give youth that have a very unequal opportunity to higher education a chance. But of course this doesn't happen until they are well fed and paid and their greed for profits is satisfied.

The state audit found that in FY 2008-09 administrative fee expenses for CollegeInvest not including salaries was \$12 million for 37 employees. That equates to a little over 324,000 thousand dollars worth of administrative expenses per employee. To put that into perspective, CollegeInvest spent 131 times more on administrative fees (not including salaries) than it did on impoverished students, (to be precise \$1197 per student). Over 50 percent of the expenses lacked sufficient documentation "and inadequate approvals or authorizations."

A large part of funding for CollegeInvest comes from "profits earned on its student loans." In other words, a non-profit that not only screws the poor but also profits immensely from the everyday college student, under the guise of a generous government non-profit!

From 2006 to 2008 (three fiscal years) CollegeInvest's ONLY expenses were on General and Administrative expenses, which directly disregarded the needs of poverty-stricken students for three years. Finally in 2009 they spent a measly \$91,000 on students. Where does the madness end?

More than ever students in Colorado and nationally are applying for student loans because of the rotting economy. Yet the current system is cutting financial assistance to students at an alarming rate. CollegeInvest must not be allowed to continue its greed when there are tuition increases, rising student fees, and worker/faculty layoffs. This money belongs to higher education and not to a rich bureaucracy, which is able to sustain itself on the backs of students.

In order for this non-profit's \$3 billion worth of assets to serve those who face an unequal opportunity to education, it must be seized by the community, students and teachers so as to serve the working class. Only a mass movement of the working class can expropriate these funds, which were acquired on the backs of working people in the first place. No longer can teachers and students idly

stand by, as the future of education is being destroyed by a rotten economic system that serves the wealthy ruling class before the needs of labor.

Where are the Government's Priorities?

While Obama pushes for \$33 billion dollars on top of a "\$708 billion baseline (military) budget submitted to congress in February," for two imperialist wars, we can see education is experiencing the exact opposite: cuts, cuts and more cuts. Where are the government's priorities? Where they have always been: profit.

Education nationally received over \$20 billion in stimulus funds last February 17th. While this helped education nationally from being cut in 2009, it only prolonged the base problem, capitalism. In this country where the top 25 hedge fund managers are worth more than 680,000 teachers making \$38,000 a year, it is time for the working class to organize and stop this madness!

"We're managing the state's economy in the worst fiscal crisis since the Great Depression, and this isn't a one-time hiccup or temporary blip. This is a massive correction. It is a new economic reality for all of us." - Colorado Governor Bill Ritter

As we already know, this economic crisis is no laughing matter. We have seen that the bank bailout hasn't helped the economy, at least as far as blue collar unemployment is counted. With Goldman Sachs Executives awarding themselves over \$22 billion dollars in bonuses this year, we must ask: why is this allowed? Is their job so much more important than the teacher's? Goldman Sachs and the big banks revolve around making profit at the expense of the producers in the world. The U.S. government's job is to protect the bankers' "bank job," clearly. Can we at least agree that bankers don't actually produce anything? The banks under capitalism don't work for the working class but against it. The organized working class is the only force that can put a stop to this cycle of profit for the few and crumbs for the workers.

Change and hope seem to be clichés to the average working family after being exhausted by Obama. There is hope, but it's not within this economic system or within our political system. As Obama has proven, it doesn't matter which party people vote for – Republican or Democrat – either way the banks, war and profit will always come before humanity and the needs of the working class. Only when teachers, workers, students and the community demand and organize against education cuts and the overall economic system of imperialist capitalism will there be real hope and real change.

We demand that the banks be nationalized under workers control, to provide the funds needed to create jobs, feed the planet, heal the people, house

the homeless, clean the environment, provide free quality health care and education for all! The capitalists are incapable of creating a just, harmonious, secure world economy. They globalize for profit alone, but in the process transforming all things and people into commodities, they destroy what should be a paradise. They sell our education, they sell our humanity, they sell our planet!

Only a workers' government arising from a revitalized but democratic workers movement can transform this dying economic system. It can transform this economy into one which embraces and engages the knowledge, intelligence and creativity of humanity, for the purpose of lifting all out of misery and poverty, of ending war, and restoring a dying planet. To do this we need the highest level of education that can be achieved by all those willing to study. Only a world economy run by the working class can provide the educational system needed to educate all 6 billion of us. Only an internationalist workers government will make the education of humanity the top priority!

