

International Trotskyist

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Obama's Depression: Wall Street Gets Bailed Out, and the Working Class Is Expected to Pay for Capitalism's Stupidity!

Don't Pin the Blame for the Ecological Crisis on Irresponsible Consumerism! Pin It on the Capitalist Economic System!

Fight the Attacks on Public Education! Free Education, Open Enrollment and Jobs for All!

Strike Authorization Votes: Bureaucratic Maneuvering to Silence Labor's Fightback!

Working Class Betrayed in Denver, Richmond and San Francisco, Statewide, Nationwide, Worldwide!

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 post-capitalist property relations.

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

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The "IT" is Back!

The return of "I.T." (not "it" but "eye tee") signifies a threshold crossed for the political thinking and activities first organized as the Revolutionary Trotskyist Tendency in 1990. Long thought by cynics to be down for the count, cadres of our tendency began to reassemble in the summer of 2008 around the completion of Dave Winter's book (parts of which are available on our web site), and after a public forum Dave gave on the overarching threat of climate change and what it means for Marxists, and the looming global capitalist global economic crisis, which we saw as about to burst upon us. Each of these developments called upon us to have a more developed discussion. Soon we were discussing and then carrying out coordinated actions. Before long it was not a great leap from our street practice to reestablishing Leninist Party norms of organization, and at our founding conference as the Humanist Workers for Revolutionary Socialism we reaffirmed them, and promised we would reestablish IT as a print organ alongside our website.

Here in your hands you have evidence that the "digital divide" within the working class will be bridged, proof thanks to our recent growth that revolutionary theory and practice is not just a microworld of bookish people on the coasts, and here you will observe that the international isolation of the vanguard of the U.S. working class can be broken once and for all. I.T. is the organ of *Marxist Humanists*, who see humanity running out of time, whipsawed between atomized helplessness in their alienation and the wholesale degradation of planet Earth's environment.

We are Humanist *Workers* for Revolutionary Socialism because we are not

armchair theoreticians; we work at our theory and practice in the trade union movement and in our communities and schools. Revolutionary Socialist because the social revolution called for to save human existence must be led by the working class and its allies among the most oppressed, welded together in the mighty, revolutionary Fourth International, re-founded on its original principled basis.

We are internationalists first and foremost. We know as long as imperialism lives and breathes our sisters and brothers in the neo-colonial world will pay for the cost of the wealth accumulated on Wall Street, in London, Brussels, Shanghai and Beijing. This year has been marked by a concerted attack on the living conditions of workers around the globe, from the South to the industrialized North. The crisis of capitalism is being balanced on the back of the working classes, but not without a fight.

Arm in arm, the workers of Gaza fought back against a siege and bombings imposed by the colonialist settler state of Israel, which brutally killed hundreds of civilians just a year ago. General strikes in Guadeloupe, Martinique, France, Brussels and Madagascar followed the street the battles in Athens. In China the Tonghua steel workers killed their boss on notice of mass layoffs. Thousands of strikes across China expose the Chinese proletariat as the most combative but oppressed workers in the world. In Argentina, the Kraft workers stood up to Warren Buffet to fight hard for their wages and conditions. In Bolivia, the Hunani miners fight a hard, bloody

battle against the Media Luna fascists and the Morales popular front which promises socialism, but works to salvage capitalism. The struggle of the unionized soldiers in South Africa forced the SACP to support their right to unionize against the will of the ANC government. We noted, with a joy that only workers can have, that during the general strike in Madagascar soldiers gave their arms to the workers. Long live the unity of workers in uniform and workers in the factories! Only by building this unity can workers turn the guns on imperialism and defeat their nemesis.

We see our class fighting back, and we gave them a shout out along the barricades when our comrades stood with the hotel workers in San Francisco, the teachers and public workers in Richmond, California, and the students fighting to save public education from privatization. In the U.S., 2008 closed with the heroic fight of the Republic Windows and Doors Factory workers. They publically lamented at a forum at the ILWU Local 10 hall that other workers in the States have not yet followed their lead by occupying their factories. While we recognize these heroic battles taken by tens of thousands of proletarians fighting for better conditions, we know the defeats imposed on us can only be reversed through a fight for the leadership of the class. They are held back everywhere by Stalinists, renegade Trotskyists, "progressives," and liberals, who rally behind the new Menshevik International the World Social Forum, ELAC and ALBA. All of these shams are designed to salvage world capitalism under the moniker of 21st century socialism.

We know that the fight against all forms of reformism and centrism must be unrelenting if the working class is to forge a new revolutionary leadership from the emerging workers' vanguard seeking a revolutionary road. The historic break of the ISO-Z from the treachery of the British SWP, which led them into a popular front with the MDF, is an example for the vanguard of the world working class that, in order to build a revolutionary international the leadership, the fake socialists must be crushed. Viva the struggle of the ISO-Z for class independence. The workers of Zimbabwe breaking with the SWP shows that the drive for proletarian independence is emerging from amongst the most oppressed workers of the world. Workers ignore these lessons at their own peril.

We have made strides! We have rallied workers to solidarity with some of the world's most oppressed workers, from the struggle against imperialist brutality in the Gaza strip to the fight against French imperialism in Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Madagascar. Our comrades clearly fight for the defeat of the U.S., NATO, their allies, and the puppet regime forces in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. We defend the steelworkers of Tonghua, China, in their heroic fight against their bosses. We solidarize with the unemployed youth of Greece as they seek the revolutionary road. We welcome the resurgence of the South American working class and their class combat with the little Obamas and the bourgeois film flam of Bolivarianism, including Chavez's preposterous Fifth International, whose phony anti-imperialism is backed by the rise of the Chinese stock market. We have launched our international class-war prisoners' defense work campaigns for miners and native defenders of the rain forests in Peru (see the *International*

Workers' Defender included in this issue of IT, and available on our website). We will not rest until we free all their political prisoners from Garcia's jails. We denounce the coup in Honduras as the true counter-revolutionary face of Obama and urgently draw its lessons for the working class. We denounce the multiplication of U.S. bases in Columbia and the installation of an "AFRICOM" U.S. command headquarters in Ghana. We stand in solidarity with the movement of Argentinean workers who seized their bankrupt factories and ran them without bosses! (See page 62.) They have lessons for workers everywhere! As Trotsky said, "The right to employment is the last serious right workers have left before the complete triumph of tyranny." We clasp hands across the ocean to embrace the union organization of the service women and men of the South African armed forces! Their unions have been recognized by the COSATU labor federation, and the SACP youth were forced by the militancy of young workers in uniform to belatedly support the right to unionize against their Popular Front government partners, the African National Congress. Let revolutionary events overwhelm and sweep away these Wall Street toadies!

This is a short and incomplete list of the major positions we have adopted in a

short sixteen months. Of course this compendium will be out of date by the time you read this. But what the list may already tell the astute is that we have found an analytical and programmatic congruence with the 23 Points of Unity promulgated by the Internationalist Leninist Trotskyist Fraction (ILTF/FLTIF). We adhered to this world party building project in July of this year. For all FLTIF members and sections, our goal is world socialism through the re-foundation of the revolutionary Fourth International on its original, principled basis.

I.T. is an organ of the U.S. section, printed in the interests of the working class. Employers will find out we have returned, to their chagrin. This journal will suddenly also be in the hands of teachers and students, hopefully learning to build inter-union organizing committees and strike solidarity committees, leading towards an eventual national general strike, the sorest need of the workers' movement today. A general strike movement is called for to refuse to take upon our backs and the backs of our children all the social costs of American capitalism's systemic crisis as a declining world power. The editorial board promises you a place between these covers where you will find what you need to fight – and win!

If you like what we have to say -

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Only Socialist Revolution Can Prevent Ecosystem Collapse



Climate change poses an immediate threat to the survival of all life on this planet, the scope and urgency of which cannot be underestimated. Many scientists have concluded that we are at or close to the point at which, even if we drastically curtail greenhouse gas emissions **immediately**, planet Earth will still undergo major climatic change. If we fail to take such measures, the results will be absolutely catastrophic. In as short a time as a few decades, our planet could experience such a swift, massive rise in temperature that human civilization would have little or no chance to survive.

Obama has pledged to achieve an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. A reduction of that magnitude is impossible under capitalism. We

cannot rely on national governments or other entities (such as the United Nations) that are controlled by the capitalist class to do that job. No matter how “progressive” capitalist politicians purport to be (see discussion of Evo Morales below), the inherent conflict between the profit motive and the good of society makes it impossible for them to enforce the necessary sacrifices on corporate-controlled industries.

But even if a miracle happens, and Obama’s pledge is fulfilled, it will still be much too little, and way too late. The human race needs to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions **almost entirely** within the next 10 to 30 years if it wants to survive.

The bottom line is that only workers’ control of the means of production can avoid the imminent climate change catastrophe. This means that a successful socialist revolution is needed **within a decade or two**. If the working class waits to overthrow capitalism for another 30 or 40 years, it is likely to be too late.

Even after the socialist revolution, the catastrophe cannot be averted unless we take immediate action. The planned economy will have to impose draconian measures against greenhouse gas emitting industries, and retool all of our energy generation and consumption to run on green, environmentally friendly, sustainable technology. This change will have to be implemented extremely

rapidly, and will require the involvement of practically everyone on the planet, if we are to prevail.

The current crisis of capitalism presents an opportunity for us to spread the message to the struggling working class about the gravity of the situation. We must tell the workers, and every middle class and progressive person who supports their struggle, that **time is running out**. The working class **must** combine its struggle against capitalist exploitation, and against the current economic crisis, with **environmental consciousness**. It must fight for workers' control of industry in order to implement **dire emergency measures** to transform the current, outmoded technology of industrial production to green and sustainable technology.

Ultimately, this urgently necessary transformation can only be accomplished if the working class and its allies get rid of capitalism via the socialist revolution. Every living soul that cares about our planet and the fate of humanity, please be aware: The game of trying to "reform" capitalism must come to an abrupt end. The stakes are no longer socialism or barbarism. They are socialism, or else the end of life on this planet as we know it.

The Methane Time Bomb Is Already Ticking!

As a result of the global warming that has already occurred, the ice that covers the Arctic Ocean is disappearing very fast. Many scientists predict that in the relatively near future, it will be entirely gone in the summer. Even now, an ever-increasing portion of the ice melts to open

water each summer, making it darken and thus absorb more solar heat. This causes a positive feedback loop of increased warming.

The rise in the surface temperature of the Arctic means that the bottom of the Arctic Ocean is also warming rapidly, to the point where it is now only a few degrees below freezing in the summer. This situation threatens to compound the problem of global warming by quickening its pace exponentially. The reason is that the seabed beneath the Arctic Ocean contains a time bomb of unimaginable proportions: a huge amount of frozen methane, a greenhouse gas many times more powerful than carbon dioxide. If the ocean temperature rises above freezing, a massive amount of this methane could be released into the atmosphere, causing global warming to increase drastically in a matter of years or decades. A similar phenomenon is now believed to have caused the Permian Extinction, or "Great Dying," which wiped out almost all life on earth 250 million years ago. (For details and links to source material, see the version of this article that appears on our website.)

We are now threatened with the very real possibility that catastrophic climate change, leading to mass extinction, could happen again. Worse, it could happen so fast that it would be impossible to develop and implement any technological solution that would allow us to preserve the human race from a reversion to barbarism, or even extinction.

The Limitations of "Progressive" Politics

In December 2008, the United Nations held a conference on climate change in Poznan, Poland. In a speech given in connection with the conference, Bolivian President Evo Morales – widely viewed on the Left as a leading progressive figure – correctly proclaimed that “Competition and the thirst for profit without limits of the capitalist system are destroying the planet,” and that “As long as we do not change the capitalist system ..., the measures that we adopt will be palliatives that will [be] limited and precarious in character.” (Morales’s speech can be found online at <http://links.org.au/node/769>.)

Unfortunately, Morales failed to follow this thought to its logical conclusion – i.e., that in order to save the planet, we must do away with capitalism. His solution? He proposes that we “**Debate** the structural causes of climate change.” “Debate”? While the ecosystem collapses around us? What is needed now is not debate, but **action**.

Neither Morales nor any other politician or public figure, no matter how “progressive” or even anti-capitalist they purport to be, can offer a realistic solution to the threat of catastrophic climate change unless they are also willing to build a revolutionary movement with the power to overthrow capitalism. As long as the capitalist ruling class holds power, all politicians must capitulate to the limitations inherently imposed by the profit system, which will not permit them to implement the measures that must be taken to curtail greenhouse gas emissions, transform the means of energy production, and increase the efficiency of energy use. Only a planned economy, democratically run by the workers and their

allies in the interests of society as a whole, can forestall the destruction of the ecosystem.

The Need for Transitional Demands

In the current financial crisis of the global capitalist system, the workers will inevitably be the ones who suffer most from the misdeeds and greed of Wall Street. This creates an opening for socialists to argue to a mass audience that we must replace capitalism with a different system, one that puts the needs of all human beings – including the necessity to preserve our planet – ahead of the voraciousness of the privileged few who seek ever increasing wealth and power.

As workers struggle today against the effects of the crisis on their basic rights and standard of living, they need to fight for democratic working class control over the means of production. A big part of this struggle for workers’ control should be the demand for the immediate transformation of all industries to produce and utilize “green” non-polluting technology. Scientists and other technical experts should join together into massive, democratically run unions to demand that all available resources – trillions of dollars – be devoted to researching and implementing sustainable, environmentally positive technologies. Ultimately, the struggles and demands of the workers and their allies should lead to the socialist revolution, since there is no way that capitalism can implement them.

Website version note: The original, expanded version of this article, with links to online source material, is available on our website. [Click here](#) to open the page.

(continued from inside front cover)

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 fulfil 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 ego-centric 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!

MARCHES AND RALLIES ARE NOT ENOUGH!
FOR *LABOR ACTIONS* TO STOP THE WARS
AND DEFEND WORKERS' RIGHTS!
WHOSE WAR? *OBAMA'S* WAR!
WHOSE CRISIS? *CAPITALISM'S* CRISIS!

October 17, 2009 was chosen by a broad "anti-war" coalition (see <http://oct17awc.wordpress.com>) as a "national day of action" against the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan, and in favor of increased funding for jobs, social services, and education. Humanist Workers for Revolutionary Socialism (HWRS) echoes the call for an end to these imperialist wars, and agrees that society's resources should be used to meet the human needs of working people, instead of bailing out Wall Street and waging wars in the interest of the multinational corporations so they can continue their parasitic existence.

From Greenspan to Chomsky, the gurus of the right and left agree that these wars are about control of oil. The Bush-Cheney Oil War has become the Obama Oil War. Despite Obama's "green face," his regime is actually dedicated to petrodollars, not to a new era of clean energy. Meanwhile, the global economic crisis threatens to ripen into a major depression, the burden of which falls on the backs of the working class. The crisis is also an economic/financial reflection of the increasing tension between the US and its global imperialist rivals – a rivalry that ultimately will explode into further wars for control of markets and resources.

To end these wars, US, NATO, and other imperialist forces in Iraq, Afghani-

stan, and Pakistan must be defeated. The anti-war movement needs to facilitate defeat by initiating massive labor actions at the point of production of war materials as well as interfering with their distribution. To stop the wars, the heroic ILWU must be encouraged to initiate open-ended hot cargo actions against war materials, and supported in launching expanded dock strikes. We must help reignite the million worker immigrants' rights strikers to step into the vanguard of the movement to stop imperialist wars. Immigrant workers know first hand the role of imperialism in their countries of origin. In contrast to the liberal-bourgeois peace movement, a working class anti-war movement must be built which unabashedly calls for the **defeat of the US imperialist forces and their allies in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan!**

Workers can have no faith that re-launching endless cycles of "peace marches," which the anti-war organizations abandoned during the Obama campaign, will by themselves force an end to the wars or to the cause of war, monopoly capitalism. HWRS members originally made this point during the first US war on Iraq, almost 20 years ago. Here is what we wrote in February 1991:

"American workers can and must stop the monstrous killings of the Iraqi workers and poor by imperialism. The first few weeks of the war brought

hundreds of thousands of demonstrators out into the streets. These demonstrations showed the spontaneous outrage of the American people and the labor movement. In San Francisco, thousands of trade unionists marched in the January 19 and January 26 mobilizations. Demonstrations alone, however, cannot stop the war or even slow the imperialist attacks against Iraq. While they are a good way to show spontaneous outrage, more is needed to dismantle the imperialist war machine. In order to win, the workers must bring the war home. They alone have the power **to turn the war into a class war against the ruling classes at home.**

“Workers can bring the ruling class to its knees. They can cut the economic arteries of the capitalist system. There is no other way out if the American workers and people are serious about stopping the imperialist war machine. They can start the process of dismantling the war machine by refusing to handle shipments of supplies and equipment headed for the Gulf. Unfortunately, the self-proclaimed ‘leaders’ of the anti-war movement refuse to consider the idea of labor actions against the war.” (Our articles from 1991 that are quoted here are available on our website.)

In 1991, we argued, both in our press and at the planning meetings of antiwar coalitions, that marches and rallies under the banner of pacifist slogans such as “bring the troops home” and “money for human needs not war” cannot end the war, unless they are coupled with direct labor actions. We predicted that “as long as the antiwar movement contin-

ues to be dominated by petty-bourgeois pacifism, and as long as the so-called socialists in that movement continue to capitulate to the pacifist elements instead of relentlessly pushing the movement in the direction of anti-imperialism and international working class solidarity, we will continue to experience the frustration and futility that characterized the movement against the [first] Gulf war. And, more importantly, we will miss the chance to work towards the day when worldwide socialism – not pacifism – will put an end to war for once and for all.”

What we said in 1991 has been proven true. Eighteen years later, not only does the United States still have troops in Iraq, but the fighting has now expanded to Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Obama threatens to extend it into Iran as well.

All the rallies and marches the progressive left organizes will amount to naught, if they are not coupled with militant direct action by workers to stop the war at the points of production and distribution. To bring the war home, a workers’ anti-war movement must explain the intrinsic connection between the capitalist system’s imperialist military adventures and its attacks on the living standard of workers at home. **The logic of a workers’ anti-war movement is that rather than limiting itself to a struggle to end the current war alone, it fights to end the cause of war itself, which is nothing other than capitalism, by turning the imperialist war abroad into a class war at home.** For unlike the pacifist moralists who eternally dominate the American peace movements, the workers’ anti-

war movement fosters no illusions in a benign and benevolent or enlightened peaceful capitalism.

In the years since 1991, under Republican and Democratic administrations alike, the gap between rich and poor in the US and worldwide has widened to obscene dimensions. Millions have lost their homes and forty million live in poverty. High unemployment rates and shrinking state and local government budgets trigger vicious attacks on workers' wages and benefits. Those who still have jobs are told to be grateful they "only" suffer furloughs and wage cuts instead of layoffs. Health care costs are beyond the reach of the fifty million not insured through their employer, and despite demagogic pandering during the campaign the Obama administration is incapable of delivering health care as promised.

How can we effectively fight these economic conditions as well as the current imperialist wars? As we urged in 1991, "we must direct our tactics and propaganda toward educating the workers and students, not toward appeasing the liberal representatives of the capitalist class. We must draw out, in the consciousness of the masses, the organic connection between imperialist war abroad and capitalist oppression at home. We must demonstrate to the workers that their real interests lie in solidarity with the exploited workers and peasants of the semi-colonial countries, not in chauvinistic support for their imperialist oppressors. We must show the working class how its own experiences

prove that marching in the streets under the slogan 'Stop the War' not only will not stop any particular war, but more importantly, cannot possibly do anything whatsoever to stop the next war from starting. We must work to build up labor activism through calls for proletarian methods of struggle to defeat imperialism's war machine."

Today, as in 1991, what is needed is a working class anti-war movement that is anti-imperialist, anti-interventionist, and anti-capitalist in character, and that fights for the following actions:

American workers: Turn the imperialist war abroad into a class war at home! Only by defeating the bosses of Wall Street and the corporate elite can you end imperialist wars abroad.

Transportation and logistics workers: Organize with or despite your union leadership to "hot cargo" (refuse to handle) munitions and other supplies destined for use in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan or for distribution to the other 130 US military bases abroad! For the Oakland dock workers and million workers' strikes to starve the war machine!

