

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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International Trotskyist

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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.