Here in Colorado we salute the extended strike of our brothers and sisters in Puerto Rico. They have shown that protracted struggle and full strikes are possible and that they have the potential to mobilize the rest of the working class in solidarity. We know their fight is OUR fight and that to win, we must unite students and workers across districts, counties, states, the nation and across international borders. We defend our undocumented sisters and brothers under attack from the racist chauvinism of the Arizona ruling class, who now mobilize the forces of the state to hound anyone who does not look "American", and to chase the children of undocumented workers out of schools. WE DEMAND FULL CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS FOR UNDOCUMENTED WORKERS!

"The Communists have not invented the intervention of society in education; they do but seek to alter the character of that intervention, and to rescue education from the influence of the ruling class." – Karl Marx



High school students in Oakland, California supporting their teachers during a one-day strike in April, 2010. Students and parents overwhelmingly supported the strike, but its one-day duration limited its effectiveness dramatically (see story, facing page).

For an All-Out Strike to Fight Union-Busting!

Introductory note and update: The article below incorporates the text of a flyer that HWRS distributed at a one-day strike of public school teachers in Oakland, California on April 29, 2010. It was previously published on the Redrave blog at <http://redrave.blogspot.com/2010/04/for-all-out-strike-to-fight-union.html>.

At press time (late June 2010), the teachers' union (the Oakland Education Association, or OEA) had yet to agree on a contract with the Oakland Unified School District. Another round of negotiations was held in May 2010, but the talks adjourned with no new date scheduled. The one-day strike evidently did little, if anything, to convince the School District to budge from its hard-line position on issues such as teacher compensation (OEA members are the lowest paid teachers in Alameda County), special education class sizes, and the retention of the adult education program. The OEA's press release on the last round of talks is available online at <http://oaklandea.com/2010/05/26/contract-talks-end/>.

The Oakland Board of Education is determined to bust the OEA, no matter what it takes, and no matter how much it hurts our children's education. Through its unprecedented move of abruptly shutting down negotiations and imposing its chosen terms on the teachers, the Board has not only declared war on the union, but also has shown that it is committed to destroying the quality of education for the children of Oakland. The Board is supposed to put our children first. Instead, it has revealed its true role, which is to help carry out the overall effort to cut public education and other social services to the bone.

If the Board succeeds in imposing forced concessions in Oakland, this trend will set the standard across the nation. Once the employer has imposed conditions without a signed contract the union is for all practical purposes busted, and can no longer function as a fighting union! Unless the members stand firm and fight for their contract, the OEA will become a mere shell. Like too many other unions, it will be reduced to the role of a messenger to bring the bad news to its members, with a sad face and the old sorry excuse: "Aw, shucks, that's the best we could do; we all know times are hard."

Across the Nation It's the Same Story

The ruling class keeps working class parents and teachers isolated district from district, and many teachers' union leaders have fallen into the trap, keeping their district in isolation and fighting their battles purely on the local level. We have fallen into the habit of negotiating separately, with all the districts treating education like a local issue. So when each district claims it's broke, it appears as a local issue and the punditry and media hacks point to declining enrollment, changing demographics, bloated benefit packages, or expensive consultants to

reinforce the lie that Oakland's problems are different from Richmond's, San Francisco's, Detroit's, Washington D.C.'s or Newark's.

We know better! Our district is not the only place where public education is under attack. Budget cuts, union-busting, and privatization are widespread across the nation, fueled by the aftermath of the worldwide economic crisis. From Oakland and Richmond to New Orleans, Detroit, Chicago, and Rhode Island, public education is under attack, and the unions are being challenged for their very survival.

Local responses to this nationwide situation are popping up across the country; for example, students in New Jersey plan a statewide strike next week. But the crisis of education is not local. The root of the problem goes way deeper than that. From the puppets in the White House all the way down to the local school boards, all the legislators and other government officials are doing the bidding of those who hired them, and they know damn well it's not the working folk. We are told to seek solutions only from district school boards, local governments, and states. But to be effective and save public education from privatization, each community's response must be part of a national movement! This strike is not only for our own survival and to save education in Oakland, but is part of the defense of unions and the fight to stop the Democratic Party drive to privatize education across the nation.

We know damn well that if the ruling class wanted our youth educated, working class schools would be flourishing, because they would be getting the quality and quantity of support the military-industrial complex counts on every year. If Obama had any faith in the public school system, his daughters would be attending D.C.'s finest.