Soldiers in the U.S. and on overseas bases: Refuse deployment to Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan – and all other areas that US imperialism seeks to control

Soldiers already deployed: Hold mass meetings to discuss and prepare for refusal of criminal orders. Build a

“let’s go home” movement to lead strikes against these criminal wars! Turn your officers and arms over to the resistance fighters! Fraternize with the resistance troops!

Workers internationally: Support these actions! Organize and lead mass protests demanding immediate, unconditional and total military withdrawal from Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan! Demand the withdrawal of mercenary contractors, trainers and covert special operations forces from Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan! Demand massive reparations for the destruction caused by the invasions!

Fake Socialists Weaken the Antiwar Movement by Capitulating to Union Bureaucrats’ Ties with Democratic Party Politicians

The San Francisco Bay Area organizing meetings for the October 17, 2009 antiwar demonstration, at which the preceding article was distributed in the form of a flyer, provided a telling lesson regarding the need for working class independence from the Democratic Party. The coalition that planned the San Francisco march included many self-identified socialist organizations, including ANSWER (Party for Socialism and Liberation), Socialist Organizer, and Socialist Action, as well as reformist groups such as United for Peace and Justice, Code Pink, the Bay Area Labor Committee for

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Iraq is still burning. And Iraqis still pay the price of having been “liberated” by U.S. “democracy.”

One year of Obamamania



**Barack Obama: The Lovechild of Degenerating
American Capitalism: The Road to Hell
Is Paved With Good Intentions.**

It's time to wake up now! The party never started. Despite all the teary eyes in Chicago last November, and the proletarian sing-along led by Pete Seeger at the inauguration last January, the working class, the minority communities and the oppressed of the world have nothing to celebrate. During the run up to the election we witnessed liberals,

progressives and the labor, women's and civil rights movements pushing the illusion to their members that Obama offered "Change we could believe in." Progressives covered their tails, qualifying their support for this self affirmed centrist, by alluding to the need to build a mass movement to force the new administration to act in a progressive manner—a mass movement they never launched after the election. Yes, it's time to wake up and fight back, but the opportunists, progressives, and labor leaders, like the Wicked Witch of the West, are showering working people with the same sleep dust and soothing mantra used on Dorothy and Toto as they crossed the poppy field on their way to the Emerald City: "Sleep, sleep, sleep!"

After eight years of the "Impeach Bush" liberals and the "Drive out the Bush Regime" Maoists pushing the illusion that all that is needed is a change of chief executive, now we have the change these class collaborationists were pushing for in years prior. Even leaders of the misnamed Revolutionary Workers League (RWL), fake Trotskyists now buried in their new civil rights "movement," By Any Means Necessary (BAMN), pandered to their base's illusions in Obama in the most opportunistic manner while promoting the

Dream Act in Sacramento, California (see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtUJ64akmxU>).

It did not take a year to see that Obama is just another pretty boy for Wall Street, picked because capitalism's credibility needed a boost after eight years of the criminal Bush league team. But anyone paying any attention should have noticed the bail-out to Wall Street was pushed by the candidate Obama during the campaign. Nor should it have been a surprise that the revolving door between the financial sector and the new administration's cabinet puts the biggest players of the capitalist system in the White House. We could honestly ask: did Obama pick Larry Summers or was it Larry Summers (read Goldman Sachs) who picked Obama?

Now, after a year, we see the torture chambers of Guantanamo are still open; the occupation of Iraq is set to go on for decades; 30,000 new troops are being sent to Afghanistan; drones are killing civilians in Pakistan; the Pentagon's SouthCom base in Honduras was used in the preparation for the coup; and Africom has been set up to protect Wall Street's interests in Africa from workers' struggles and imperialist competitors. Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education, has built an alliance with Bill Gates and sectors of the teacher's union bureaucracy (among them the California Teachers Association) to push charter schools in an effort to privatize the public education system. After chronic underfunding and years of the "No Child Left Alive" program, they point to the failed public schools and sell their market solution to the frustrated public. At Copenhagen, Obama put his foot down

in defense of big oil, big coal and capitalism's right to destroy the environment. Concepts like clean coal and cap and trade are pabulum offered up as a green agenda. In the Senate, Obama's "friends" finally delivered a health care "reform" bill, friendly to the right wing and the insurance companies, that forces working people into the wasteful for-profit health insurance system and limits women's reproductive rights, forcing women to purchase additional insurance for abortions.

This sorry compendium of Obama's achievements shows once again (as if we needed a reminder) that the ruling class has the ability to change its puppets as needed to put the frustrated masses back to sleep. Obama, with the help of all the progressives, liberals and opportunist fake socialists, is enforcing the crisis of capitalism on the back of the working class here and abroad.

Revolutionary Marxists know that only a socialist revolution led by the workers themselves, building their own forms of democratic control in the workplace and the economy, and in turn forging governance structures based on their own rank-and-file, democratic self-mobilization, can offer any meaningful solutions to the crisis of capitalism. An international revolutionary workers' party is needed to provide programmatic and theoretical leadership. Otherwise, the historic mission of the working class to bury capitalism and build a new world will be defeated. Thus, the journal *International Trotskyist* is being launched anew, with this first issue, to advance the struggle to forge such a revolutionary international.

(continued from page 14)

Peace and Justice and U.S. Labor Against the War. Jeff Mackler of Socialist Action was chosen as one of the coalition's coordinators.

At the first meeting of the coalition, labor videographer and longtime left activist Steve Zeltzer moved that the coalition participate in a protest against Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, because of her role in supporting funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Pelosi was scheduled to appear at a breakfast fundraiser in San Francisco on September 4th, 2009. Zeltzer did not mention that the event was sponsored by the San Francisco Labor Council (SFLC), but he later explained that he did not believe this was necessary, because a number of the people in the room had close ties to the SFLC. The motion to protest Pelosi passed unanimously.

However, the day after the second Coalition meeting, Mackler – with the support of Socialist Action, ANSWER, and Socialist Organizer – instructed the members of the coalition that the protest was being canceled because a meeting sponsored by the SFLC was not an “appropriate” event at which to protest Pelosi! (See http://socialistaction.blogspot.com/2009_09_06_archive.html.) Mackler even demanded that the leaflets promoting the protest be destroyed.

Mackler's order to cancel the demonstration was supported by Alan Benjamin, who is on the Executive Committee of the SFLC – along with the SFLC's executive director, Tim Paulson, who serves on the Executive Board of the California Democratic Party. The cancellation was opposed only by Zeltzer,

HWRS, Socialist Viewpoint (see http://www.socialistviewpoint.org/novdec_09/novdec_09_16.html), and Code Pink.

By ordering the cancellation of the protest against Pelosi, Mackler and the so-called socialists who supported him abjectly capitulated to Big Labor's ties to the Democratic Party. By opposing a protest against a capitalist politician who supports US imperialist actions in Iraq and Afghanistan, merely to avoid the possibility of offending the bureaucrats of the SFLC, Mackler, Benjamin, and their supporters demonstrated their own willingness to cross the class line in the interests of building a “big tent” mass antiwar movement. Through this and many of their other actions in the past, they have betrayed the teachings of Lenin and Trotsky, for whom strict working class independence from all bourgeois political formations was a defining principle for revolutionary socialists. The failure of the US antiwar movement to mount an effective opposition to US imperialist adventures in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, as described in the article on pages 11-14 of this issue, is directly connected to the revisionist methodology of these class traitors.



If the left had protested Pelosi, she would have been shocked that the reign of the Democratic Party was being challenged.

Labor Bureaucrats Bottleneck Workers' Struggles

New Millennium, Under Degenerating Capitalism: Same Old Show, Different Channel

Introductory note: In May 1994, HWRS's predecessor group, known first as the RTT, then the RTL, then Workers' Voice, published its theses on the economic crisis of 1993-94. Now HWRS has published its own theses on the current economic crisis. Both are available on our website (see URLs below). Although the groundwork for what is manifesting in 2009 has been being laid since the 1970s, we believe that the capacity for the ruling class to manufacture illusions in the capitalist system via breadcrumbs of reforms, or by cushioning itself with layers of the middle class or labor aristocracy, has come to a grinding halt, never to be recovered again while capitalism remains in place. What Trotsky forecast nearly 70 years ago, about the necessity for revolution not being just ripe, but rotten, is something that HWRS now believes, with the intervention of Trotskyist-Leninists, can come into the

conscious knowledge of the working class and oppressed, in such a way that if reformists and centrists try to lie to them about it, that will only lead to them being called on their falsehoods and betrayals.

The current global economic crisis, which is supposedly being ameliorated via various "jobless recoveries," is a qualitative shift in the landscape of imperialism. Relations between the working class in imperialist countries, and those in the semi-colonies, have become even more interdependent, making international solidarity even more possible, while the capitalist class plays a divide and conquer game to pitch the "first world" against the "third world," and every nation against each other. The fulcrum for the change in relations between imperialist countries and the semi-colonies is exemplified in the relation between the United States, its former big boy on the imperialist block status declining, and China, the deformed workers state turned capitalist (ironically, due to conditions of having quasi-independence from capitalist relations made possible due to its formerly being a workers' state), with China giving one black eye after another to the

Theses on the Present Economic Crisis, first published May 1994:

http://humanistsforrevolutionarysocialism.org/IT_Archive/Economic_Crisis_cover.html

Theses on the Economic Crisis, March-April 2009:

http://humanistsforrevolutionarysocialism.org/Current_Articles/Economic_Crisis_Theses.htm

“police of the world”, or the bully that has enforced imperialist order ever since WWII, the United States.

There was a general trend in imperialist countries, starting in the 1970s, to export the means of production to the semi-colonies to extract a higher rate of surplus value, thereby bolstering their profits, that denuded imperialist countries, especially the United States, of the material means to maintain their hegemony over the disgruntled teens discovering their adult abilities, China, or Russia or India, who are hoping to follow in China’s sardonic wake for the death of what has largely been classic Western Imperialism. Nixon, goaded on by a sense of U.S. exceptionalism, authorized that the value of the dollar be severed from gold, thereby laying the groundwork for the “petro-dollar,” on the basis of oil, a resource that is inherently limited by natural supply. This move towards an over-monetarization of the economy was blind to the laws of historical materialism that long ago forecast capitalism’s demise when the real source of value, workers’ labor, and the capitalist need to sell as many commodities as possible, would manifest as various crises of overproduction that have repeated reared their heads through the 1970s, 80s, 90s, and the first decade of the new millennium.

However, with the current economic crises, the capitalist system is being taken off the artificial life support that has sustained it through its various fictional strictly monetary booms, while the forces of production have been increasingly corrupted, and the same Marxist forecast and laws still apply. Regardless

of any revolution in technology, or reverie about “The Knowledge Age,” technology is only as good as the hands of those who apply it, and it has been applied to the means of production within the historically reactionary context of capitalism. This has only meant that it has taken fewer workers to create the crises of overproduction, and the rate of profit has been falling, no matter how much the capitalist class has tried to super-exploit the working class of any country. And while China, Russia or India may have pipedreams about being a similar world powers on the order of the old Western powers or Japan, their ambitions will only serve to drive the nails into the coffin of capitalism, and impel a potential “permanent revolution in reverse” on the lives of the working class in imperialist countries.

Now, the working classes in the imperialist countries are being expected to pay for the capitalist stupidity (without the imperialist capitalist class having a fat wallet from which to throw Keynesian economic measures as crumbs) via massive assaults to force their standard of living down to levels more commensurable with that of the semi-colonies, while the working class in the semi-colonies are being cast aside as human rubbish. But nor is it the case that the forces of production in the neo-colonies will allow the working classes of those countries to ever enjoy a standard of living that was present for the working class in imperialist countries. As U.S. military grunts say, capitalism as a global economic system is S.O.L.

The following series of articles about the sham excuse of labor bureaucrats of

strike authorization, the struggles (or lack thereof, or only the first gasps for air) in Denver, San Francisco and Richmond, and internationally, point out not only what needs to be done, but what it takes, ultimately, a socialist revolution to do. Read for yourself how the betrayals prevent the working class and oppressed from firmly setting the tombstone on the grave of the capitalist economic system, and why the intervention of Leninist-Trotskyists means, not just the difference between socialism and barbarism, but the avoidance of ecological catastrophe for the entire planet.

Strike Authorization Votes: A Sell-Out Tactic



Strike Authorization Votes:
The working class is pushed into depression and give-backs, and union bureaucracies push their business unionism.

Workers who follow news stories about labor relations have probably noticed a disturbing trend in recent years. In workplace after workplace, when the union's contract has expired and negotiations for

a new contract are going nowhere fast, the union "leaders" call for a strike *authorization* vote, not an actual *strike* vote. The workers overwhelmingly vote in favor of it, but mysteriously, no strike ever materializes. When asked, the union officials explain that the results of the vote will be used as a tool to extract concessions from management in the ongoing negotiations.

The bargaining team then returns from the latest round of talks with the sad news that despite the "threat" posed by the strike authorization vote, management's offer has not improved very much, if at all. "This is the best we could get," say the union bureaucrats who are handling the negotiations. "You'd better approve it, because there's nothing more we can do." Sometimes, if the negotiations drag on long enough, the union calls for a token walkout, lasting a few days at most. Despite the overwhelming sentiment of the workers, as expressed in the strike authorization vote, at no point in this process do the "leaders" even prepare for a serious strike, much less actually call one. No wonder workers

have lost faith in the ability of what are supposed to be “their” unions to defend them against the bosses’ attacks!

Authorizations Without Strikes Lead Only to Defeat

In at least one case, the union used an even more indirect approach, which we cannot help calling the ultimate in Mickey Mouse unionism. At Disney World in November 2004, the union leaders called for a strike authorization vote, but did not even *hold* the vote before caving in to the company’s barely-improved contract offer. The offer included small raises for workers (which a company official later admitted were more than offset by increased health care costs), and an agreement to retain the existing cap on part-time work instead of raising it – in other words, withdrawal of a proposed take-back. Some deal, right? The workers initially rejected the offer, but even so, the union did not call a strike. Instead, a slightly revised deal was ratified shortly afterwards.



Who needs cops when there’s the internal cops in the business unions’ bureaucracy?

Closer to the present, the measures taken by bourgeois politicians to force California public workers to bear the brunt of the burden of budget crisis have precipitated several overwhelming strike authorization votes – none of which has been followed by an actual strike. The results for workers have been predictable: ratification by sold-out BART workers of a contract they all knew was a defeat; imposition on state employees of mandatory furloughs amounting to a 15% pay cut, with no meaningful fightback by their unions (SEIU Local 1000, CAPS, PEGS, AFSCME, IUOE Local 39); and a prolonged stalemate in the negotiations between the United Teachers of Richmond and the West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD) – ultimately resolved by the reluctant ratification of a contract that hurt both teachers and the community by drastically increasing class sizes, among other take-backs.

In July 2009, after the teachers in the WCCUSD had been working without a contract for about a year, the district imposed a contract that required the teachers to pay for their dependents’ health coverage. In August, the teachers overwhelmingly approved a strike authorization vote. During the fall, while the WCCUSD spent thousands of dollars to recruit and train prospective scabs, the union – despite the best efforts of its progressive rank-and-file caucus – did nothing whatsoever to prepare for a strike. Finally, in early November, the UTR presented its members with a tentative contract that, among other things, required teachers to pay for a portion of their health insurance for the first time, without any offsetting salary increase; raised class sizes; instituted furlough days in the second and third years of the contract’s

duration, effectively *cutting* salaries by 2.5%; and cut training time for some teachers, while imposing additional furlough days for the other teachers and staff.

Understandably concerned at how the teachers would react to this outrage, the UTR presented them with a ratification ballot that offered only two options: “Yes, I vote to ratify the tentative agreement,” or “No, I vote to go on strike.” An initial vote count conducted by the union – under circumstances that some rank-and-filers found suspicious – indicated that the agreement had been ratified by a nine-vote margin. Because the result was so close, the rank-and-file succeeded in pressuring the executive board for a recount. The revised count revealed that the contract had actually been *rejected* by a vote of 705 to 671 – almost four times the margin in the original tally, and in the opposite direction.

Stunningly, UTR President Pixie Hayward Schickele reacted to the news by saying that, “I’m not sure what our choices are” – as if the UTR membership had not already *told* her exactly what *it* believed to be the appropriate course of action. Schickele acknowledged that the teachers were “very angry” at the UTR leadership, but explained that the union had had “every expert we could find look at the budget,” and that she believed the district did not have the money to provide a better contract. What Schickele did *not* explain was why the UTR had not taken militant action to confront the abysmal budget situation in California and try to change it. Instead of joining with other public education workers, as well as other public and private workers under attack, to take to the streets and demand

adequate funding for our children’s education instead of Wall Street bailouts and wars, the UTR leadership tried to force a contract down its members’ throats. Eventually, as already noted, it succeeded in doing just that, at a great loss to the teachers, their students, and the community.

Strike Authorizations in the Private Sector

Things are not much different – and no better – in the private sector. A typical example transpired between the Communications Workers of America (CWA) and AT&T earlier in 2009.

Despite the union members’ 88% approval of a strike authorization vote earlier in the year, no strikes ensued. Instead, the union encouraged rank-and-filers and their supporters to engage in symbolic protests such as wearing red on Thursdays as a symbol of solidarity, and to sign petitions and seek support from their representatives in Congress. In the end, bargaining unit after bargaining unit reached agreements with management that were reluctantly ratified by the membership after they were told by “their” negotiating teams that this was the best they could do.

Short-Term Walkouts

Another tactic being employed by union bureaucrats is to substitute symbolic short-term walkouts for real strikes. In late October 2009, the hotel workers represented by Unite HERE Local 2 in San Francisco voted overwhelmingly, by 92%, to authorize a strike. The union, however, is staging only brief walkouts at

individual hotels (three days at the Grand Hyatt, then three days at the Palace, and so on). What the union has not told the workers is that this tactic is doomed to failure. The struck hotels will simply transfer their guests to other hotels for the brief duration of the strike. The other hotels, in turn, will return the favor when it is their workers' turn to walk out. If only one hotel at a time is closed, even visitors who honor picket lines have little reason to stay away from San Francisco. As a result, in the long run the hotels will lose little or no revenue. In short, the rolling walkout tactic gives the hotels no meaningful incentive to sweeten their contract offer. As a *New York Times* report succinctly put it: "Authorizing the union to strike ... is very different from actually striking. ... Hotel managers said the outcome of the strike vote will not affect their negotiating strategy."

It should be clear just from these few examples that a strike authorization vote, even when coupled with a brief walkout, is not an effective negotiating tactic. This is especially true when the bosses know that there is little or no chance that the union bureaucrats will actually follow through with their empty threat and conduct a genuine, militant, all out strike. So why do the bureaucrats keep holding these useless strike authorization votes? What is going on here?

“The Changing Face of Labor”

A report entitled *The Changing Face of Labor, 1983-2008*, published in November 2009 by the Center for Economic and Policy Research in Washington, D.C., confirms what we have all suspected. Union membership in absolute and percentage terms

has declined over the last quarter century. In 1983 – the starting date for the report's research – 20.5 million people, or 23.3 percent of the U.S. workforce, was unionized. By 2008, the number had declined to 17.8 million people, or 13.7 percent of the labor force.

In addition, the same report indicates that there has been a change in what kinds of jobs union members do. In 1983, about 30 percent of union members held jobs in manufacturing as of 1983. As of 2009, that figure has gone down sharply, to about 10 percent. Conversely, the percentage of union workers who hold public sector (government) jobs has risen from just over a third in 1983 to nearly half today. In the public sector, strikes are sometimes illegal, and even where they are permitted, they are less likely to draw public sympathy and support, because of the widespread misconception that public workers are overpaid and underworked, and because public worker strikes, such as those by transit workers or teachers, are more likely than manufacturing strikes to result in direct inconvenience or even hardship to the community – a sentiment that is fueled by negative news coverage in the so-called “mainstream” media. These obstacles can be overcome, but only by hard work, creativity, and boldness – not attributes commonly associated with union bureaucrats, and for good reason.

Combine this trend with the recent economic meltdown, and the result is that according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, major work stoppages – defined as those when 1,000 workers or more go on strike or are locked out – dropped 95 percent in 2009 compared with 2008, and

are at their lowest level since the government began keeping a tally in the 1940s. (For detailed data, see the BLS's annual reports for 2008 and earlier, and monthly reports for 2009.) Gordon Pavy, the AFL-CIO's director of collective bargaining, was quoted in a November 3, 2009 news article as saying, "I think you can say that everybody's anxious to keep labor peace right now with the economy being where it is and employment where it is."

This could not be more wrong-headed. As the experience of workers in the 1930s demonstrates (see the article *Labor's Next Chance: What American Workers Can Learn from the 1930s*, available on our website), economic hard times are precisely when workers need – and are motivated – to fight hardest in order to avoid being victimized and forced to bear the entire burden.

The enormous margins by which the strike authorization votes are passing is a clear signal that workers are angry, and *want* to fight back. But the union bureaucrats, acting as de facto agents of the bosses and Wall Street, have no perspective to win. All they can think about is maintaining "labor peace" so they can avoid waging the hard, sometimes dangerous militant workers' struggle that presents our only hope of victory. Hence the strike authorization vote tactic, which allows the bureaucrats to save face by creating the illusion that they are responding to the membership's anger and militance, while at the same time defusing that anger and sidetracking it into useless symbolic actions like wearing union colors, signing petitions, or at the most, staging short-term walkouts.

What the Labor Movement Needs

A real strike is not an empty threat; it is an actual walkout that totally stops the employer from conducting business. And real strikes produce results. Compare the recent experience of the workers at BART in the San Francisco Bay Area with those of SEPTA in the Philadelphia area.

The BART workers came to the brink of a strike, but the union leadership backed off at the last minute, and the workers ended up with a wage freeze for the first year of the four-year contract; increased workloads; reduced overtime; and benefit cuts.

The SEPTA workers not only authorized a strike, but actually walked out, brought the transit system to a screeching halt, and stayed out until they had a significantly better offer. In the end, management backed off from its refusal to grant any wage increases at all over the life of the contract, and the workers won a \$1,250 bonus upon ratification, a 2.5 percent raise in the second year, a 3 percent raise in each of the final three years, and no increase in the workers' health-insurance contributions.

This was not a great victory, but it was far better than what the BART workers achieved. In addition, when a union wages an effective strike that shuts down the employer's business, not only can this force concessions from management, it also serves as an example to other unions in the area, emboldening them to do the same.

Similarly, in the private sector, when the Teamsters Local 743 members employed by SK Hand Tool Corporation lost their health coverage due to a unilateral action by their employer, they waged a genuine old-fashioned strike that totally shut down production. The workers also gained widespread support from other unions, including bodies on the picket line and donations of food to striking workers. In the end, they won back their health coverage. Even though this victory came at a cost in the form of wage concessions, it is still an example of how a real strike can accomplish far more than a fake “strike authorization” vote.

Overcoming Obstacles to Effective Strikes

Employers often respond by threatening to replace the striking workers with temporary or even permanent scabs, or to close down the business or move it overseas. As already mentioned, workers – especially those in the public sector – also face media-fueled hostility and accusations of greed and selfishness when they threaten to strike. And in difficult economic times, workers may be reluctant to face the loss of income that will come from walking off the job.

In order to overcome these obstacles, workers need to prepare in advance for a strike, and if possible, force their union to use its resources to help them do so. For example, public hostility can be countered by mobilizing an effective campaign to explain the facts to the community, and point out that a maintaining a strong labor movement helps *all* working people fight back against the bosses’

attacks on their wages, benefits, and standard of living. In some cases, workers can also offer to serve the public in other ways while the strike is in progress. For example, striking teachers can work with the community to set up strike schools and day care centers so that working parents will have a safe place to take their children and continue their education while the schools are closed.

To help striking workers survive financially, workers should band together in advance of the strike to take measures to protect themselves. Such measures could include forcing their union to amass a meaningful strike benefits fund instead of using members’ dues for other purposes. Community solidarity can be mobilized to organize strike kitchens, food pantries, and other resources to help striking workers feed themselves and their families.

When the bosses say that they cannot come up with a better contract offer because the money simply is not there, workers in the private sector should demand that the company open its books and let the workers’ representatives determine for themselves how much the company is taking in, and where the money is going. Public sector workers who are asked to “share the pain” should demand that the money used to bail out Wall Street bankers and bomb civilian women and children in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan be used instead to pay government workers decent wages to deliver public services.

Finally, when the bosses try to bring in scabs so that they can continue

to operate during a strike, workers must organize effective, militant picket lines to keep the scabs out. If a private sector company tries to lock out the workers or close down the plant, workers should occupy the plant until either their demands are met, or the plant is turned over to them to run, without compensation to the stockholders.

Tactics such as these are what built the labor movement from the late 19th Century through the 1930s, making it strong enough to force the bosses to share the benefits of the post-World War II economic boom with US workers, raising their standard of living to the highest in the world. In the intervening years, workers have forgotten the lessons learned during those early years of struggle, and the

unions have degenerated from fighting organs of workers' defense to bloated, parasitic bureaucracies. Today, many workers see unions as doing little more than funneling their dues money to the bureaucrats' own inflated salaries, and then soliciting even more of their money for PAC contributions, which the union bosses then hand over to political candidates, usually Democrats, who do nothing, once elected, to fight for workers' rights.

The lessons of the militant labor union struggles of the prewar era must be relearned, and soon. If the union officials will not lead such struggles, they must be replaced by democratically elected workers' councils, populated by rank-and-filers and committed to take the struggle for their members' rights as far as it needs to go.



Auto workers occupying a General Motors plant during the Flint sit-down strike of 1936-1937.

Not Taking This, Laying Down Or No how!: The Colorado Grocery Workers' Road to Class Struggle Self-Defense



Colorado Grocery Workers Would Like to Wage Class Struggle to Point the Way Forward For Other Colorado Workers

The Safeway and King Soopers employees, members of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local Union 7R Colorado, have been facing vicious attacks from every possible angle since new contract negotiations started in early May. Workers have been attacked by the corporation, which threatens to lock them out. The corporation has said that it has a scab army to replace the union membership if they strike. The attack is continued by Governor Bill Ritter who, since he was elected, has vetoed a number of labor bills and turned his back completely on struggling workers. Along with this the media, particularly the *Denver Post*, have published articles meant

to demoralize our struggling brothers and sisters in the UFCW, and has tried to turn the grocery workers against each other. The workers' democratic wishes have time and time again been betrayed by the International UFCW bureaucracy and the privileged elite of local 7R. Workers must organize for a fighting union leadership and be an example to all those unemployed and exploited workers who suffer at the hands of this rotten capitalist system.

The Safeway and King Soopers corporations fail to recognize the workers "contribution to company profits,"(1) and they continue to spit on the hands that feed them. The workers of these corporations in fact are the ones producing all of the profit for these ungrateful CEOs, so the real question is: How have they contributed to workers' security, and how can they do this while at the same time attacking workers' pensions??

The UFCW 7R website reveals the 2008 earnings of both the CEOs of Kroger/King Soopers as well as for Safeway. David Dillion, the CEO of Kroger, made \$8,031,721, while the CEO of Safeway, Steven Burd, earned \$10,959,400. Both have voiced their opti-

mistic outlooks on the economy because both are profiting off the banks' recession. According to *Fortune 500's* rankings of the most profitable corporations in the U.S., Safeway ranks at 50, while Kroger (King Soopers) ranks at 22.(2) The Safeway and King Soopers workers must unite because their interests are intertwined. As the corporations team up and plan the best way to crush the workers' movement one by one, it is necessary for the rank-and-file grocery workers to unite and create workers' democratic committees to truly represent the will of the members as well as their families.

Local 7R members know far too well the treacherous consequences of a divided union and united corporations. The grocery workers are being demoralized by the treacherous business union leadership, which drags out negotiations instead of acting on behalf of the workers' expressed and voted wishes. While this happens, the members are being attacked by the right wing media and especially their own corporations, which threaten them and their families with an unhealthy pension plan and statements that threaten a lockout.

The corporations say that if Safeway strikes, then King Soopers will lock out its workers, and vice-versa. This happened in 1996, and is a successful tool to divide the union membership. As workers, we should all stand up and say "NO to your lockouts! We will lock YOU out because we are the ones who pay for your luxuries. We are the ones who make your profits. We are the ones who suffer for your greed. We are the producers and the progressive class, and we base our interests on one another and not for

profit. We want security, and we will fight for it!"

Bill Ritter, an Enemy of the Workers

As current law stands in Colorado, when a union strikes at one grocery chain, the other grocery chain, which is also unionized, can lock out its workers; the locked out workers cannot collect unemployment even though their corporation forcibly locked them out. Governor Bill Ritter vetoed House Bill 1170 in May. This bill would have made it possible for locked out workers to collect unemployment after their despotic corporation locked them out. In regard to Ritter's veto, he writes, "I believe it is ill-advised and counterproductive to enact legislation that materially impacts the relative bargaining position of parties in the midst of ongoing negotiations." This gross accusation proves to the world Ritter's spineless disregard for working families. It's just another classic example of the Democrats' dealings with unions. While the six-figure-earning union bureaucracy props up Democratic candidates with the membership's PAC check-off, working families are left in the cold due to the business dealings of the Democrats and their union bureaucrat lackeys.

The UFCW's Hypocritical Leadership

On October 6, 2009, the UFCW union leadership once again betrayed their very patient membership. It is the second time in five months that the UFCW Local 7R

grocery workers of King Soopers and Safeway voted overwhelmingly to authorize a strike by over 90%. These workers are struggling to hold on to their pensions, and they have even asked their very wealthy CEOs to meet them only half way. Julie Gonzalez, a King Soopers worker, told 9 News, "We are ready, willing, and able to get back to the bargaining table if the corporation is willing to meet us half way. All we're asking for is a fair deal. And we really hope they don't lock us out for asking for livable wages and a pension plan that recognizes our contribution to company profits."

International UFCW President Joe Hansen on September 15th wrote Local 7R President Ernest Duran stating the International Union's stance if the workers voted to reauthorize a strike. "The International Union will accept this representation. If, however, following strike authorization Local No. 7R learns that additional bargaining may resolve the matters at issue, Local No. 7R must continue to engage in such bargaining." So explained Joe Hansen with the characteristic facility of the servant-fed: In just two sentences, he speaks to the membership from both sides of his mouth.

On October 20 the bargaining continued, with the corporations refusing to budge, saying that they "did not have any new or different proposals for the workers. They said to call them if we did." (3) These corporations, just like the banks, believe that working people should take the hit for their callous greed. The corporations have refused to bargain in good faith with the union, and the union bureaucracy refuses to recognize the will of its membership. This leaves the grocery

workers in a state of limbo that creates confusion. They know that Safeway and King Soopers only care about their own profits, and it's becoming clearer every day that the UFCW union aristocracy has anything but the workers' right to security and healthy pensions in mind. The Local 7R membership must reach out to the community and be an example for workers in Colorado and the entire U.S. Only the revitalization and reorganization of a strong, empowered working class will be able to defeat and expose the capitalist class and the union aristocracy.

Cristina Duran, the Associate General Counsel of UFCW and daughter of Ernie Duran, tries and fails miserably to represent anything that resembles the workers' interests. On October 22, she wrote a letter to the King Soopers employees addressing a letter by Dave Savage, the Vice President of Retail Operations for King Soopers, regarding the negotiations. She replies to Savage regarding the lockout by saying, "King Soopers could CHOOSE to not lockout their employees because they could negotiate their contract separately. In fact, if Safeway workers go on strike, King Soopers could profit millions if they CHOOSE to not lock their workers out." She acknowledges the fact that the corporations are united, and she's on her knees begging for them to negotiate separately.

The problem is that the UFCW leadership has continued to run the union on the basis of dividing the workers in a store. Some grocery workers are part of the clerk union, others are in the meat cutting union, and some workers in unionized stores aren't a part of the union at all, but are still greatly af-

ected by the union contracts. This horrible setup is there to divide the workers and pit them against their fellow employees by creating different interests instead of one united union fighting for the benefit of all its employees. If Cristina Duran truly cared at all for the UFCW workers instead of her fat six-figure salary, she would call for a united front against both corporations, and the uniting of separate union shops into one strong united union that would be able to win against the united corporations, but she doesn't. and she continues to be a brake on the progress of the workers' negotiations. This cannot be tolerated, especially when Savage writes that he will be forced to lock out King Soopers employees if Safeway strikes. Unfortunately, Duran does not call for a united union, nor does she call to occupy the stores in the instance that the employers attempt to lock the workers out. Instead, she cries and begs the union to negotiate separately, divided and weak. Workers must force the Durans out now and elect a leadership that is run by the workers, for the workers.

Workers must demand that all union staff be elected by the rank-and-file and make wages that are equivalent to their own, and never more than an average skilled worker in their given industry. This will only come about if workers unite and realize that the union bureaucracy, which says it represents them, continues to constantly undermine the democratic decisions of the rank-and-file workers. The union is there to protect workers, not to pay for extravagant salaries for sell-out bureaucrats who betray the decisions made by the rank-and-file. The only solu-

tion is to kick out union opportunists and to demand union democracy in which all workers have a voice; one in which anyone and everyone elected to union positions are rank-and-file workers themselves, making the same wage as an average worker, and whose interest is directly linked with the people whom the union is supposed to represent.

King Soopers has decided that if UFCW 7R goes on strike they will run ads to attract scabs in the right wing *Denver Post*.⁽⁴⁾ The *Denver Post* also blatantly shows its disinterest in the needs of the common worker by running disgraceful articles against the workers' struggle for respect and security. On October 6, the *Denver Post* ran three articles on the UFCW membership's votes, which overwhelmingly showed support for re-authorizing a strike. Two of the articles barely mentioned the reauthorization for a strike, and, of course, failed to mention the straight-up thievery of the treacherous corporations and UFCW's class-traitor International leadership. Both of these articles boasted fewer than 125 words. But on that same day, when Coloradans flipped to the Business section of the *Post*, the first thing they would all see on the cover was the bold words that read, "Strike Won't Stop Shoppers," along with a picture of a man saying a strike wouldn't change his way of shopping. The article slanders the cause of the grocery workers' struggle for livable wages and a decent life. The article concluded with: "These people are lucky to have jobs," the man said. "They'd be idiots to strike. I'd take that job in a heartbeat." By pitting members of the working class against each other for a fight to the

death, this article attacks not only the UFCW members, but all working families that want security. The workers' answer to Steve Raabe, the article's author, should be one of disgust and anger. He tries to demoralize the workers with right wing propaganda articles aimed at dividing and confusing the masses into blaming the Local 7R rank-and-file.

Throughout the negotiations, the employers and the media make it clear that if the union strikes, a team of scabs will be there to replace them. This must be fought against vigorously. So far, the union leadership has barely addressed this, and instead it continues a policy that ignores the scabs. Workers must kick out scabs already amongst them and refuse to work when there is a scab in the store. We know the union bureaucracy and the corporations do not care much for workers' security, and they continue to allow scabs to be trained to undermine the incredibly fragile security grocery workers barely have.

We say to the scabs-in-training: "Do not fight against fellow workers; fight alongside them, demanding employment for all and against pitting members of the working class against each other." History has proven this to be a powerful tool for fighting the working class: employing traitor elements amongst us who are willing to work against the struggling masses. This must be stopped because it will only deepen the crisis of the working class and lead to even deeper divisions amongst the people who struggle for their security. The working class must be united to defend successfully against the corporations, the union bureaucracy, and

against the contradictions of scabbing against one's own class.

Solidarity among all working class people is imperative for victory. Grocery workers from all stores must stand together and demand a living wage and security. Grocery, transportation, processing, and factory workers all must build solidarity among their struggles to demand a future not based on the profit shares of the rich, but on the security of all who struggle to feed and clothe their families. Workers have the power to emancipate themselves from the slanders of the right wing *Denver Post*, to be free of all Safeway and Krogers despotic CEOs, and against the traitors of the UFCW union bureaucracy. All workers must stand together in our brothers' and sisters' time of need. When the media, corporations, and business union bureaucracy are attacking working families from all sides, we stand together and unite against the theft and greed of corporate capitalist society.

No more excuses! They have the money! While the working class pays the banks for their recession, Safeway and King Soopers both made *Fortune 500* magazine's top 50 most profitable companies. We say "No!" to their lockouts against the workers! Workers, occupy your workplaces! Form action committees in every workplace, coordinate city-wide—prepare for unified action! Once the occupation is on, don't let the food spoil; invite the unemployed to supper!

When the management of a company pleads poverty in the face of workers' reasonable demands for pay and bene-

fits, we must call for the nationalization of failing enterprises under democratic workers' control, without compensation to the stockholders!

JOBS FOR ALL! From an individual's entry into the working world until retirement, everyone must be guaranteed the opportunity to perform meaningful, creative work that serves humanity and pays enough to support a family. To end unemployment and the squeeze on workers' wages, **we demand a sliding scale of wages and working hours: 30 hours' work for 40 hours' pay!**

Against the traitors of the UFCW leadership, the new fighting rank-and-file leadership will bring charges of nepotism and replace their rot with a **democratic leadership that earns average skilled workers' pay and is subject to immediate recall.**

Create democratically-elected strike committees that will truly represent the will of all of the rank-and-file workers. Reach out to the community and raise awareness about the maliciousness of corporate greed and the betrayals of the union leadership.

Reach out to all of the working class and unite under the banner of workers' democracy! **An injury to one is an injury to all! Workers of the world, unite! LABOR NEEDS A VICTORY. LET IT START HERE AND NOW!**

Notes:

Denver workers want negotiations to continue Jeffrey Wolf, 6/15/2009, <http://www.alwayshereforcolorado.com/node/201>

Statistics from Fortune 500 top 1000 U.S. 05/04/2009, http://157.166.226.108/magazines/fortune/fortune500/2009/full_list/

Little progress in Soopers, Safeway grocery talks; strike threat looms Denver Business Journal, 10/21/2009, <http://denver.bizjournals.com/denver/stories/2009/10/19/daily41.html>

(4) Colorado grocery chains, workers prepare for strike Denver Business Journal, 05/01/2009, <http://denver.bizjournals.com/denver/stories/2009/04/27/daily88.html>



It will take more than rallies around the union headquarters for grocery workers to win a strike.

Grocery workers in Colorado need to point the way forward by striking to win.

Strikes Not Furloughs! How to Fight Back Against Attacks on Public Employees



Schwarzenegger is playing "Terminator" with State Workers and their families.

In his quixotic quest for ways to balance the deficit-ridden California budget without imposing any part of the burden on powerful corporations or the state's wealthy coterie of campaign donors,

Governator Schwarzenegger has targeted the state's public employees for an unprecedented, massive attack.

Between the elimination of paid holidays and the imposition of mandatory furloughs, state employee wages have effectively been cut by almost 15%. Massive cuts in the future state budget for education promise to result in college enrollment cuts, massive layoffs of teachers, larger class sizes, shorter school years, and even school closures. Yet until recently – now that it may well be too late – the unions that represent those employees have largely abandoned their members to suffer, without raising a finger in their defense.

The July 1 Rally – A Case Study in Futility

The largest public workers' union in the state is SEIU 1000, which has approximately 30,000 members in Sacramento, the state capital, as well as over 120,000 other members around

the state. On July 1, 2009, SEIU 1000 held a march and rally in Sacramento against the current spate of attacks on California state workers. Even though tens of thousands of SEIU members work within walking distance of the site, and even though it bused in members from outside the state capital, SEIU 1000 was barely able to motivate 3,000 members and supporters to participate.

Concurrently with the demonstration, the governor, speaking at a press conference, lambasted state workers and their unions as “special interests,” and then signed an order for a third unpaid furlough day per month. Beyond holding the relatively small demonstration, the unions representing the state workers barely raised a peep at this outrage. Of course, the 3,000 of us on the capitol lawn were hooting and hollering at the top of our lungs, but after a few hours we all went back to the office or got on our buses and left, with less in our benefit package than when we had arrived.

The other state worker unions – CAPS, PEGS, AFSCME, IUOE Local 39 – did nothing to mobilize workers to attend the rally. CAPS released a letter in which they “vigorously opposed” the third furlough day, but when CAPS member Charles Rachlis approached a CAPS executive board member and asked the union to help build the rally, the CAPS official rejected the idea, expressing disdain toward SEIU. He argued that if SEIU couldn’t turn out its own members, why should we (CAPS) mobilize to fill out “their” rally.