But Obama cannot and does not intend to salvage the education system that working class youth depend on. Just like Bush before him, he is acting as the good CEO for imperialism, and putting the needs of US corporations far ahead of the education of working class youth. Posing as a great reformer, he has offered us a new program – RACE FOR THE SLOP – under which chronically underfunded districts in economically destroyed communities try to prove their worthiness to stay alive in a “fair competition” to meet standards set without regard to the special educational needs of young people inner city, poor, and multicultural school districts. Meanwhile, class size rules are being ignored, and the quality of education diminishes, and teachers’ wages are being driven so low that talented, experienced educators are being forced out of their chosen profession.

The recent firing of an entire school staff in Rhode Island was the opening salvo in an attack on public workers the likes of which has not been seen since Obama’s mentor Ronald Reagan destroyed PATCO.

Be clear, brothers and sisters: this president is leading a war against the unions and the working class. As part of this effort, Obama and his Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, are leading the drive to destroy public education through privatization of public universities and promotion of charter schools.

The effect of this effort is already starting to show. The UC system is no longer accessible to the average working class student. The chronically starved schools have such high dropout rates that many of our young workers will never be ready for higher education and will remain functionally illiterate. And to put the final nail in their coffin, adult education is being slashed in district after district, giving the most oppressed no way to “pull themselves up by their bootstraps.”

How to Win Back Our Education

But we CAN fight back! Teachers, workers, parents, and students are not powerless! Last week, in Orange County, the Capistrano Unified School District had a one-day strike over a 10% pay cut that was respected by two-thirds of the parents and students. In order to call an effective halt to the cuts in public education, however, we will need to do

more than hold educational pickets prior to school, visit Sacramento to lobby the paid stooges of the ruling class, and organize day of action protests like those on March 4, Even one-day strikes will not be enough. Unless the ruling class feels the real power of labor through full-on, determined, indefinite strike actions that cut across district and state lines and unite educators, workers, students, and parents, public education will be starved into submission to the privatizing drive.

Even slowing the attacks on working people or winning a decent contract in Oakland will not be possible until workers achieve a much higher level of self-organization and political independence. The Democrats count on the Union leaders to deliver our membership into the often tried and failed political task of supporting another millionaire for the next open office; in our case our unions will push for Jerry Brown and the Democrats as the executioner of choice. To maintain their political control, the Democrats will try to put our movement back to sleep and keep union members from generalizing the fight-back across localities, and from acting politically by running working class candidates under labor’s banner. To fight back effectively, rank-and-file union members must take control back from the current leadership and forge a new, politically independent militant workers’ movement.

To win a fair contract, the OEA will have to take a number of steps: 1) escalate the strike action from one day to an extended strike until demands are met and a contract is signed; 2) break out of localism and link our struggle with that of others across the state and nation who are fighting privatization; 3) work to spark a Bay Area wide, statewide and ultimately nationwide strike for education; and 4) defeat Taft-Hartley and other reactionary anti-labor laws through action, not legislation. As long as our labor leaders accept anti-labor legislation that tells us when we can and cannot strike, labor cannot win! Only when the ruling class has its back to the wall because we as workers exert our power on the picket line and in the streets, as we unite and smash the anti-labor laws, will we get decent wages and benefits, and provide quality education for the youth! This will also be a big step in breaking with the Democrats and building a fighting labor party.

FIRST STEP: ALL OUT ON APRIL 29!

THEN: TURN THE ONE DAY STRIKE INTO AN ONGOING STRIKE TILL WE WIN!

SMASH TAFT-HARTLEY! STRIKE ACROSS DISTRICT, COUNTY & STATE LINES!

BUILD FOR A GENERAL STRIKE BY ALL TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

IN SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES THROUGHOUT

THE BAY AREA AND CALIFORNIA!

A Progressive Teacher Speaks Out

An Interview with Diane Brown, President-Elect, United Teachers of Richmond

Last fall, just as the first issue of *International Trotskyist* went to press, the United Teachers of Richmond (UTR) rejected the dismal contract offered to them by the West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD), headquartered in Richmond, California. At first, the UTR's then president, Pixie Schickele, announced that the vote had been to accept the offer. When the teachers gathered in the union hall to demand a recount, the union's leadership called cops on the union's own members. A recount was eventually conducted, however, and the teachers were proved correct; the contract had in fact been rejected overwhelmingly.

Unfortunately, the teachers' victory proved to be only temporary. A few days later, Schickele and her allies pushed through a concessionary contract with only minor changes. The membership was so dissatisfied that they called a special recall election in March, and booted out Schickele, who was replaced by the union's vice-president for the duration of the term. At the same time, in a regular election, the disgruntled membership also voted for the progressive teacher slate, ousting the old leadership and much of the old executive board.