None of Rachlis’s emails to the CAPS office or to the other executive board

members, suggesting that CAPS mobilize for the demonstration, were answered. About 150 Communications Workers of America (CWA) workers appeared early in the afternoon on the capitol steps, just around the corner from the SEIU rally point. It seemed obvious that the two contingents should merge in a show of class solidarity, but what was obvious to some was ignored by both the CWA and SEIU leaderships, who while on site did nothing to initiate a joint action.

The Legacy of Business Unionism

Why aren’t the public employee unions in California (and other states in similar situations) activating their membership to take militant action to combat these attacks? Are they incapable? Just plain against the concept? Or working for the other side?

In the days leading up to and just after the announcement of the third furlough day, the scuttlebutt around the water cooler was that what we need is a strike. Workers are pissed off, and jawboning about how we need to strike is how folk vent. However, there is no confidence among the workers that our unions have either the strength or internal fortitude to build for a strike. Instinctively, workers know what is needed, but we also see that we have no organizational structure capable of fighting. Nor is there any semblance of solidarity developing, which is essential if we are to build for, initiate, and sustain a winning strike. Union activists and staffers quickly cover their inaction with “blame the worker” statements,

such as “Of course we need a strike, but if we can’t even get our people out for a picket line or on the bus to Sacramento, how do you expect them to strike?”

It’s time that we look at our organizations to see why they are incapable of building a fighting leadership. The hand wringing we are seeing on the part of the staffers, executive boards and activists who have stood by, watched, and allowed our unions to disintegrate over the years is the conscious expression of the destruction wrought upon organized labor by 50 years of business unionism. Few and far between are members who remember or have learned the story of what it took to win the unions in the first place. For decades, labor has been told by its leaders to build support for Democratic politicians who, despite posing as “friends of labor,” invariably legislate, execute, and administer policies written by and for their true friends in the financial and corporate sectors. Rather than building a fighting workers’ party, preparing rank and file action committees, organizing the unorganized, and building solidarity among different locals and unions, our union “leaders” have told us that their Democratic “friends” would look out for us. So we kept sending them our contributions, worked their phone banks, and supported their candidacies.

What have we gotten in return? The real deal is being exposed now, when we are faced with a world wide collapse of capitalism, and all the Democrats and all the Republicans can’t put Humpty Dumpty back together again. The very same politicians who were elected to office with the support of organized labor are telling us that there is no money and

that we all have to “share the pain.” Big time liberals in the California Legislature like Mark Leno and Tom Ammiano, both of who, climbed the Democratic ladder from the San Francisco Board of Supervisors to the State Assembly, can be heard on the radio pushing the anti-worker, anti-union solutions that their caucus put together with uber-worker-hater Governor Schwarzenegger to be presented to the voters on the May 19th ballot, and soundly rejected.

No wonder the workers have lost faith in their unions. All that is left of the fighting spirit of state workers is to bluster boldly by the water cooler, as a mere fraction of the membership answers the leadership’s call to rally at the capitol. Union staff were heard to lament that they gave plenty of notice to workers to come to the rally. Indeed, we got at least three e-mails to mobilize us. What the union staffers apparently don’t realize is that it’s going to take a lot more than a few e-mails to mobilize the fighting spirit of workers who have lost all faith in their leadership’s ability or willingness to fight back.

The intention of this article is not to point to one union and blame it for the lack of leadership. But we cannot understand fully why workers don’t respond to their union’s calls for demonstrations unless we look at some of the concessions and practices some of the leaders of these unions have been party to. For example, they accepted a two-tier medical plan under which new workers have to wait longer to become fully vested. Like all such two-tier plans, this ruptures the solidarity between younger and older workers. Most workers who voted to ac-

not even aware that they were undercutting desperately needed solidarity between the young and the old. When the SEIU leadership cut a deal for one furlough day in the negotiations leading up to the failed May 19 ballot initiatives, they willingly voted to accept this concession despite the fact that other unions, facing the same furloughs, were still struggling (in court) to stop all furloughs. This lack of unity set the stage for the earlier mentioned animosity between CAPS and SEIU. And, of course, the reliance on the courts by CAPS and PEGS as their sole method of opposing the forced concessions did nothing to mobilize the workers to take any organized action greater than calling their legislator or sending a postcard to the governor.

In short, it is clear from the tactics and leadership provided by our unions that they simply are not capable of defending our interests, and are definitively not interested in fighting for workers' power. Their intention has long been to support the status quo. To that end, they have limited their role, as they have seen it, to negotiating for wage increases that keep up with inflation; preventing givebacks; and supporting only the most gradual reforms, if any. But today they have shown that they are not even capable of those limited tasks.

The Need to Build Inter-Union Rank-and-File Solidarity

If we had a fighting trade union leadership, they would long ago have convened a series of district-wide inter-union rank and file conferences to mobilize workers and prepare our organizations to take

united action to defend our quality of life and protect the multitude of vitally necessary social services – health care, education, workplace safety, transportation, parks, home care for seniors and the disabled, the poison hot line, and so forth – that state and local government employees provide to the public at large. But the union bureaucrats are so set in their ways that even the mention of such a concept sends them into apoplectic fits

It was due to this vacuum of leadership, and the unions' history of concessions and dependence on politicians and courts, that rank-and-file workers at the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Richmond campus came together on their own, in the spring of 2009, to form an inter-union organizing committee. This committee's purpose is to investigate ways to build solidarity and fight back against the cuts in our benefits, threats of layoffs, and cuts in public services and education. If not for the efforts of this committee, there would not have been a busload of folks from Richmond joining the rally in Sacramento. To be fair, we found one SEIU staffer who took action to support our work. It is our hope that the SEIU leadership allows this honest staffer to continue to advance the work and help us build inter-union solidarity.

At the rally in Sacramento, we distributed 400 leaflets approved by our steering committee calling on state workers to form inter-union organizing committees in every workplace throughout the state. Our bus to Sacramento carried public employees from a variety of state and local unions, including workers from EB-MUD (the East Bay water and sewer util-

ity) and the West Contra Costa County School District. The Richmond bus set an example of solidarity which must be repeated ten-thousand-fold if we are to defeat the anti-worker policies of the politicians in Sacramento and their corporate and banker friends who have destroyed the economy.

How to Respond to Teacher Layoffs and Furloughs

Another case study on the need for public employees to build solidarity among different unions, and with their surrounding communities, has been taking place in the West Contra Costa County School District, also centered in Richmond. The school district, not satisfied with merely closing schools and laying off teachers, is threatening to add mandatory unpaid teacher furloughs to its mix of budget-cutting measures

Parents oppose furloughs 100 percent and do not want any days taken from the educational year. As the school board is forcing the United Teachers of Richmond (UTR) toward a strike, parents and teachers must work together to prepare the community. The governor and his stooges on the school board have thrown down the gauntlet, and we must respond in kind.

In the case of a strike, the kids do not have to get screwed. The way to prevent the kids from getting screwed is for the strikers and parents to occupy the schools. If that is not possible because of the police, then we must create two teams of strikers. Half the teachers, assisted by other trade unionists and par-

ents, must stand guard at the school gates and prevent the entry of scabs. The other half of the teachers must set up assemblies of students and parents in local churches or other buildings that the community will make available to us. In those educational assemblies the teachers can teach the economics of the budget crisis, and the history of labor organizing, to the children. These lessons will allow children to learn math, civics, history, research methodology, and public discourse.

The older students can also take turns on the picket line, and stand with their teachers to demand education for all. They can also form a student council at each middle and upper school, and an inter-school representative council of student delegates. These bodies of student representatives should be involved in all aspects of running programs, giving input, and discussing tactics of the struggle. At the same time, each school should call on its existing parent teacher organization to contribute to the support of the teachers' struggle, and if the existing organization does not do so, interested parents and teachers, together with older students, should build their own alternative organizations. Having the parent / teacher organizations and student council bodies play an active role in support of the teachers' strike is an essential mechanism for spreading the concept of direct, militant struggle beyond the public sector and into industrial sectors of the working class.

Now is the time to prepare for the strike, to build class unity, and to prepare coordinated actions between teachers, transportation workers, other public work-

ers, and the community, particularly parents and students.

Don't Share the Pain – Send It Back Where It Came From!

The ruling elite of California are rich beyond our wildest dreams. The governor and the politicians are all in Sacramento to protect the plutocrats' wealth, not to serve working people. The same fat cat bankers and investors who ruined the economy now want working folk to pay the price for their recklessness and greed. We need to send them a loud and clear message that we refuse! The only way to force the corporations, the billionaires, and all their fat cat stooges to pay for education and social service is to take militant direct labor action – in other words, strikes.

As we have been advocating since the beginning of this crisis, there is a road to victory for working people, students, parents and the recipients of social services. That road is though massive coordinated state wide strike action. The only way for us to win is to defy the Taft-Hartley law that prevents sympathy strikes. We must stand together with one another to support all strikes against furloughs, layoffs, budget cuts, school closures, and other measures designed to force us to bear the brunt of the financial crisis.

On July 10, SEIU 1000 finally got serious, and announced that it is preparing to take a strike vote to oppose the third furlough day imposed by the governor. Let's force them to stick to their word, and make other public worker unions follow

suit. Only militant, unified action can lead us to victory. To prepare, we must immediately convene mass inter-union assemblies of the working class, including not only members of the trade unions but also parents, the unemployed, the poor, seniors, and other recipients of public services. When workers meet and talk, the ruling elite tremble, because their lies will not stand the scrutiny of public discovery.

Forward to mass inter-union assemblies of rank-and-file public workers!

Occupy the schools and state workplaces and keep out all scabs!

For mass strike action throughout the state to save education and social services!



Let's put Arnold on the run, like his character in "Running Man," and turn the tables! For state workers not to have to live out his dystopian fantasies, but to force the Governor and the capitalist class to play by *our* rules.

How the Unions Demoralize the Workers and Prevent Resistance from Developing

Following a series of actions for four months on furlough Fridays where members of the Inter-union Organizing Committee used their unpaid day off to stand with banners reading, "End the Furloughs" and "Strikes not furloughs" at highway overpasses and the State Building in Oakland, some of the members thought if the unions stepped forward the small actions could grow. SEIU members called upon their union to come down to the job site and build for the actions. What happened when they showed up is very revealing as to how these fake leaders hold back the workers. The SEIU showed up at the Inter-Union organizing committee meeting, with lunch and a team of professional staffers. They immediately assumed it was their meeting. They were aghast to hear that what they were supplying lunch for was an Inter-union meeting, not an SEIU meeting.

In June the SEIU 1000 members voted a strike authorization by a rate of 73%. Six months had passed. Consequently, a young woman worker asked, "What's up with our strike? It's been a long time since the vote." This legitimate question put the staffers on the defensive and they broke out their stock answer. Their stock answer is that how can you expect the workers to strike when they won't even come to a meeting or come to a picket in front of work or wear their purple shirts? This "blame the membership"

attitude from the paid staff of the union did not sit well with the militant activist workers.

The debate became heated as a militant worker seized the floor and disputed the staffers premise. It was argued that it is the sell-out class collaborationist policy of the SEIU and the other trade unions which take members money and energy and give it to Democrats, who represent the capitalists, not the workers. It was argued that because they have done this for decades, the workers have no faith in the unions' ability to fight and no faith in their ability to lead.

The staffers tried to regain their credibility by arguing that they agree with what everyone said. This resulted in another challenge. The militant unionist argued that if they truly agreed, then they would get on the horn to the Democrats and tell them there will be no more funding or staffing on future campaigns and that we would be using our funds and staff to prepare for a statewide strike immediately. Of course the staffers couldn't undo decades of class collaboration and left the meeting without convincing the workers that they are capable of providing more than lawn signs that say: "I am proud to be a state worker." They tried to use the meeting to regain authority, but were not successful, and were ultimately pressured into joining the committee on the November 20th action. The staffers showed up, but they could not turn more than two rank and file workers to

join the action.

State workers are frustrated, know they have useless unions and cannot see the road to victory. As long as these unions are allowed to trade class struggle for class collaboration, workers' frustration with organized labor will grow. Organized labor is not organized or organizing to win. As long as they tie the working class to the capitalist parties, labor will not be able to launch a winning struggle. The capitalist class has no choice but to enforce their crisis on workers across the globe.

California workers are getting the first dose of the drive to lower workers

conditions in the first world to those of workers in the semi-colonies. The great leveling is in process because capital is finding it harder and harder to make profit. The American Dream has long since turned into a nightmare. The only way workers can improve their conditions is to throw off the sell-out bureaucrats who tie labor to their bosses' political parties, and build their own revolutionary party to fight for a workers government to replace capitalist production with a socialist economy based on workers democracy, self management and the workers' own plan.

Shut Them All Down!

Open Letter to San Francisco Hotel Workers Local 2 Membership

Editor's Note: This Open Letter was prepared in November 2009, and distributed by HWRS members to hotel workers on the picket lines at the hotels in San Francisco, California that are currently in contract negotiations with Unite HERE Local 2.

The current struggle for a fair contract is at a crucial point for the members of Local 2. The Hotels may threaten layoffs due to losses caused by strike and boycott action, yet at the same time will claim those losses could have been used to pay workers bonuses and *continued* healthcare (as if they have a choice, given SF employment law). They are claiming their proposals are fair in "what

are difficult economic times." Yet their proposals call for increases in employee contributions, particularly family coverage. Their proposals also clear the way to eliminate retiree medical coverage. The rising cost of healthcare is at the forefront of political debate in the US today. The insurance industry is a rotten manifestation of the profit system. We must insist that the hotels and the insur-

ance industry must not push their increased cost onto the backs of the workers. Workers cannot expect the Obama administration via the so-called health care reform to protect their interests. **We can win only by shutting the hotels tight.**

The Hotels and the corporations that own them will continue to use the current economy as an excuse to cut away at workers' benefits unless a successful strike is waged to fight back. Hotel workers have already forgone wage increases in the recent past to keep health-care affordable. Any further give back now by the workforce will pave the way for continued decreases in benefits in the future. **It's time to fight back now.**

An indefinite strike at ALL hotels collectively bargaining, is as Local 2, is needed to leverage the full weight of the union against the corporate stranglehold placed on the hotels by the Starwood Corporation. The current method

of rolling, limited 3 days strikes at individual hotels only allows bosses to rotate managers and scabs to cover the work stoppage. This does little to hit their pockets, and therefore cannot be a winning strategy. Further, workers returning from these 3 day strikes are subject to harassment and retaliation, leading ultimately to further demoralization. **If we shut them all down, and have strong picket lines that will stop the scabs from entering the hotels, the tourist industry in San Francisco will collapse and the hotels will quickly give in to our demands.**

Be aware of what the union is doing in your name. Union reps have done little to inform you of details of the negotiations. The union bureaucracy does not practice democracy among the workers. It does not consult the membership on its actions, attitudes or decisions, yet is empowered to sign deals and contracts without workers' participation.

It's time to fight back now!
For workers' democracy in the unions!
For an elected rank-and-file Strike Committee!
For a fair contract now!
For an indefinite strike and
a well publicized boycott at all hotels!

In solidarity,
 Humanist Workers for Revolutionary Socialism

Attacks on Public Education

Turning a Profit on a Human Need

From K-12, to University, the capitalist class is sending a message that is a clarion call of class war. They are telling working class youth, their parents, their teachers and education workers, and working class communities that the hard won gain of free, public education – a victory that has long been taken for granted in the U.S. – is a gain they are looking to take back. Although our articles “The View from Ground Zero” and “Attacks on Public Education and Public Workers” discuss the attacks on Richmond public schools, and on the University of California and State University of California system, the attacks are not just occurring in the State of California, but nationwide. The capitalist class is sending the message loud and clear that minority and working class youth are only fit to fill prisons, or die in their imperialist wars, and that an education that could lead to their being ready and able not only to question, but to overturn the rotten capitalist socio-economic system, is a dangerous thing. For working class youth, who have traditionally looked to an affordable public college education as their ticket into the more privileged sectors of their class, the tuition hikes and cutbacks on classes they require for graduation and the slashing of the positions of teachers and staff, are telling them decisively that even if they do make it to (and through) college, they can most likely count on being disenfranchised out of the “middle

class” lifestyle to which they aspire. The U.S. is becoming increasingly polarized between the very rich and the very poor, and the living conditions of the working class are coming to resemble those of workers in the semi-colonies.

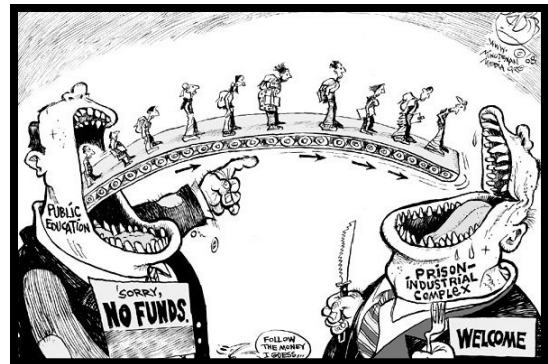
Only through militant students linking their struggles to those of education workers and of their communities can affordable, quality public education not only be defended, but an aggressive counter assault waged. The fight should raise demands such as “No Tuition, Open Enrollment” for students going to University, and “Jobs for All. 30 Hours of Work for 40 Hours of Pay”, in regards to the reinstatement of any laid off education workers. Students and workers should also fight together for a jobs training program so working class youth actually have a chance at employment at a living wage on which they can support themselves and their future families. Those demands can only be won if the working class, both in their communities and through their unions, become the backbone of the fight back. Fundamentally, what must be fought for is for the U.S. educational system to be run on the norms of workers’ democracy, with student / teacher / parent / worker control of the schools and universities. For such demands to be implemented, the passions and ambitions of the U.S. working class and oppressed

as a whole must be ignited to fight back, and to take control of a world they have so painstakingly built through their sweat, blood and labor.

The attack on Public Education is part of a broader effort by the capitalist class to privatize and squeeze as much profit out of services the state formerly supplied for free, or at little cost, and is part of a general slash and burn on the domestic front, in the overall quest of the ruling class to force the working class and oppressed to pay for the malfeasance of U.S. capitalism in creating the current global economic crisis while pumping more and more funds into their bloody, imperialist wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Just as the current health care “reform” is basically a mass herding campaign of the uninsured towards being a captive market for Big Pharma and the Health Insurance monopolies, so the attacks on Public Education are aimed at transforming another human need into an opportunity for capitalist interests to turn a profit, by setting up schools where students “learn to the test” in a Taylorized, mechanical way that does little but dampen the enthusiasm, passions and creativity of what begin as young, inquisitive minds, and where the educational system, for the sake of “efficiency”, is set up according to one size fits all norms, as encouraged by “The No Child Left Behind” Act of 2001.

Whether the current reigning regime in the White House is Tweedledee or Tweedledummer, what makes the recent attacks qualitatively different is that, instead of using piecemeal, backdoor, strictly legalistic and legislative means,

the capitalist class is out and out seeking to pull the entire rug out from beneath any kind of real educational opportunities for oppressed and working class youth, by trying to break the backs of education unions. Teachers are being turned from those who went into the profession due to genuine love and care for the intellectual development of youth into little better than overseers to youth into whom they drill information. They are compelled to treat students as if they were empty robots they can program like a computer, something which is equally demoralizing to both youth and teachers. But the attacks on working class schools such as in Richmond are just a localized version of national trends in regards to schools with large working class and minority populations. The articles in the “Attack on Public Education” section of this issue of *International Trotskyist* outline HWRS’s recent fights and strategies for linking the struggles of students and workers together, to not only defend Public Education as a right, but to make quality education from K-12, to the University level, free and universal, and to lay the foundation for socialist revolution to replace the rotting structure that is capitalism.



How to Defeat the Attacks on Public Education and Public Workers

Introductory Note: *Members of HWRS attended the September 24, 2009 walk-out at the University of California at Berkeley (UCB); the statewide “Mobilizing Conference to Save Public Education” held at UCB on October 24; and the occupation of UCB’s Wheeler Hall on November 20. At the October 24 event, we distributed a flyer ([in IT: “see page 52”; on web: insert link]) calling for militant statewide action to unite the fight to save and improve public education with the ongoing struggle to preserve other public benefits and social programs, as well as the defense of state workers against furloughs and budget cuts. This article presents our balance sheet and analysis of the September 24 and October 24 events, written in late October. A separate article on the November 20th occupation can be found [in IT: “on page 49 of this issue”; on web: insert link].*

The September 24 “Strike” at University of California Campuses

The reformists and fake-leftists who, at the moment, are in charge of the emerging student / worker movement on the California campuses, have a limited perspective of sporadic brief protests and so-called “strikes” that can only exhaust and demoralize the movement, and lead it to a dead end. Needless to say, a strategy like this poses no threat to the ruling class.