The new board will be headed by president-elect Diane Brown, a member of the progressive caucus in UTR, who is set to take office on July 1, 2010. In early May, IT interviewed Brown about her plans for the union. What follows is a transcript, lightly edited for style, and then our comments.

IT: In large part, the progressive teachers' victory is based on the sell-out in the contract fight by the old leadership, which wore down the resistance of the membership and delivered a three-year concessionary contract laden with cuts in medical benefits, furloughs, and increased class sizes, all laid on top of school closures, layoffs of staff, and loss of teachers' preparation time. How will the new executive board dedicate the resources of the union to organizing rank and file action committees to prepare for the fight to win back what was given away by Pixie? Will the new executive committee wait until the next contract fight, or will the new board initiate actions to put the pressure on the district to reverse these concessions immediately?

DB: The new executive board and I will immediately take on the task of creating more democracy in the UTR by amending or rewriting the bylaws to assure that members can bring motions to the floor of the union even during negotiations. Last year Pixie would not allow us to bring motions to the floor during the contract negotiations and thereby shut down the opportunity for us to put the strike vote to the members. We need bylaws which protect the members' right to make motions at contract negotiations and at membership

meetings. Moving forward, facilitators will provide trainings to help our members build the basic mechanisms of a rank and file democracy self-organization. Right now we don't have a strike fund, so we have to initiate one to help people out during any action we may take. One new member of the executive board is looking into the legality of the concessionary contract and how it was pushed through against the will of the membership, to see if we can challenge it.

IT: What plans do you have to organize the base to fight these concessions, to lower class sizes, rehire the lost teachers and staff, and provide a quality educational environment?

DB: We have heard that the K-3 class sizes are back to the original 20-to-1. Charles Ramsey on the School Board reported that money had been found for next year from reserves. Those teachers who received pink slips will have those pink slips rescinded and teachers who retire will be replaced so there will be new hiring.

IT: Do you have a perspective of inter-district organizing to direct the fire above the local school board level toward the state and federal governments?

DB: I support the action of the OEA [Oakland Education Association] last week. During their [one-day] strike [on April 29, 2010, see preceding article—ed.], I went down to walk the picket line at the administration building. We need to have a united conference of Bay Area teachers and plan our struggle together. I will support the Statewide Strike and Day of Action on October 7th.

IT: Do you have a perspective of how to fight the anti-union Taft-Hartley rules and the concept of being “strike legal,” which prevent labor from taking broad inter-district and inter-union actions?

DB: Being “strike legal” is all our members know. They were born into Taft-Hartley, so before we can fight Taft-Hartley, members have to be educated about the rules of Taft-Hartley. It is the responsibility of the local leadership to take the lead and provide direction to membership on this issue. Many of our members are isolated in their classrooms, and in some instances don’t want to be seen as a troublemaker, or take political risks.

As an individual, I’m willing to open a dialogue regarding Taft-Hartley at our National Education Association (NEA) Convention and state association, California Teachers Association (CTA) this summer with the rank and file in our Peace and Justice Caucus and other affiliates to take a united action against rules and laws that impede or prevent labor from taking broad inter-district and inter-union actions. When I take office as the United Teachers of Richmond President on July 1, 2010, I’m willing to work locally, with our state and national to that end.

IT: The old leadership did not organize and mobilize the membership to take independent political action. And the CTA ties the teachers to the Democratic Party political machine. As the Democratic Party is a corporate party representing the capitalist class, when labor plays to the Democrats they disarm the class of class struggle methods designed to win the class war. Will the progressive slate push for the UTR in particular and labor in general to break from the Democrats and fight for the working class to run its own candidates and forge an independent fighting workers’ party?

DB: We intend to invite all parties to the UTR Representative Council sponsored debate. Members will interview all candidates who

want our support and make their recommendations to the UTR Executive Board. The Political Action Committee will publish the debate for the membership. All candidates are welcome to speak. Traditionally the CTA makes its endorsements (this year it already has) and then they ask us to run the phone banks. I am not going to say that I am breaking with the Democrats, but I am not ruling out advocating or voting for other parties.