First we need to clarify the meaning of the term strike. A strike is a fundamental tool of the working class in the class war. The capitalist class does not give any concessions unless it is forced to do so by the pressure of antagonistic forces and the power of the working class. A real strike must be enforced by picket lines that are solid, uncrossable, and if necessary even violent.

The picket line is the means by which the working class defends itself. Indeed, taken to its logical conclusion, the picket line turns from a defensive tool into a succession of ever more powerful offensive tools: picket lines organized to defend strikes develop into workers’ defense guards to defend the overall needs and conquests of the working class, and lead ultimately to workers’ militias that can wage the struggle for power to overthrow capitalism.

In short, the first rule for a strike to win is: it needs powerful picket lines. The second rule is that nobody crosses the picket lines. Without these fundamental rules **a strike is not a real strike**. By this definition, the September 24 day of action was not a day of strikes. It was a day of protests, during which a relatively small percentage of students cut classes, and some workers were AWOL. The students and the workers who participated in the walkouts did not set up serious picket lines. At UC Berkeley, for example, the picket lines were set periodically in one location, and they did not seriously try to stop scabs from going in to work or class. As a result, campus business proceeded essentially as usual, and thousands of students went to classes and ignored the day of protest. During the big rally in the middle of the day, HWRS members made inquiries around the Administration Building to see if the workers were honoring the strike. We found out that the majority of the workers were working, and all the offices were open and doing business – while 5,000 were “on strike” just feet away on the steps of the building!

A day of protests like this, held a couple of times a year, and even a few brief building occupations such as those that occurred on November 20th, will do nothing to force the capitalists and their servants on the Board of Regents to halt

their relentless attacks on students and workers at the University of California. Unless far more militant actions are taken, the ruling class will go on with its plans of raising “fees” (i.e., tuition) **by 32% (!)** in January 2010, and laying off staff and faculty members in the middle of March.

The Capitalist Crisis Behind the Attacks

From the very beginning, the strategy of the reformists who have taken charge of the movement has been doomed to derail it to go nowhere. The types of protests they have initiated, in the place of real strikes, are particularly ineffective now that the capitalist system is in the deepest crisis since the 1930s. In the wake of the economic meltdown, the only way to restore the US capitalists’ profits is to engage in brutal competition against other imperialist rivals by driving down the wage base and reducing social services in the US. It has become a matter of high importance to the rich and powerful to lower the standard of living of the US working class to that of the workers in the semi-colonies, that is, the less developed countries whose economies are heavily dependent on US trade and investment. This is being done right now through attacks on workers’ wages, security and conditions, both in the US and abroad.

The task of winning quality, free public education, not to mention universal health care, jobs for all, and environmental protection and restoration, is exactly and nothing less than the task of overthrowing capitalism. Due to the international economic situation, the period of reforms is over, and the period of permanent cutbacks is on. Capitalism has no intention of offering concessions at this point; concessions will be won only when the capitalists see that without them, they are going to lose it all. When we consider this situation, we must realize that our task is nothing less than turning every battle into a direct attack on the capitalist class; that is, turning every struggle into one where the workers move toward the challenge for power.

Because of the crisis, the threat of educated proletarian youth rising up to stop the capitalists’ plans through united action with workers

makes the bosses tremble with remembrance of May 1968. For that reason, among many others, the capitalists are more motivated than ever to destroy the public education system. To that end, Obama has unleashed education secretary Arne Duncan to expand privatization and the profit system to a new frontier: the realm of public education, which has historically been the exclusive realm of government, strictly off limits to the private sector.

Any mass movement to defend students and workers against these attacks must take as its starting point these objective conditions. Because the attacks stem from the crisis of capitalism, the only way to stop them is to use the powerful fist of an *anticapitalist* movement. In order to win we must build mass picket lines, and other militant actions such as building occupations, in order to shut down all the colleges, and the universities in the state **until the demands are met**. This shutdown must be enforced by massive picket lines that prevent anyone from crossing them. If necessary, the pickets must be prepared to use force to defend their lines against scabs and police – the thugs of the state.

The reformists do not want to take this road of militant confrontation because they have no strategy for socialist revolution, and have taken upon themselves the job of perpetuating illusions in capitalism’s ability to be “tamed.” In turn, they have become the tools of the bosses’ ideology within the movement; while pretending to organize students and workers to fight back, they actually serve capitalism by channeling the anger and energy of the workers and students into toothless protests – a strategy that the capitalists gladly accept.

The Big Betrayal on October 24

On October 24, 2009, one month after the September “strike” action, a “Mobilizing Conference to Save Public Education” was held at UCB. The conference was attended by between 700 and 1000 people associated with many different public universities and colleges in California, as well as over 100 primary and secondary school teachers. Dozens of the attendees were members of various unions.

Our experience at the conference convinced us that the students who belong to the vanguard of the working class in California, consisting of working class youth and young workers, were ready and willing to organize a general strike before the imposition of the massive University of California tuition hike in January. These young students and workers, many of them African-American or Latino, wanted to take up the banner of the militant tradition of class struggle in the Bay Area.

Unfortunately, however, the reformists who comprised the unelected “leadership” of the conference **criminally** derailed the proceedings so that ultimately, the conference went nowhere. Even though the organizers claimed in the agenda that it was their intention to launch actions that could “win” the struggle, the conference closed without a winning strategy; without the adoption of any agreed-upon demands; and without any plan for action, other than to set up a day of further protest on March 4, 2010 – a date much too far in the future to have any real impact on the looming attacks we face.

The self-appointed leadership of the conference (who called themselves “facilitators”) was composed primarily of members of an organization called *La Voz de los trabajadores* (“the voice of the workers” – “La Voz” for short). *La Voz* is the US affiliate of a reformist organization centered in Latin America around the International Workers League (Fourth International), which is perhaps better known within the workers’ movement by its Spanish name, the Liga Internacional de los Trabajadores (Quarta Internacional), commonly abbreviated as LIT.

The LIT is responsible for many betrayals of the working class in Latin America (for two extensive exposés of the LIT’s role in betrayals of the class struggle in Latin America, see [ELAC Critique and Brazil Attack – insert links on web; URLs in IT]). As we explained in our flyer for the October 24 conference, the LIT “creates and perpetuates illusions in capitalism’s ability to deliver by calling for an elected Board of Regents instead of fighting for student/worker/teaching faculty control of the university system. Their faith in reform is made apparent in a banner headline in their press, *La VOZ de los Trabajadores*, asking:

‘OBAMA ARE YOU LISTENING? WE’RE FIGHTING BACK!’ As if this ‘bought and paid for’ pretty boy of Wall Street, whose job it is to impose the cuts, will turn his back on big capital and put the interests of the working class first.

The LIT’s method of derailing the conference was reinforced and supported by other left organizations such as the reformist fake Trotskyists of Socialist Action (USec), International Socialist Organization (ISO), Socialist Organizer, and the Revolutionary Workers Group. As for ourselves, the HWRS members present joined the militant youth in a battle against the reformists from the very beginning of the conference. To loud applause, our speaker called on the conference to organize an indefinite extended general strike by the students, union workers, and the oppressed, based on a transitional program – a bridge between the present consciousness of the working class and the socialist revolution. The only political speech made by the LIT was given by a cadre, whose only political declaration was to say that the purpose of the conference was to build a “big movement” against the attacks. The rest of the LIT’s interventions were about logistics, and were aimed at destroying the democratic rights of the conference attendees and derailing the conference.

This was not an accident. The reformists and the various fake socialists came prepared, and joined forces to **prevent any political discussion** at the conference. Their goal was to refuse to permit any discussion of the **demands** of the movement, and they accomplished their task. They explained this shamelessly in the written agenda distributed at the door, in these words: ***“The conference will not be voting on top demands or voting on the specific demands of the statewide action. Why? The process of collectively discussing and deciding on top demands is a very long process and there is simply not enough time at today’s conference to adequately and democratically do this.”*** Thus, the self-appointed administrators of the conference, who were not elected by the conference participants, bureaucratically decided in advance that the conference would not come out with any demands.

It should go without saying that the

agenda for the conference should have been decided upon by the students and workers in attendance. It should not have been up to the conference's self-appointed administrators – or more accurately, dictators – to decide this in advance! This is not only a complete abuse and betrayal of workers democracy, but it even falls below the corrupt standards of formal bourgeois democracy. And even more importantly, how can the mass movement take any action against the capitalists and their attacks without knowing what demands and program they are fighting for? The only answer offered by these reformists, led by the LIT, was . . . that it is a matter for a later conference!

The LIT and their handful of supporters at the podium deliberately blocked all political discussion by allowing each person who spoke from the floor only *one minute*, even though their own agenda called for a time limit of two minutes per person. Instead of a political discussion about demands and program, these rascals stated that people should put their demands in a suggestion box, to be dealt with later.

The Break-Out Sessions

During the second part of the conference, the participants broke up into smaller groups for “discussion” and the formulation of suggested resolutions by each group. HWRS participated in two workshops. One was a “workshop” for teachers in K-12 (elementary and secondary) schools. The other was for people connected with community colleges, which are two-year colleges that attract primarily working class youth. They often enroll with hopes of moving on to the state university system to earn a B.A. But when the colleges' budgets are cut and times are hard, they are more likely to find themselves on a trajectory to earn only an associate degree or a certificate in a trade skill, and to remain at high risk of unemployment. Thus, the community college break-out session attracted a largely proletarian group, with a huge and very direct stake in the fightback against higher education budget cuts.

At the K-12 break-out session, the well-known class traitor Alan Benjamin of the misnamed Socialist Organizer, sporting his AFL-CIO jacket, became the enforcer for the LIT-sponsored policy barring any political discussion

of demands or program at the conference. Benjamin opposed a proposal to call on the conference to address demands in the afternoon session, arguing that the attendees had to follow the conference as if it were written in stone – even though it had never been voted on by the conference participants.

There were two hundred plus strong working class youth at the community colleges workshop. Once again, the LIT and Revolutionary Workers Group members appointed themselves as administrators. In defiance of all their maneuvering, HWRS put forward a resolution for an indefinite general strike to be prepared and coordinated in the universities, colleges, unions, and oppressed communities. Despite the reformists' efforts to block it, the resolution passed by a clear majority. The group then also passed a student-sponsored resolution to start an indefinite general strike at the universities on March 4, 2010.

Vote First, Discuss Later?

According to the conference agenda, after the break-out sessions ended, there was supposed to be an hour and a half of “open discussion of proposals and voting.” Yet when the general assembly reconvened at the appointed time, the LIT and their backers on the podium deliberately ignored the agenda and the resolutions for a general strike that had been democratically voted on in the break-out sessions. Instead, the self-appointed bureaucrats went straight to the vote, without allowing any discussion first. When HWRS objected to the organizers' attempt to deliberately ignore the proposed resolutions for a general strike, we created an uproar in the hall. We received vocal support, particularly from students from San Francisco State University and UC Santa Cruz, who are clearly in the vanguard of the student movement. (Later, when a rash of building occupations struck UC in mid-November, the Santa Cruz students held their building long-est.)

We also raised objections to the reformist concept of having “actions” and “strikes” without a program or demands. The LIT and their supporters answered that this could be dealt with . . . at the next conference. They maneuvered wickedly, proposing to vote dozens of proposals, including

one about a general strike, as one bloc, thus totally diluting and preventing a vote on specific actions such as an extended general strike. Then they destroyed the whole purpose of the conference by proposing that each school should decide separately what actions that school would carry out. Jeff Mackler of Socialist Action played a big role in this particular diversion.

The March 4 Day of Action

To add insult to injury, the reformists passed a resolution for a “a day of actions and strikes on March 4, with another general assembly sometimes in February.” This was a massive betrayal, because on January 1, 2010, the UC system will impose a massive 32% hike in the fees charged to students, and CSU and community college students will also face fee hikes. Thus, the March 4 “action” will take place two months after the fee hikes, and many students will likely feel betrayed and demoralized.

In addition, the reason for holding an indefinite strike at the universities starting on March 4, as proposed by one of the students, was that layoffs of faculty and staff are planned for the middle of that month. Obviously, one day of protests less than two weeks before the layoffs is not a winning strategy – despite the promise by the conference organizers to forge one. Meanwhile, the teachers in Richmond are on the brink of a strike, which – if it happens – will be long since under way or perhaps even over by March 4. Thus, the selection of the March 4 date also misses an opportunity to connect the struggle of Bay Area college students with the struggles of K-12 teachers in neighboring West Contra Costa County.

LIT Violates Its Own Agenda

Ten minutes before the end of the general assembly, after most people had already left, the reformists finally permitted the “discussion” on program that was originally allocated an hour and a half on the organizers’ own preprinted agenda. In this miserable 10 minutes, each speaker was allowed only 30 seconds, and any meaningful discussion regarding the laundry list of demands was deferred to the next conference in February.

This was such a colossal betrayal of revolutionary politics and basic concepts of workers’ democracy that we can even say that it is a betrayal of ... the LIT’s own reformist politics. They no longer practice the classic reformist concept that “the movement is everything and the program is secondary.” Now the LIT’s politics appear to be that the program is nothing, the movement is secondary, and the movement’s logistics are everything!

With Friends Like These ...

In the end, the October 24 conference served to illustrate the unfortunate reality that the bourgeoisie does not necessarily need Social Democracy and Stalinism to stop the masses from mobilizing an effective resistance. All the fake Trotskyists have now lined up for the job formerly done by the Stalinists and Social Democrats, and they are doing a fine job for the capitalists.

The fake Trotskyist left, led by the LIT, destroyed the conference’s potential to spark militant joint worker and student actions across the state and nation. They defused the potential to organize and launch an indefinite general strike at the universities, which could have been coordinated with the struggles of key unions currently in the heat of battle. The Richmond teachers, the San Francisco hotel workers, the furloughed California state workers, and the Palo Alto city employees – all have voted for strike authorizations and could legally strike at any moment. They would have gained strength and resolve from an immediate and indefinite strike call coming out of the conference, leading to the formation of joint student-worker strike committees and coordinated inter-union actions. But due to the betrayal by its self-appointed leadership, the conference lost the possibility of being the spark to unite these struggles.

La Lucha Continua!

Despite this sabotage, the potential to launch a winning fight is not lost. The militance of many of those who attended the October 24 conference illustrates that a mass movement is beginning to heat up in the US, and that there is a

strong proletarian vanguard in the movement. HWRS will do everything we can to energize and support this vanguard with revolutionary theory, program, actions, and spirit. Our experience at the conference, coupled with the November building occupations and the support they inspired, tells us that many students want an indefinite general strike before the tuition hike in January. We will do what we can to assist students from San Francisco State and other colleges who are working to organize an emergency conference to build for such a general strike.

We know from history that when the working class and the oppressed in the US start fighting back, they move very fast. We also know from history that a leadership and a revolutionary program are critical in order such an upsurge to succeed. Transitional demands must be formulated to create a bridge that will carry the working class from their struggle to meet their immediate needs all the way to the understanding that workers can only win meaningful, long-term change by fighting capitalism. That is why our organization, HWRS, is committed to remaining in the midst of the fight, alongside the rising vanguard of youth, students, workers, and the oppressed.

Occupations at UC and CSU



UC Berkeley students get lesson on whose side the state is on.

On November 20th, 40 students at UC Berkeley, 150 at UC Santa Cruz and students at UC Davis, and at San Francisco state, staged building occupations, with students at UC Santa Cruz not ending their occupation until three days later. Supporters of HWRS arrived at the UC Berkeley campus, an hour after it reached our attention, and after three UC Berkeley students were arrested in the process of helping to barricade Wheeler Hall, and charged with Felony Burglary. Crowds of roughly, earlier on in the day, of 1500-2000 students and supporters had gathered on the east and west sides of the front of Wheeler, and on the back, with pickets having been thrown up during the course of the strike, precipitating a 9 hour stand-off with the UC Berkeley, City of Berkeley, Alameda County and Oakland police. As the hours wore on, more and more students showed up to be part of the lines on the barricades, swelling the numbers of students to 4-5000 thousand. During the course of the stand-off, there were several scuffles with police, with the police using batons to beat down students who tried to resist the police efforts to put up metal barricades, with one our comrades being caught up in the scuffles.

The meeting for which action of students was discussed had occurred the night before, with several different factions and groups being involved, and there having been no clear plan for action that all parties involved could agree upon. While there seemed to be five to six different student leaders who were circulating around the crowd and were keeping in touch with each other and the occupiers inside via cell phones, the

general sense of whomever the leadership was boiled down to whoever it was who had a bull horn. There was an obvious divide between the students who had pacifist, reformist consciousness and students who wished for more militant action, who were opposed to calls to sit down in the face of the police. They probably realized that if enough students had been able to break through the barricades, then the occupation by 40 students could be turned into an occupation by a few hundred, dealing the police a mightier blow and raising the level of militancy of the students' struggles.

While demands were raised by the student occupiers included "Down with the 32% Tuition Hike", and "Re-hire the 38 Janitorial workers" who had been laid-off as part of cutbacks to UC, those demands were not ultimately met. During the stand-off, the student occupiers kept in communication with the crowd concerning a lot of "negotiations about the logistics of negotiation" with the Vice Provost of UC Berkeley, the Alameda County Chief of Police and Professor George Lakoff, with them raising the demand that negotiations take place in front of the crowd of students present, whereas the Administration wanted negotiations to happen behind closed doors. The occupiers correctly perceived that acceding to the administration's demands would cut them off from their base of support amongst students, and that the school administration would not be as pressured. At one point during the mid-afternoon, Lakoff tried addressing the crowds of students on front of Wheeler

Hall, telling them that the student occupiers would only be charged with a misdemeanor felony of trespassing, and would be led out of the building by one police officer, and urged students to keep the protests “peaceful” and “their bodies still”. However, it turned out, according to what the student occupiers communicated to the crowd, that it was more of a carrot or the baton approach, where, if the students didn’t open their barricades to the police, they were told they would be charged with two counts of Felony Burglary and Destruction of Property.

However, 150-200 police were outnumbered by what became a crowd of 4-5000 students, which, if the police tried to take the student occupiers to police vans, they would be compelled to use the tear gas and rubber bullets they had brought with them, and it could have easily turned into a case of blood being spilled at UC Berkeley. This would have caused national outrage, since every major television station and a good number of news outlets were present, and such naked violence of the state against middle class students would instantaneously be broadcast across the entire country. The stand-off between the police and the students ended around 7:15 p.m., with the building having been occupied since 6:00 a.m. that morning. The police and administration were unable to carry out their harsher threats towards the occupiers, and they were charged with misdemeanor trespassing, due to the outrage that would have been sparked amongst the rest of the UC Berkeley student body if the harsher charges had been pressed.

However, due to lack of coordinated leadership, despite there being a minor victory on the issue of charges, and despite the militancy of students both at UC Berkeley and at other UC campuses and at San Francisco State, none of the demands the student occupiers raised were met, and the negotiations via mass assembly the student occupiers desired never materialized. The picket lines the students had set up as part of the strike broke up as the stand-off wore on, with the principle of picket lines mean “Do not cross!” not being enforced. While the strike had taken hold in the humanities department of UC Berkeley, with many classes having been canceled, it was unclear whether the strike was extended to the rest of the departments. While HWRS applauds the militancy and willingness to fight back of UC and CSU students, the way for the demands of students to be met is for them to coordinate with efforts to save public education from the K-12, to University level, along with the unions of faculty, staff and teachers and to coordinate for an indefinite general strike on a state-wide level. The capitalist class and their bought and paid for lapdogs, the Republicrats in Sacramento, will use the current economic crisis as an excuse to try to make both students and the Californian working class pay for the ruling class’s economic crisis that the ruling class should be paying for. When the research departments of UC Berkeley, and other UC schools, are used as cash cows to develop research that brings billions of profit to

corporations, and there being a push for less and less dollars to be spent on the needs and education of students, the 32% tuition hikes, cutbacks and lay-offs have little to do with improving the quality of education for students.

The sweet deal of state subsidization is not something that the corporations that exploit taxpayer resources in the UC system are willing to give up without a militant, resolute fight back.

FROM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TO THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL: ONLY WORKERS' ACTIONS CAN SAVE PUBLIC EDUCATION!

**For control of our public universities by faculty, staff, and
students; abolish the Board of Regents!
For parent-teacher-staff control of public schools;
down with school boards and state trustees!
Stop the Democratic Party/CTA drive to privatize
through charter schools!**

Richmond, California, located in the West Contra Costa Unified School District and sitting in the shadow of Chevron, is Ground Zero in the attack on public education. Chevron draws down \$14 billion in annual profits and enjoys tax breaks via Proposition 13 and the corporate tax deals cut in Sacramento to pass the budget this year. All the while, schools are bulldozed; teachers and staff are fired; classes are overcrowded; and public education in California has become the laughing stock of the educated world. Youth in this district are more likely to go to prison or war than to get a good education and a decent job. Even now, few can afford the University of California. Yet they plan to increase fees to over \$10,000!

The swells and overstuffed suits on the Board of Regents, the school boards, the legislative and executive bodies (from the State

Capitol to the White House), and their paymasters on Wall Street, led by JP Morgan Chase, Citibank, Goldman Sachs etc., blather endlessly about their commitment to cutting costs. Meanwhile, their wealth and profits soar, in contrast to homeless encampments which bloom outside our cities.

WHO WILL STAND UP TO THIS INJUSTICE? WHO WILL FIGHT FOR OUR KIDS' EDUCATION?

Despite the clamor of the media pundits, who last week celebrated a jump in the Dow, the current crisis shows no let up for the working class, the unemployed, or our students. CEOs and public administrators see only one way to balance their books, via wholesale attacks on the living standards of working people. One in seven people internationally live in poverty. 40 million in the US join the 2 billion world-

wide surviving in poverty, alongside a billion who live on less than \$1.00 a day. We are now told to expect a jobless “recovery” while the economy shreds a quarter million jobs monthly, and the stock market skyrockets as profits return to the financial capitalists. ***The bailout is working – but only for Wall Street – and at our expense!***

Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan Chase, and their ilk have hoarded billions to pay obscene bonuses to their best thieves this Christmas. The treacherous leaders in the union bureaucracies, the union supported politicians, and the reformists posing as socialists only give cover to these accepting furloughs, lower wages, cuts in pensions, and increased health care costs, and to stand by as immigrants are scapegoated and deported. While Wall Street and the military receive billions of dollars from Washington, we are told: “Don’t fight back; you can’t win, because there is no money for education and social services.”

Most of all, we are told: “This is simply a crisis of the financial sector, caused by foolish people who let themselves get talked into mortgages they couldn’t afford.” They don’t want us to see the big picture. The truth is that the entire edifice of the capitalist economic system is rotten to the core. The present economic crisis is not a matter of bad mortgages transformed by Wall Street machinations into “toxic assets.” Rather, it is a **classic crisis of overproduction**, caused by inter-imperialist rivalry lowering workers’ standard of living in order to boost profits, until the workers can no longer afford to buy the goods they produce. This inherent structural weakness in capitalism means that **for the bosses and their profits to survive, Wall Street needs you to take the hit – you, your kids, your grandkids, and your descendants ad infinitum!**

Instead of explaining this truth, the fake socialists join the chorus of liberals and progressives who create the illusion that simply putting pressure on Obama will stop the cuts and save our education. One fake socialist group, the LIT-FI, creates and perpetuates illusions in capitalism’s ability to deliver by calling for an elected Board of Regents instead of fighting for stu-

dent/worker/teaching faculty control of the university system. Their faith in reform is made apparent in a banner headline in their press, *La VOZ de los Trabajadores*, asking: “OBAMA ARE YOU LISTENING? WE’RE FIGHTING BACK!” As if, this “bought and paid for,” pretty boy of Wall Street, whose job it is to impose the cuts, will turn his back on big capital and put the interests of the working class first.

What fake socialists, liberals, and progressives won’t say is that for us to win quality education, affordable health care, jobs for all, a clean environment, and an end to war, **capitalism must die**. We must replace this entire system – the economic foundation, the political structures, and the armed power of the state – with workers’ democratic self-management, all the way from the points of production and distribution to the highest levels of decision making and enforcement. **What we need is a Workers’ Government run by workers’ power.**

Rallies, teach-ins, forums, and one-day work stoppages alone will not end the attack on education. To win, we need **prolonged general strike action** across the state against the rule of the capitalists, in all the workplaces in both the public and private sectors, in the schools the universities and in the streets. We must fight for transitional demands that can break the grip of the capitalist media and world view on the masses of workers. Our program must include:

1) **No layoffs, furloughs, or speed-ups; no fee increases or cuts in programs or classes in the schools or in higher education; no cuts in social services and benefits for the poor, seniors, children, or the disabled.**

2) **Abolish the Regents! No to fake democratization of the Regents through general election! Down with the drive to privatize public education!** Only a university system democratically administered by teaching faculty, staff, students, and the working class community can provide education that serves the interest of the working class, not the corporate elite. **FOR STUDENT, FACULTY, STAFF, AND WORK-**

ERS' COMMUNITY CONTROL of the UC, Cal State, and Community College systems and all public schools! Down with the political appointees, elected officials, and state-imposed trustees who strangle our colleges and school districts!

3) FOR OPEN ADMISSIONS! FOR AN END TO FEES (NO TUITION)! STIPENDS BASED ON NEED! From pre-school to graduate school, provide free, high quality education and enough classes for everyone. The existing system is not designed to educate the working class. From grade school through university, it tracks students by socioeconomic class, separating the privileged from those destined for low paying dead end jobs, the military, or prison. In a socialist economy the highest education achievable by an individual would be valued and promoted. But in this era of capitalist decay, higher education and socioeconomic advancement are no longer valued by the denizens of Wall Street and their corporate skills on the UC Board of Regents. **DOWN WITH ARNE DUNCAN'S CHARTER SCHOOL DRIVE!**

4) JOBS FOR ALL! From an individual's entry into the working world until retirement, everyone must be guaranteed the opportunity to perform meaningful creative work that serves humanity and pays enough to support a family. **To end unemployment and the squeeze on workers' wages, we demand a sliding scale of wages and working hours: 30 hours' work for 40 hours' pay! Share available work! Reclaim advances in productivity from the expropriators!**

5) When banks and corporations plead poverty in the face of workers' reasonable demands for jobs, fair pay, and full benefits, we must fight for the nationalization of failing enterprises under democratic workers' control, without compensation to the stockholders!

6) ABOLISH CALIFORNIA'S INDUSTRIAL PRISON SYSTEM! The decline in spending on education since the passage of Proposition 13 is closely correlated with the rise of the prison population in California. Each prisoner is a con-

sequence of this system's failures in education and employment! The **system** is the crime; the prisoners are only the symptom. Abolish the capitalist system and the symptom will disappear. Prisoners cost \$47,000 a year and incarcerated youth cost a quarter million dollars a year – while our public schools operate on \$7,000 per student!

7) FOR UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE from cradle to grave. The only thing preventing universal, free, high quality health care is the profit system, which extracts profit from every illness or death. **For our families to have health care, the profit system must be driven out of medicine!**

8) Stop the two-tier system of contracting out permanent positions. Offer contract workers permanent union university employment, offer integration into CALPERS with credits for time served. **Organize the unorganized!**

9) Drive Military & CIA/NSA recruiters out of the universities! Down with all intellectual work that serves the exploitative and military ends of the imperialists. **Down with Lawrence Livermore**, home of US nuclear weapon research! Rather, we need a university that teaches the critique of political economy and the theoretical contributions of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky—not the deceptive system of exploitation and wars! **Education withers during imperialist war drives! Defeat US, NATO and Allies in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan!**

10) For a fighting Workers' Party. To achieve the above demands, workers and students must break with the Democratic and all capitalist parties (Greens, Republicans, American Independent, and Libertarian) and build a Workers' Party based in the trade unions, alongside unorganized workers, the unemployed, and their allies in the communities of color and the LGBT community. **Only a Fighting Workers' Party committed to defeating capitalism by revolutionary means and founding a workers' government can establish a rational socialist plan to win these demands.**

Labor and the Attack on Public Education: The View from Ground Zero



Public Education: Preparing Oppressed and Working Class Youth to Be Cannon Fodder Either for the Prison Industry or for Imperialist Wars.

Richmond California is Ground Zero for both the attack on public education and the fight to save our schools. This community, part of the West Contra Costa Unified School District, is well known for its high unemployment rate, high murder rates, and for sitting in the shadow of the massive oil refinery owned by Chevron (which benefits disproportionately from the Proposition 13 tax break which tied their rates to the property value from 1978 plus 2% per annum). A long history of negligence, corruption and mismanagement in the district's past has burdened the schools with

a massive debt to which a state trustee has been assigned. This is to assure it is paid before money is directed toward educational necessities. The trustee holds the threat of state take-over over the heads of an obsequious school board unable to shake the debt and provide for quality education.

Then the 2008-2009 statewide budget cuts set in!

In November 2008, just after the districts residents passed a school bond to keep schools open, the school board announced that ten schools would need to be closed. The school board meetings from November through February drew hundreds of angry parents, teachers and students. Of course, Richmond was not alone. Similar scenarios were played out in districts across the state and nation.

When the students at Richmond's Kennedy High School found out their school could potentially be closed, they walked out in protest on December 18th. At the school boards' "democratic" closure meetings (which were designed to gain buy-in and get communities to vote to close their neighbors' schools instead of their own), the authority of the school board was challenged, as the majority

vote was for no closures. Hundreds spoke out, protested and marched against the closures, and over a thousand showed up to demand no closure as the school board decided which schools it would close. The pressure from the public forced two cities to cough up 1.5 million dollars each to keep their city schools safe for two years. The “progressives” in their city councils had to do something to save face in front of the masses of parents and potential voters. From ten originally slated for closure three schools were shut down and one has been bulldozed this summer. But those schools temporarily saved will again face the chopping block unless funding is found annually.

School closures were just the start. Then came the layoffs, the forced give-backs and negotiated concessions from the unions. Students found overcrowded classes when they returned to school this September. Teachers had long ago accepted lower wages in exchange for medical benefits for their spouses into retirement. So in a cost saving maneuver the School Board has refused to negotiate seriously with the union for over a year, ultimately imposing an end to the spousal benefits on Dec 31, 2009. This forces older teachers who qualify to consider leaving the district sooner than they may have intended, leaving students with inconsistent teaching this year and opening the road to hire young first tier teachers at lower costs and with lower expectations. In this district where one third of those who enter school in kindergarten do not graduate and where a child has more of a chance of ending up in prison than going to university and landing a decent job, the conditions are slated to get

worse. Capitalism no longer has use for educated working class youth and has in turn abandoned them to the economic crisis. Even before the crash of 2008 this district was in dire straits. Now it is little more than a holding pen on the way to the penitentiary.

The Role of the United Teachers of Richmond’s (UTR) Class Collaborationist Leadership

When the cuts and school closures were first announced, the UTR president made demagogic speeches in defense of public education. But UTR never committed their resources to make the struggle to save schools a social and political fight to unite labor, parents and students against the closures. While our comrades advocated united statewide strike action to force full funding of the schools, the UTR president withheld the unions resources from the struggle. She told our comrade that they were saving their resources for labor actions later in the summer. The school closures were followed by layoffs and the UTR leadership didn’t lift a finger. Aside from a few threats of law suits and a few angry speeches, nothing was done to mobilize the membership.

After a year and a half of fruitless negotiations, a strike authorization vote was taken in August 2009 just a week prior to school opening. The strike authorization passed by 93%. But the UTR president never planned on using this vote for anything more than leverage (see our article on the insidious nature of strike authorization votes). In the meeting prior to the vote teachers from the Progressive Teachers caucus and other rank and file

leaders tried to propose a “strike-now” vote as opposed to a strike authorization vote, but they were shut down. Their motion for a strike-now vote was not allowed on the floor of at the meeting.

Following the strike authorization vote the school year started without a strike. The teachers missed the opportunity to strike from a position of strength. If the teachers had struck the first week of school when the classrooms were not set up, scabs would have been incapable of navigating the chaos of the first weeks of school. But, the UTR leadership let this tactical opportunity slip through its fingers. The leadership had no confidence in the ability of the union to win a strike, a message transmitted to the school board via non action and to the teachers directly in meetings. The school board took advantage of this hesitation on the part of the union and started training scabs at various sites around the county. It looked like the school board may had been preparing for a lock-out. Teachers and supporters turned up at the scab training to intimidate and drive out the scabs. (insert link for video clip). In a UTR leadership meeting, (held the same day as the first scab training) CTA hacks were brought in to promote a plan making the WCCUSD a charter district as the only alternative to accepting concessions; a strike was ruled out by there hacks as un-winnable.

The CTA, in league with Obama’s Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, is pushing a plan to destroy public education in districts around the nation which are failing. First they under fund the districts, then they push charter schools as the answer. During this campaign the UTR president and School board presi-

dent joined on stage at the Democratic Party of El Cerrito to promote their joint view of education’s future. But outside the meeting progressive teachers and their supporters held banners calling for “Strikes not furloughs!” This call for charter schools by UTR President Pixie Shickele Hayward turned many of the teachers against the direction the leadership was taking the union. It was becoming clear that this leadership did not have any strategy or tactics to win this struggle. All they were capable of was serving up concessions. When the proposal for a charter district was shot down by teachers and parents, Pixie came back around to furloughs and other cuts and brought a tentative agreement with give back of preparation time for Kindergarten teachers, acceptance of over crowded classes, furloughs in upcoming years, no wage increases for the duration of the contract and a cut in medical benefits for spouses and increased employee contributions for dependents.

Absent from the perspective of business unionism is the view that our unions fight not just for its members, but for the entire class. The UTR and the CTA have totally embraced the dislocation from the working class as a whole with their business unionism. But they have gone one step further; they demagogically speak to the higher good of public education but do nothing to unite the working class to defend it. Worse than that, they don’t even fight for their own membership. They would rather play footsie with the school district superintendent (the boss) at a Democratic Party forum pontificating on perspectives for quality education than devote resources to organizing the community to win quality education.

The bottom line is that the current crop of trade union bureaucrats are a transmission belt for the bosses' beliefs into the working class. The bosses say there is no money; the union shrugs it shoulders and says there is no money. The bosses say the community will not support a strike; the union echoes the right wing media and tells the membership they can not win a strike. The bosses say you can not win a strike; the union tells its members they can not win. These are the bosses lies and our unions push them on us because they are hooked into the bosses political party and they will do nothing that shakes up the ship of state that binds labor to capital, unless they are forced to act by the democratic and militant rumblings of an activated rank and file.

Which is what is now happening in the UTR. Following the strike authorization vote, the leadership brought back a tentative agreement as described above and tried to sell it to the membership. In a democratic union a general membership meeting would be called which would entertain all input from the floor, discuss and vote the TA up or down. Instead the UTR called a series of informational meetings which did not entertain debate or motions from the floor. The vote was held following three meetings. A few days later the outcome was announced that the TA had been approved by nine votes. The Progressive Teachers and the rank and file militants were not convinced and claimed there were voting and counting irregularities and demanded a recount.

In the meantime the Progressive Teachers were circulating a petition for a general membership meeting, on which

they collected double the qualifying 20% of membership signatures and submitted them, demanding a meeting.

The issue of the general membership meeting and the recount converged and angry teachers went to UTR headquarters to get answers about the petitions they had turned in and the progress of the recount. In turn the president of the UTR called the police on the teachers in their own hall! It is no surprise that a union leader willing to sell the district off as a Charter District, willing to bring back cuts in medical benefits and accept furloughs, who speaks from the same platform as the School District Superintendent (who is actively recruiting scabs), would call the cops on her own members. But this breach of workers morality and of the principle that "labor cleans its own house" cannot be allowed to stand. Pixie must be expelled from the union.

Following the confrontation at the union hall the petition for a general membership meeting was found and recounted, and the ballots for the TA were recounted. In both cases the Progressive Teachers and the rank and file militants prevailed. There were enough signatures on the petition to call a general membership meeting and the recount showed the TA had been rejected by a margin of 30 votes (approximately 670 yes to 710 no).

What was particularly unique, and revealing about the mood of the teachers, about the rejection of the TA was not that the majority voted no, or that the president resisted the recount and tried to steal the election, but that Pixie (the President) had also worded the ballot to scare teachers into voting for the TA. It

was worded thusly: "Yes, I accept the TA vs. No, I want to strike." Obviously Pixie had no intention of striking. She had not done any strike preparation and had not raised a finger to mobilize labor or community support for a strike. Rather, she worded the ballot to frighten teachers, pure and simple, and it backfired on her, reflecting the frustration and anger of the teachers.

On November 30th the teachers will had their General Meeting. HWRS and others brought a leaflets advocating that Pixie be removed and that a strike committee be chosen. The Progressive teachers initiated a petition to remove her, but other militants suggested a majority vote to amend the bylaws to allow for immediate recall followed by a recall vote. What has become clear is that the will of the teachers to fight and win a strike can not be abided by a leader who opposes strike action and who will call cops on their own members. Members of the Progressive Teachers told the assembled workers that they needed to plan a demonstration in the next couple of days and build for the strike committee and a member strike.

The following motions passed at the meeting, but the president said that she would have to "check" with CTA legal to make sure that they don't violate the authority of the bargaining team or the executive board.

1. Move that this body elect a UTR Strike Committee immediately. That UTR provide members of this committee with the resources to plan direct actions immediately.

Direct actions Include:

Send teachers door to door to our school community and inform them about our original demands. Work with parents and community groups to gain support for a strike.

Form solid picket lines at schools and in the community

Plan joint actions with our supporters and allies in labor, with Oakland and neighboring locals....

2. Move for resumption of bargaining, which passed with about a 2/3 majority:

"The president of UTR shall instruct the bargaining committee to make itself available for bargaining starting on December 1, 2009 and calls upon the district bargaining team to return to the bargaining table no later than December 2, 2009."

3. The last speaker, in the last minute of the meeting (5:59 p.m.) made the following motion on bargaining demands, which again passed overwhelmingly:

The president of UTR shall give the following instructions to the bargaining team:

- The bargaining team shall not accept any "average" class sizes. Every class must have a hard cap not to exceed 24 for K-3, 34 for Grades 4-6; 35 for Secondary academic, an average of 40 for Secondary PE, 25 for Alternative Education.
- If lifetime health care is reduced or eliminated, employees who, under the old contract, would have become eligible for lifetime benefits during the proposed contract period must remain eligible for the term of the proposed contract.

The bargaining team must consider the special lifetime health care needs of those members continuously employed since 1986, who may not be eligible for Medicare.

- If concessions are made, the membership will only accept temporary concessions, such as furlough days, rather than permanent concessions, such as an increase in employee health care contributions
- The bargaining team shall not accept any dollar caps on the district's contributions to employee health care; and if concessions must be made, the employee contribution must not exceed 10% of health care costs for family members; with employees and retirees covered 100% by the district.

As this article is being written, the UTR is in a crisis. The membership by a slim majority supports a strike and the President opposes it. In a strike situation the membership and leadership can only win if they are united for victory, and strike now. But a successful strike action depends first and foremost on the removal of Pixie from office.

The UTR needs fighting leadership with a winning strategy and tactics to include making the local economic struggle into a statewide and nationwide fight for public education. The attack comes from big capital via their puppets in the White House down through the State House and to the school board; so the fight back must identify the source of the attack. If big capital had use for educated workers, you can bet they would be pouring bil-

ions into education to create the next generation of happy worker bees. But now in this period of deindustrialization, outsourcing and increased inter-imperialist rivalry, workers are not needed here because factories can be established in places like Honduras, Indonesia and China where the local thugs can execute union leaders without a fuss thereby punishing and keeping down a super-exploited labor force. This is a process whereby the conditions of the working class in the First World are being driven down to those in the Semi-colonies.

To confront this onslaught from big capital, labor must self identify with its own power, establish working class political independence, and build class solidarity and united actions.