IT: Although the WCCUSD has its own unique historic debt, it must be recognized that the crisis in the District, and the disintegration of the California education system generally, are a reflection of how the capitalist class is enforcing its crisis on the back of the working class through cuts in social services, cuts in wages to public workers, cuts in education,

“Being ‘strike legal’ is all our members know. They were born into Taft-Hartley, so before we can fight Taft-Hartley, members have to be educated about the rules of Taft-Hartley.” - Diane Brown

foreclosures, and unemployment across the nation. How do you intend to take your local district’s conditions and link them to the struggle of all workers facing this crisis?

DB: Our concessionary contract is 2.5 years out. It’s important to organize, organize, organize members, educate and mobilize our communities, unite with neighboring locals and labor supporters for direct actions. Build a strike fund to sustain ourselves during any labor dispute. Use all resources—short term loans, grants, strike kitchens—to support members during strike action.

IT: When the progressive teachers caucus in UTR called for the expropriation of Chevron under workers’ control and marched on Chevron on February 27, there was concern that this call would alienate teachers and lose you votes. However, following the advocacy of this bold working class position of the progressive teachers, your slate won the UTR election. Will you take this position for the expropriation of Chevron without indemnification and under workers’ control to the exec board and advocate to make it the official position of the UTR?

DB: The board would not adopt that position. Very few people knew about the march so it had little impact on the election.

IT: During the contract fight last summer you fought against the strike authorization vote and counterposed a strike now vote. Please explain your view on the strike authorization vote.

DB: I argued against the strike authorization for two reasons. I had no confidence in the leadership to run a strike. A strike action in August would cause chaos and disrupt the opening of the first day of school, empower the bargaining team, and put added pressure on the district to settle a contract in favor of our demands and minimize concessions. Pixie would not allow a motion on the floor of our membership meeting because she was not capable of organizing a strike.

IT: We have often talked about the need for an indefinite united statewide general strike of educators, staff, and students to win quality education and fair contracts for educators. Will the progressive teachers advocate for this position in the UTR and the CTA, and among the public assemblies that come together to fight against the cuts?

DB: I would advocate the need for an indefinite statewide strike. That is what we are supporting for October 7th. Oakland teachers have called for regional meetings and I look forward to meeting with them as the UTR President. As the UTR President-elect, I supported the Oakland Teachers during their one-day strike. I was proud to join the picket lines in front of the Oakland Administration on April 29th.

As the UTR President, I hope to influence the need for an indefinite united statewide general strike to the rank and file and our state and national leadership. I hope to build a participatory structure of rank and file leaders who voted for change in UTR, and build on the proactive leaders that were elected in the 2010 UTR election. We are planning three levels of outreach: newsletters and public forums for parents, students, and teachers, as well as our own internal members-only forum. Next year the furloughs will be implemented and that will drive home the need to continue to organize.

Editorial Comment: While it is clear the new UTR leadership are not fighting for an unequivocal break from the capitalist political parties, they do have a perspective of organizing the rank and file in an open and democratic manner. Having ousted the old leadership, the membership of the UTR has an opportunity to transform their organization into a fighting organization that puts the interests of the working class first. By so doing, the UTR could take the lead in the nationwide fight-back for quality education and the rights of teachers and other education workers.

It is the view of HWRS that to be successful, local teacher and staff unions will need to transform their unions into independent political fighting machines. UTR President-elect Diane Brown has outlined a series of important steps needed to build workers' democracy; build inter-district and inter-union solidarity; and educate the membership and national teachers' organizations on the nature of the anti-labor Taft-Hartley laws and how to fight them.

The anti-labor laws stymie workers' ability to initiate the united, inter-district, indefinite strikes it will take to win quality education for all. Only by crushing these laws through united, defiant workers' strike actions will we be able to mount a successful fight-back. Such united actions will, in turn, engender the groundswell of class-based politics upon which a fighting workers/labor party can be formed.

The new UTR leadership's intentions are powerful, and will serve as examples for the entire working class in the struggle to throw off entrenched bureaucrats and build fighting unions. However, for the leadership's efforts to be successful, the UTR membership needs to clearly identify the capitalist political parties as the class enemy, and break with the long-term practice of the NEA & CTA in directing their members' political energy into support for false-faced "friends of labor" in the twin parties of capital, rather than toward self-mobilization and independent political action. HWRS comrades will march side by side with the UTR members as they forge their new union, and will continue to point to the pitfall of putting faith in the capitalist politicians whom CTA is already pushing for in the November 2010 elections. We will advocate for the newly revitalized UTR to unite with other trade unionists, run independent worker/labor candidates, and work to found a fighting labor party committed to putting the entire capitalist system down, and lifting us forever out of our downtrodden misery.