The teachers in the UTR can take back their union, establish democracy, and prepare for a winning strike. To do this Pixie must be expelled, a rank and file strike committee must be democratically chosen and a strategy of class solidarity must be established to prepare for the strike. The union resources must be turned to reach out to the working class community in the district, in particular to the Black and Latino/a parents to win them to; support solid picket lines, set up STRIKE SCHOOLS, and STRIKE KITCHENS, organized through massive STRIKE ASSEMBLIES including teachers, parents, students and workers. These assemblies must take up the task of reaching out across districts, statewide and nationwide.

AS GOES RICHMOND, SO GOES THE NATION!

International News



Workers of the World Unite! You Have Nothing to Lose But Your Chains!

James P. Cannon, founding American Communist, was fond of saying the art of revolutionary politics consists in knowing what to do next. Since the onset of this crisis of capitalism we have been shown all the bright ideas of the Democrat and reformist labor tops and the "fight back" programs of the fake left and fake Trotskyists. They have canalized and dammed up the anger of the working class to safeguard the prerogatives and power of a bourgeoisie that is confiscating surplus value from the future.

The Obama crowd is telling youth to forgo any dreams of prosperity. The crisis deepens. Even as spin-managed 'news' shovels up 'recovery' without any full-time jobs, the Copenhagen Conference on Climate Change was a predictable farce, though we find no humor in it. Iraq is starting to go badly again for U.S. imperialism as Afghanistan and Pakistan threaten

to disintegrate on Obama's watch and all of liberalism and reformism are in a tizzy. How to answer the growing Chinese re-division of world markets without entering the road to inter-imperialist war? The bourgeois politicians and their well-wishers haven't one clue. They are helpless. Yet they rule.

As you will see in the following pages, the proletarian revolution has plenty of ideas for escaping this crisis and capitalism's cyclical crises. We have proposals for militant direct action. We have them because we have a method, the dialectical materialist method of Leon Trotsky's "Transitional Program." Working with this method and the living feedback from class struggles our members are immersed in, here and abroad, we generate political thought aimed at the heart of capitalism and alienation.

In the following articles we hope to popularize our view of the next tasks for our class and allies.

Zanon: The Two-Step the Argentinian Bourgeoisie Is Trying to Dance With the Workers



Workers Voting at a Factory Floor Meeting at FASINPAT (Formerly Zanon)

HWRS thanks the FLTI, publisher of Organizador Obrero Internacional, and the CWG, publisher of the Redrave blog (<http://redrave.blogspot.com/>), for permission to use, as the basis for the Introduction portion of this article, Redrave's summary of an article on the "Law of Expropriation of Zanon" that was published in a Special Supplement of Organizador Obrero Internacional (OOI) on September 15, 2009 (<http://www.democraciaobrera.org/OOI%20NE/OOI%20001%20parte%202/OOI%20Zanon-oct2009.pdf>).

Introduction

In 2001, the owner of the Zanon ceramics factory in southern Argentina closed the plant, locked out the entire workforce without paying back wages, and filed for bankruptcy. The factory workers responded by taking possession of the plant, and eventually reopening it under workers' control in March 2002 – a practice that is almost unheard of in the

US, but that has been implemented over 200 times in Argentina. Since 2002, the workers have been operating the former Zanon factory as a successful cooperative enterprise under the name FaSinPat, short for “Fábrica Sin Patrones,” which means “Factory Without Bosses” in Spanish. The legality of their operation remained in doubt, however, and the workers faced threats of eviction and other legal action by the former owner, as well as violent attacks that led to the death of at least one worker.

In August 2009, the provincial legislature of Neuquén in southern Argentina adopted a law of “expropriation” that allows the workers at the former Zanon ceramics plant the right to retain control of the factory. The passage of this law legalizing the workers’ ownership of the plant has been celebrated as a victory by many so-called “progressives” and reformists. (See, for example, <http://upsidedownworld.org/main/content/view/2052/1/> ; <http://www.latinlasnet.org/node/305> ; <http://www.onesolutionrevolution.org/?p=385&language=en> ; and <http://www.marxist.com/argentina-workers-owners-ceramica-zanon.htm> .)

What the cheerleaders are downplaying, however, is the price that the workers are being forced to pay for their ownership. Instead of declaring the former owner’s debt cancelled, the law obligates the provincial government of Neuquén to pay up to 23 million Argentinean pesos (roughly 6 million US dollars) to the creditors that held claims against Zanon when it went bankrupt. The same law obligates FaSinPat to reimburse the government for this entire amount by selling the factory’s products to the government “at

cost,” for public purposes. What this means is that ultimately, the debt incurred by the capitalist former factory owner will have to be paid from the earnings of the factory after wages and depreciation.

In other words, what the reformist “left” calls an “expropriation” or “victory” for the workers is nothing of the kind. It is the worst form of bourgeois nationalization. It is a bosses’ “provincialisation” that allows the state to retain final control and takes the workers’ surplus value for the pockets of the Neuquén state – which is itself nothing more than the committee of the Neuquén provincial bourgeoisie!

When the law was passed in August 2009, the workers who had been in a long fight to defend their occupation since 2001 understandably felt a great sense of relief. They had resisted years of armed attacks of the bosses and the government, and sellouts by the union leaderships. This proved that only the struggle of the workers was capable of defending their recovered factory. It was the workers of Zanon, with the support of their community and the unemployed “piqueteros,” who won this factory, not any law or ruling class court decision. These and other factory occupations and takeovers in Argentina were the result of the untold suffering and heroic deeds of the revolutionary working class since 2001.

As our colleagues in the LOI(CI) have explained in their newspaper *Democracia Obrera*, after the mass revolutionary offensive that brought down the regime in 2001, over 200 companies in Argentina were forced into bankruptcy. Many of them were recovered and put into pro-

duction by the heroic struggle of the workers to keep their jobs, in the face of an unemployment rate of 26% or more in Argentina at that time. This offensive left the bourgeoisie in control of the productive forces and the nation's key businesses, such as banks, transnational corporations, and privatized services. As a lesser evil, however, the bosses tolerated worker takeovers of bankrupt companies that had been abandoned by their owners, the workers' former employers.

After the bourgeoisie had regained their control of the state, they attempted to regain their control of their property and rebuild all the institutions of domination. So while some bankrupt companies were repossessed, others continued to operate under some form of workers' cooperative. They remained under the legal control of the legislatures and judges, however, often exploiting themselves by paying poverty wages, doing piecework, or working with obsolete equipment, and in many cases suffered miserable living conditions. Thus, although the workers of Zanon, Brukman, Chilavert, and the like had fought to recover their jobs with great heroism and sacrifice, they remained without any real workers' control, and subject to the bosses' laws.

Meanwhile, in Argentina, a cycle of growth began in 2003 that saw the rate of profit rise, at the expense of much greater exploitation of the working class. Super-exploiting the working class and plundering the nation allowed the bourgeoisie and transnationals in Argentina to accumulate a huge mass of surplus value over the years, forcing 50% of workers onto the labor black market, working long shifts, while the regime paid off loans to the IMF and bonds to foreign creditors.

This brought about enormous inflation, which led in turn to a fall in real wages. In these circumstances, the recovered factories have remained isolated. The workers cannot earn more than \$400 to \$1,000 per month in wages. They have no retirement pension.

The truth is that Zanon, like the rest, is only a partial victory. If the workers who control an occupied factory are required by the state to pay compensation to the bosses as the price of recognition of their ownership, then these workers are bound to remain as super-exploited as the rest of the working class. The only ones who have "expropriated" anything are the capitalists, bankers and big corporations, who continue to expropriate the surplus value of the workers. This is the truth we must tell the working class, not because we have not fought, and have taken back our jobs, but because our struggles have been betrayed, and our forces divided, under the supervision of the Ministry of Labor, the courts, and the bourgeois parliament.

[Editor's Note: The remaining portion of this article is reprinted without substantive change from Redrave's adaptation of the original article published in Spanish in OOI.]

All class-conscious workers now know this to be the truth. The crisis has begun, big layoffs, suspensions, salary cuts and other attacks on the entire working class come every day. Very soon we will be taking and making new Zanons to preserve jobs, as the workers did recently in France, the USA and Greece. We will occupy the factories and take the bosses hostage to keep our jobs.

This crisis demonstrates that despite all the miserable wages, accidents, unemployment and slave conditions forced upon the workers to boost their profits, the bosses' system cannot prevent profits from falling. All hope that this cycle of expansion could allow the workers to pressure the bourgeoisie to make concessions is shown to be false. The promises of the Bolivarians and the Castroists to negotiate new deals with 'democratic' imperialists to reduce the debt and increase living standards have exploded. Along came the world crisis, inflation, unemployment, wage cuts and new mass layoffs. The imperialists and the national bourgeoisies are now forced to take back all hard won concessions to survive. So for the workers to survive the capitalist system must die.

It follows that the workers of Zanon cannot escape this law of the capitalist system. Either capitalism will take back all the partial gains of the occupations, including making the workers suffer to keep their jobs, or the partial gain of the occupation has to be defended by a revolutionary struggle that takes the working class to power. If the working class does not take power, it stands to lose everything.

“A Law of the Legislature In the Service of Employers or an Historic Triumph of the Workers?”

So comrades, how is it possible for the entire Argentina reformist left that the new law on the expropriation of Zanon is a great historic achievement for the working class? This cannot be true. What property is expropriated here?

. We argue that the law of this bosses' provincial government and the bosses' political parties of Neuquén (MPN, the PJ and UCR) serve the interest of the transnational oil companies and the provincial bourgeoisie in Neuquén. The purpose of the law is to enable the Zanon bosses to pocket the money owed to them by the bankrupt factory (\$23,406,566 million pesos). This will be paid by the workers out of their labor as 'compensation' for their 'cooperative ownership.'

You cannot play hide and seek with the interests of the working class. We must tell the truth. The first truth is that we are facing a reactionary law to serve the bosses, not the workers. True the law does not openly rob the workers because they operate the cooperative, and that is a victory that the employers do not have the strength to take back right now. But the law creates the conditions that will bring the cooperative to ruin. As a legal "cooperative" like any capitalist enterprise without capital, it will have to get loans from capitalist banks or form joint ventures. Then it has to compete in the market and risks failure and bankruptcy like any other cooperative in capitalist society.

So the truth is, as we say above, that this law creates conditions where the workers of Zanon have to exploit themselves to pay compensation to the capitalist creditors. At the same time the workers have to drop all claims against the employer of more than 20 million pesos in compensation for layoffs, pensions and wage arrears owed to the 380 workers when the factory was abandoned. That is, the bosses' law only recognises the debts of the capitalist creditors of the

factory, and not the debt that the capitalist factory owner owes the workers.

This means the workers have to pay their former bosses' creditors and drop all claims against the boss in order to get legal title to the factory. Of course they had to do this because the employers and the government put a gun to their heads and said, pay up if you want to keep your cooperative. We can see that this 'law' is really the law of the bosses' gun, because otherwise why would the workers agree to pay again the debts of the former boss when they had already provided from their labor, his profits and his assets? It is their class's law that uses a gun against us.

This act of expropriation i.e. the "provincialization" of the Zanon plant required by the law means that the workers have to pay compensation, that is buy the plant from the creditors. How will they pay? From the surplus labor beyond their necessary labor, and income set aside for the depreciation of machinery [the cost of replacing worn-out machinery]. But they are not allowed to charge for the depreciation of their bodies to pay every cent of the 23 million that the state recovers from their surplus-labor.

Is this a victory? Up to now the conquest of the occupation was maintained by the workers struggle. The bosses were not able to force the workers out at the point of a gun. But now the occupation is legalised under a law which requires the workers to buy Zanon for 23 million pesos. This is not a nationalization, or provincialisation, and certainly not an expropriation. It is not a victory for the workers because the workers have agreed to pay with their surplus labor for

private property and were not able to guarantee their occupation by force of a workers expropriation.

For Trotskyists expropriation means:

"...the expropriation of companies monopolizing the war industry, railways, the main sources of raw materials, etc.

The difference between these claims and the stupid reformist slogan of nationalization is the following:

- 1.- We oppose compensation.
- 2.- We warn the masses against the demagogues of the Popular Front, who hypocritically advocate nationalization, but remain in reality agents of capital.
- 3.- We call upon the masses to rely only on their own revolutionary strength.
- 4.- We link the question of expropriation with the seizure of power by the workers and peasants."

(Transition Program of the Fourth International, 1938).

The conquest of Zanon was won by the workers' struggle and now they will lose their money and their labor, and worse, their class consciousness if they believe that the parliament of the ruling class can pass a law that is favorable to the workers. Today the reformist left passes off this defeat as a victory for socialist reforms. This means that workers will be looking at Zanon as a model for workers expropriations, and when they fail, the reformists will blame the bosses, the lawyers, the workers, everybody but themselves – betrayers of the revolution.

The Zanon workers have every right to sign this deal, as they are isolated and do not have the power to say no, yet. But you cannot call it a victory. Instead of passing off this deal as a victory we need

to prepare for the harmful consequences that this bill will have on the workers of Zanon, of Neuquén, Argentina, and further afield. What the workers of Zanon need, is the unity of the working class nationally and internationally to change the balance of power that forced them to accept this law that only benefits employers.

We must speak out; we must tell the truth to the working class. How did the bosses get you to accept this law? Learn the lesson of the bosses' using their agents the union bureaucracy to betray our struggles. The workers of Zanon were left isolated for 8 years while the bureaucrats looked for a way to settle the occupation. What other reason is there to explain why after an uprising that overthrew 5 presidents we end up with the bare minimum, a law which says we can work provided we buy the bankrupt property from the creditors?

Let's see, in the U.S. the super banks that exploit and plunder the world go bankrupt, along with General Motors and Chrysler. The ultra-liberals who spoke of the free market now demand that the state pays their debts and saves their profits. The bank bailouts will be paid by the workers out of their future wages. The bosses of GM demand as part of the bailout that the workers "share the pain" with loss of benefits, redundancies, transfer of pensions, loss of holidays etc.

Can you tell us what is different between Obama's law to rescue General Motors and Citibank for the bosses, and the MPN Neuquén law to rescue Zanon for the workers? Apart from the scale, they are the same. But this means that we have to call the expropriations of

Chavez such as the steel plant of SIDOR in Venezuela a victory. In that case the Rocca family was paid compensation out of the cash reserves of the state owned PDVSA. In Argentina we would have to speak of the victory of the nationalization of British owned railways by the Roca-Runciman Perón government, for which they paid a huge amount of compensation.

What they all have in common is a bourgeois nationalisation to save the bankrupt capitalists and make the workers pay their debts out of their wages, by giving up compensation, decent wages, jobs, holidays, pensions etc. Victory? Balls! The only way the workers can win a victory is to make the bankrupt bosses pay, and to struggle to expropriate the bosses' property by their own hands. Such a victory cannot be delivered by the parliament of the bosses!

To defend a reactionary law of capitalist parasites as a workers' victory is to throw out Karl Marx's Capital. How far is the PTS prepared to go in its break with Marxism?

A PTS lawyer, Pedrano, a member of the SOECN-PTS, wrote in an article on the 20 August with the title "Zanon has been expropriated from the capitalists," that "The Zanon expropriation law has finally been passed. It's a step forward for workers' management, because the Law No. 2656 of the Legislature provides that the land Neuquén, (...), and plant will be transferred without charge to workers" . . . It is important to note also that the workers of Zanon ceramics do not have to pay anything as the state will sell the factory production for construction sites (homes, schools, etc.) at cost,

which includes salary and depreciation of machinery.”

First, this is not an expropriation as Marxists understand the term. The PTS lawyer should know that compensation of 23 million pesos to the creditors is not expropriation. Both the former owner Zanon and his creditors get 100% compensation. No other creditors in Argentina get 100% compensation. An expropriation happened in 2001 when the workers took over the plant. That was a victory. Now they are paying 23 [million pesos] to transfer the property rights to the collective. That is not expropriation.

Revision 1: Hiding Exploitation

Second, when a ‘marxist’ lawyer says that the workers do not ‘pay’ he is lying. This ‘marxism’ says that workers do not pay because they still get a wage and can replace and maintain their machinery. That is they are guaranteed to reproduce their labor and fixed capital. But what is being hidden by this phony ‘marxist’ is the exploitation of their wage-labor. The basis of capitalist exploitation as explained by Karl Marx is being conveniently covered up to make this law a ‘victory.’ The Zanon workers work necessary labor time to make their wages and to keep their machines running, but they do not get any benefit from the surplus labor time they work and the surplus-value that they produce. Such a victory would mean that socialism can be legislated for by the employers.

Pedrano hides the fact that the state is extracting the surplus value from the workers to pay the debt to the creditors. The state is taking the Zanon ceramics at cost and using it in its infrastructure,

building of schools, clinics etc. This means that the Zanon workers are subsidising the social wage for the Neuquén bosses who do not have to pay higher wages or higher taxes, since the Neuquén state is nothing but the organizing committee for the provincial bosses.

Well, we challenge Mr. Pedrero to find a capitalist factory that sells its products at cost. No capitalist parliament in the world would pass a law that makes the capitalists sell at cost. It is the opposite, they will legislate to make sure that the workers pay for the employers’ losses i.e. rescue the bosses from bankruptcy.

Revision 2: Hiding the Ruling Class State

We have shown then that the law of expropriation of the legislature has been a blatant Neuquén business bailout of creditors, and that far from being a step forward and a victory for the Zanon workers it will mean they must endure greater sacrifices.

But the ‘marxists’ of the reformist left have made another revision of Marxism. If the Neuquén state can legislate for a victory for the workers of Zanon, this means the state can reform capitalism, and that the state can represent the interests of workers. Workers don’t need to create their own organisations independent of the state, instead they just let the reformist left negotiate deals with the state.

What this means is that Marx is replaced by Gramsci, so that workers don’t need to overthrow the state, they just need to put more pressure on the state to bring about socialism. We can see the



Working Class Solidarity Behind the Zanon Workers

PTS, as part of the reformist left of the World Social Forum, is promoting the social democratic illusion that workers can pressure the capitalists into accepting workers' occupations of factories as long as they are agree to allowing the state to exploit them. They mask this exploitation by saying the state can be pressured to meet the interests of both employers and workers. All that is required is that workers have good reformist lawyers to represent their interests in the state.

There is an intimate connection between these two revisions. If the state has no necessary requirement to protect the bosses' property or suppress class conflict, then 'nationalisation' can be presented as potentially favorable to the working class. How the state uses the surplus value extracted from the Zanon workers is then a matter of relative class strength. If the workers are strong enough they can earn a living wage and make bosses pay taxes to pay for workers' needs: education, health, housing, etc., i.e., the social wage. If the bosses

are stronger they can force down the wages and extract surplus which goes straight into the pockets of the bosses or is used to subsidise the social wage. Socialism can be legislated!

This is pie in the sky reformism. We have seen how only class struggle can guarantee workers occupations. The same is true of their wages and conditions. It is not possible to negotiate with the bosses' state for a living wage and living social wage, especially in the middle of a global crisis.

The Zanon workers have no power to maintain a living wage, and no power to ensure that their surplus value goes to improve the lives of Neuquén workers by creating more jobs etc. The only way this can be changed is for the workers to create their own power, 'dual power,' against the bosses' state, to expropriate not only Zanon, but all bosses property, the banks and the land, to create their own workers' state and plan for socialist production for need and not profit.

Marxists are committed to the postulate on the state which says: "The state is an organ of class rule, an organ of oppression of one class by another, is the creation of" order "that legalized this oppression and secured by reducing conflict between the classes. ..."

"The attitude towards the state is one of the most patent signs that our Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks are not socialist in any way (what the Bolsheviks have always said), but Democrats with a quasi-socialist phraseology." (The State and Revolution, V. Lenin)

We say to all the working class in Argentina and worldwide, that although for now the Zanon cooperative has been forced to give up control over their salaries and allowances, we will fight to defend their hard won class consciousness that the state is the state of the bourgeois class, from the corrupting influence of the left reformists.

Stand With the Workers of Zanon!

It is our urgent task that the entire working class stands alongside their brothers and sisters of Zanon to fight to make the capitalists, and not the workers, pay for the crisis. There is an "alternative" to the bosses' law.

- Open the Books! It is imperative that the Zanon workers vote for an Independent Investigation Commission to open the books of the employer and to discover the business secrets and deals made by the Zanon family.
- End the Isolation of Zanon! All organizations that call themselves working class must fight to get the four ceramics factories of Neuquén united to make the government pay the market price for their products and provide cheap credit for new machinery.
- Zanon workers do not pay 23,406,566 pesos! Instead of compensating the bosses, put tax on all the oil companies, the banks and the wealthy.
- Fight for a base salary of 4,500 [pesos a month] for the workers of Zanon and the other three ceramics factories in the area. And for all workers in the country.
- Declare the factory has provincial heritage status, and that workers are paid the wage and social benefits of all state workers. Build standing committees to fight for the real "Provincialization" of Zanon, without compensation and under workers' control now!
- Work for all! Distribute working hours among those who want to work! A living wage pegged to inflation! Workers from the plant, with its union (SOECN) in the lead must respond to all the appeals of the oil and construction workers in Patagonia who have been fighting against the imperialist multinationals, facing layoffs, pay cuts and suspensions!
- Re-nationalise without compensation and under workers' control, Repsol, Total Fina, APACHE, Pan American, Plus Petrol, etc., to stop the plundering of the nation and to make the capitalists pay for their crisis!
- Throw out the union bureaucracy of the CGT and CTA, servants of the



Workers in Solidarity with Zanon Workers in Occupation of Factory

- Kirchner government, servants and thugs of the agrarian bourgeoisie, and of the imperialist monopolies: Cargill, Monsanto, Dreyfus, etc!
- Oppose the bosses' law that protects the gunmen of the trade union bureaucracy, business chambers, government and provincial governors!
- Stand up and fight for a strong unified National Coordinating Committee for all fighting workers, led by the workers of Terrabusi (Kraft-Foods), and the subway. Confront and defeat the treachery of the union bureaucracy, which betrays the workers struggle to save the capitalist profits.
- For a National Congress of employed and unemployed workers to defeat the isolation and division imposed by the union bureaucracy!
- Self-Defense Committees, to defend ourselves from the repression of trade union bureaucracy and state management!
- Immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners, and the dropping of charges against workers and popular fighters!
- For Workers' and People's Courts to judge and punish the murderers of Teresa Rodriguez and Carlos Fuentealba!

Call for Solidarity with Terrabusi and Subway Workers



Terrabusi Workers Blockading Road

Argentina: Emergency appeal to all the fighting workers' organizations!

**The struggle of the workers of
Terrabusi (Kraft-Foods) and
Subway trains must win!**

**Kick out the armed thugs of the UTA
and STIA bureaucracy
paid by the bosses!**

**This is the same struggle as that of all
workers for a living wage, against the
layoffs and against the betrayals of the
labor bureaucracy that sell out the
workers' fight to save the capitalists'
business!**

Stop the repression against workers!

**Freedom for all political prisoners and
drop the charges against all worker and
popular militants!**

Reinstate all sacked workers!

**Long live the fight of the Terrabusi and
Subway workers!**

**Recognise the delegates committee of
the Subway as the only representative
of the workers!**

**For a National Coordinating Commit-
tee of all sectors in struggle now!**

**Workers organizations break with
the Labor Ministry and its compulsory
conciliation!**

The Terrabusi workers must win!

Fighting to get the jobs of 160 fired workers back, the Terrabusi workers are up against the giant US imperialist monopoly, Kraft-Food. Kraft-Food has 120 branches around the world. It reports profits of \$37 billion a year and aims to monopolise the key sectors of the food industry on a worldwide basis. Kraft is negotiating to buy the British monopoly Cadbury for \$17 billion. Its plans require the ruthless restructuring of its global production, putting many more thousands of workers into the street and forcing the remaining workers to produce more than all those who have been sacked.

This plan isn't just that of the food monopolies, since all monopolies must do the same to survive the current crisis. They bankrupt their competitors, concentrate their market share, and attack their workers to increase their exploitation and make them pay for the crisis, backed by their states and governments. To defend their property and that off the imperialist monopolies, they pay for the services of the union bureaucrats of the CGT and CTA as their armed thugs to control the factories as virtual concentration camps to overexploit the working class. At the same time, millions of workers are forced into the industrial reserve army and are used by the bosses to drive down wages.

The Subway workers must win!

At the same time the Terrabusi workers block the road without support of other workers, the Subway workers are on strike to defend their wages and to defend their delegates against the treacherous "sell-out" bureaucracy of the UTA. This action of the rank and file workers and their delegates is to defend

the victory of the 6 hour day won by the workers' struggle. The Subway workers have proved that only rank and file militancy can win and defend the gains of the working class. They cannot win anything by appealing to the judge Zafaroni, or to the bosses' justice with its "union freedom" law, or to the agent of the imperialist monopolies, Tomada, and his Ministry of wage-slavery. These agents of the bosses keep a lid on the workers' struggles. Victory only comes from the power of the workers.

The Subway and Terrabusi struggles, by confronting the betrayals of the union bureaucracy, prove to all workers that only by trusting their own forces and defeating the union bureaucracy that sells out the workers' wages and jobs, can they defend their wages and other conquests.

To win a living wage, to defend our jobs, and to stop the bosses' attacks, we must coordinate the struggle, unify the workers' ranks, and defeat the union bureaucracy!

Long live the Terrabusi and Subway workers' struggles!

The Bosses, Kirchner Government and the Agrarian Bourgeoisie Attack the Working Class

The Kirchner government with its infamous "social pact" regime, supported by the CGT and CTA union bureaucracy, leads the attacks of the monopolies to save them from their own economic crisis. The agrarian bourgeoisie, while it may fight over who gets what share of the profits from exports, agrees on attacking the workers. Cristina Kirchner, Carrio,

Macri, Reuteman, the government and the Liaison Board (Mesa de Enlace), the church, the bankers, and all the bosses' parties, emboldened by the victory of the regime in the last elections, have a common policy: to unite as one fist to smash the workers' movement with layoffs, suspensions, wage cuts, inflation, high cost of living, high prices, hunger, misery and repression to boost the profits of the capitalist parasites.

This is clear in the Terrabusi and Subway struggles where the bosses' justice system, the repressive police, the armed thugs of the union bureaucracy and all the bosses' organizations, including the ARI and Agrarian Federation (FA), are united behind the Labor Ministry to smash every single action that the working class organizes against the attacks.

In Metcom, GM, Acindar and the Córdoba Car Industry, the Bureaucracy and the Reformist Left Stopped a Workers' Counter-offensive Against the Bosses' Intensifying Attacks

The heart of the industrial proletariat in Metcom, GM, and Cordoba auto-industry has been fighting against the plan of the "sliding scale of suspensions, layoffs and lower salaries" imposed by the bosses for months. In all these factories, the workers dug in their heels to stop the sacking of contract workers, because they knew that next would be the workers on the payroll. This showed the bosses that they would have to destroy this unity to impose their plans. For that, the bosses used the union bureaucracy and the reformist left parties. So the union bureaucracy told the payroll workers that if they

would keep their jobs, they must allow the contract workers to be sacked. The left reformist parties went to every workers' struggle to tell them have faith in the bureaucracy and that it was not necessary to "open 2 fronts," i.e., it was not necessary to face the sell-out bureaucracy because this would weaken the struggle against the bosses. Thus they brought this wave of struggles against the capitalists' attacks to defeat. They prevented any attempt to set up organs of direct democracy and even closed down those that had been formed. They told the workers that out of these "tactical defeats" the bureaucracy would prepare the ground for victory. This treachery enabled the bosses to advance their common plan to isolate the struggles of the workers' movement and smash them sector by sector.

However, the attack and betrayals did not stop there. In March [2009], the CTA – a yellow union, and a guard dog of the interests of the state budget – betrayed the fight of the teachers of 14 provinces for higher wages. Again the reformist left parties, which lead and influence hundreds of unions and branches of CTERA and CTA all around the country, prevented the coordination of the fighting forces.

In July, the government, UIA, the agrarian Liaison Board (Mesa de enlace), and the CGT and CTA bureaucracy met with the Salary Council to sign a wage-slave agreement which will put a ceiling of \$1500 on the minimum wage, driving down workers' wages in this way.

All these betrayals disarm the workers, with the treacherous leaders diverting the workers into the electoral trap.

Thus, we reached the point – only a month ago – where the UOM bureaucracy, despite 50% inflation, went for a 25% increase in wages only to then settle for an 18% rise. This was agreed to beforehand in the Labour Ministry, to be paid in installments, provided the workers agreed to mass layoffs in exchange! And the only reason that they made this concession was that they were afraid that the fight of the metalworkers in Cordoba would set off an explosion in the working class. The metalworkers physically confronted the Varas bureaucracy (the UOM in this province), marched to the union headquarters shouting, “Everybody out, nobody left.” Again, the left reformist raised the policy of putting pressure on the bureaucracy through collective bargaining to stop any unified struggle in the working class for living wages and jobs against the repressive regime.

We have to be clear: the union bureaucracy and the left reformist parties were responsible for stopping the workers’ organised fightback against the bosses’ brutal attack. The reformists refused to unite the workers’ movement, leaving it to fight in the worst conditions that demoralised the most advanced and combatant sectors of the working class, subordinating them to state collective bargaining and the Labour Ministry.

That explains how the workers ended up in the present conditions. It was not any lack of willingness or capacity to struggle on the part of the working class. It was the treacherous stabs in the back of the workers’ movement that allowed the bosses and their servants to launch a decisive attack.

Terrabusi and Subway: The Bosses and Their Government Unite Their Forces to Break the Back of the Working Class

As we can see, we are not facing just another struggle. In the Subway, as in Terrabusi, the imperialist monopolies, the government and the agrarian bourgeoisie with their bosses’ parties, their opposition politicians and bureaucrats, have decided to launch an attack to smash the vanguard in order to terrorise the masses. They are very conscious that if they win on these two fronts, they can advance to defeat the entire workers’ movement. They are telling the working class that the coming attack on them will be even bigger. They want to drive down working conditions to the same slave-like level, or even worse, than those of the half million farm workers oppressed under the agrarian bourgeoisie and its agents, Bussi and De Angeli.

The bourgeoisie is trying to break the back of the proletariat in Subway and Terrabusi with the clear aim of using their armed thugs to defeat the internal commissions and drive back that victory of the revolutionary struggles of December 2001. This is why the bureaucracy of Yaski-Maldonado wants to contain the workers of Suteba La Plata and smash the rank and file rebellion of the teachers against the bureaucracy. The bosses want to take back all concessions. If they succeed in this plan, the bosses will be able to smash the resistance of the activists, starve and terrorise the masses and impose much greater levels of exploitation. This is what the bosses are trying to do in Terrabusi and Subway,

where the workers' resistance threatens to unite the demands of the entire workers' movement. Thus, the bosses attack but with carefully calculated methods. The bosses know that if they press too hard they can unify the workers' resistance and undo the work of the bureaucracy and the reformist parties in dividing the workers' ranks. They can lose everything under the current conditions if their attacks unite the rank and file around the fights in the Subway and Terrabusi.

Terrabusi and Subway: A Decisive Battle of the Entire Working Class to Defeat the Bosses' and Government's Attack

The fight of the workers of Terrabusi and Subway is the most advanced expression of the mood of revolt in the depths of the workers' ranks. It is the most advanced expression of hundreds of factory revolts against the bosses' attacks and over-exploitative pay rates and miserable salaries. It is the direct expression of the hate of millions of workers against the privileged union bureaucracy. Thus, if these two conflicts are immediately coordinated, they will inspire the enthusiasm for fight back among thousands of workers who want to fight the bosses' attacks, but are currently kept in isolation by the treacherous union bureaucracy. Thousands of workers are now realising through their own experience of struggle there that is no possibility of winning decent wages and stopping the layoffs without a common action against the bosses and their government.

In the Subway, in the middle of the stoppage, the workers were heard singing "Subway and Terrabusi, one heart."

This is the feeling of unity of the rank and file workers and is echoed in the blockage by the workers of Emfer and Tatsa of the General Paz highway in solidarity with Terrabusi. The bosses are afraid of such solidarity! They know that even isolated and divided, the working class is not yet defeated. The workers have far from exhausted their fighting capacity and when they unite and break from the bureaucracy, they will be able to launch a workers' counteroffensive against the bosses to make them pay for the crisis.

Stop isolating the fights! From Subway and Terrabusi, let's regroup all those who are fighting against the bureaucracy and untie the hands of the working class!

**The Subway workers in struggle have adopted the slogan:
"Subway and Terrabusi,
a single heart!"**

They know that workers united can defeat the bureaucracy and reinstate the Terrabusi workers and stop the layoffs. They know they can defend the delegates committee of the Subway workers and win decent wages for all the workers. The lesson of the defeats of isolated struggles at the hands of Labor Ministry conciliation and at the hands of the hired gunmen of the bureaucracy, are being learned. To fight and win, we must rely exclusively on our own forces, our own methods of struggle. We will not win jobs, decent wages, housing, education and health for workers via the laws of the bourgeois parliament, compulsory conciliations, or with the bosses' justice and

its “union freedom.” We will only win our demands by defeating the scab union bureaucracy and its gunmen, freeing the hands of the workers, and confronting the bosses and government in decisive combat.

**Down with the CGT and CTA
union bureaucracy!
Down with compulsory
conciliation !**

**Down with the social pact!
Down with the Wages Council!**

It has been clear in the last 20 days of the Terrabusi workers’ struggle and in the Subway fight that the internationalist Trotskyists of Democracia Obrera are correct: when the working class is staking everything on their struggle, the reformist parties refuse to fight for the unity and solidarity called for by the workers, thus demoralizing our class in one defeat after another. Enough! It is not possible to fight with these leaderships let alone fight.

Each minute we continue fighting and resisting alone, sector by sector, divided from each other, the bosses gain time and the power to defeat us one by one. Enough! These attacks must be stopped!

For that reason, the leaderships of Terrabusi and Subway have the duty to call for immediate coordination of the Terrabusi and Subway ranks under a single demand to unite all the workers who want to fight but are currently isolated and condemned to defeat, to send their delegates of all the factories and workplaces to a national committee of struggle.

**A Program to Unify the Rank and
File Workers: National
Coordinating Committee
of Struggle NOW!**

We need to set up a program that unites rank and file workers. The suffering, the high cost of living, and the oppression and exploitation of our class is unbearable. The workers’ struggles have proven that under these crisis conditions is it impossible to defend existing gains let alone win new economic demands in isolated sectors. It is time for the working class to rise up in a mass political struggle as one fist against the bosses and their government. The demand for a “sliding scale of wages and working hours” is on the order of the day to unite the Terrabusi workers’ fight against layoffs with those of Subway who are fighting for a wage increase, and with the unemployed workers of the piquetero movement who want to get a decent, secure job.

**For the non-recognition of the
fake collective bargaining
signed by the bureaucracy that
sells out the workers’ wages!**

**For a sliding scale of wages,
4500\$ of basic salary for all!**

**No more dismissals
or suspensions!**

**Jobs for all! For additional
shifts in all the factories
and workplaces!**

For all the factories to vote this program and call to unite the piquetero movement with the employed workers! Nationalization without payment and under workers control of all factories of companies that close or suspend or dismiss workers!

For cheap food for people: Expropriate without compensation the agrarian oligarchy, owner of 80% of the land! Smash the profiteers in the food chain! Cancel the VAT!

Down with the skyrocketing taxes! Re-nationalization without compensation under workers control of Telefónica, Rep sol and all the privatized companies! Kick out the transnationals that plunder the nation!

Repudiate the external debt that this Bolivarian Kirchner government pays with the muscles and bones of the working class!

Expropriate the banks and monopolies under workers control to pay for the jobs, wages, education and health for the exploited masses!

Set up self-defence committees against the repression by the guard dogs of the bosses and the gunmen of the union

bureaucracy! Stop the repression against fighters!

Immediate freedom for political prisoners! Throw out the charges against the popular and worker fighters!

A motion of unity for the entire workers' movement: Either them or us!

We must raise an emergency motion right now in all the workers' movement, in all the assemblies of rank and file workers, in all the factory committees, in every mobilization and road block, in each stoppage and every militant action.

The Terrabussi and Subway workers must take the lead to make an appeal to all workers in struggle.

First, the Internal Commission of Terrabusi and the Delegates Committee of the Subway have the responsibility and duty to immediately call for a Coordination Committee of Struggle to regroup the thousands of workers, who despite and against their leaderships, want to stop the bosses' attack.

Such a motion from the Subway and Terrabusi workers is necessary to unite with the Emfer and Tansa workers that blocked the General Paz; the employed and unemployed workers that blocked streets in La Plata supporting the Terrabusi struggle, and the 400 fired workers of Mercedes Benz; the workers of Mahle who are resisting in isolation in Rosaria; to unite with the workers of Zanon who under ter-

rible isolated conditions have been forced to accept a law of the Neuquén legislature to buy the firm to keep their jobs. This law is to make workers pay for the crisis.

This is the motion to unite the teachers of Suteba La Plata defending themselves against the intervention of the Celeste bureaucracy of CTERA/CTA, and the health workers that have led a struggle for rank and file control in Tucuman that confronts the bureaucracy.

This appeal would give moral support for thousands of workers to re-open their fights, such as the Port, Fate, Firestone, and Pirelli workers, that hate the sell-out union leaders of UOM, SUTNA and other treacherous bureaucracies. Such a motion would coordinate with the militants of the metal and municipal workers' struggles of Cordoba who have led huge combats in the factories and the streets.

Without doubt, an appeal like this would have the support and energy of the combatant students, and the youth killed in the workers neighbourhoods by the repressive forces of the Federal and Buenos Aires police, Naval Prefecture and gendarmerie.

The militant piquetero movement must take into their hands this appeal for a Coordinating Committee of struggle because we cannot allow any longer the bosses a free hand in firing thousands of workers and creating a massive reserve army of labor. Without uniting employed and unemployed alike, we will face more savage repression like that against the picketers of Caleta Olivia by the oil police.

The piquetero movement must stand up again and march to the factories to ally with their employed brothers and sisters to fight for work for all!

Down with the piquetero bureaucracy, those administrators of the unemployed workers' misery!

We must re-launch the struggle and the 21 point-program of the picketers of the North of Salta!

By winning a National Committee of Struggle now, we will be able to centralize a call for setting up a National Workers' Congress of employed and unemployed workers, that is, set up the Third Piquetera National Assembly to vote for a National Plan of Struggle and build for a general strike so that everybody goes out, nobody stays on the job, because the Kirchners and all the bosses' sectors – like the agrarian bourgeoisie – and their corrupted politicians disguised as “opposition,” want the workers to pay once again for their crisis.

Enough!

There is no time to lose! Either them or us! Make the capitalists pay for their own crisis

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Voice of the LOI-CI Argentina (Workers International League – Fourth International)
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Historic Defeat for the SACP at the Cosatu Congress



The objective reality of the working class impacted on the Cosatu Congress to deal the SACP a major defeat (the first in a long time). The SACP in Cabinet voted unanimously with the nationalists that they support the mass dismissal of soldiers as well as for the smashing of their unions. The workers at the Congress united and unanimously rejected this proposal. The very lives of many workers, having been shot at and brutalised by the regime during strikes and protests over the last period, have taught workers that we need unions in every sector as a first point of defence against the capitalists-imperialists.

The capitalist crisis has forced together the forces of the bosses within the workers' movement to openly side with the capitalists and to refuse to organise resistance, to allow high food prices and mass retrenchment to go unchallenged.

Workers adopted a fighting programme, but made a crucial error to return to office the very ones who will now drag their feet over the programme and who will do everything in their power to delay and water down the demands of the masses. The failure to adopt a call for a general strike for an emergency workers' plan is another limitation. Nevertheless, the basis has been laid for the start of a fightback by the working class. Now we need to draw the lesson up to the end of the class role of the SACP and of the need for working class independence.

It is not only labour brokers who are the problem but the very system of capitalism.

Forward to a workers' summit of all unions, unemployed representatives and soldiers to adopt a programme of action to implement an emergency plan for the working class!

Forward to a general strike to defend the lives of the working class from the capitalist-imperialist attacks!

Forward to the rebuilding of a revolutionary International based on the lessons of the Fourth International!

Down with the regime that conciliates with the imperialists to keep the working class in starvation and slavery!

**Forward to a workers' government!
Forward to Socialism!**

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