

**Break with the Democratic Party  
of War and Racism!  
For a Revolutionary Workers Party!**

## Down With U.S. Imperialism!



U.S. Navy

**American forces landing in Helmand Province in Afghanistan, January 25. Marines at Camp Lejeune, February 27.**



AP

**Barack Obama, imperialist Commander-in-Chief, addresses**

In February, President Barack Obama announced that he was sending an additional 17,000 U.S. troops, an increase of nearly 50 percent, to Afghanistan. This was followed by Obama's long-awaited pronouncement on a "withdrawal" from Iraq—a plan that would leave up to 50,000 troops as an occupation force for at least two more years. Meanwhile, the administration has stepped up U.S. military attacks on north-west Pakistan.

A number of liberal antiwar coalitions, which effectively went into hibernation when it was clear the Democrats had a shot at the White House a couple of years ago, have called for a march on the Pentagon (and in cities around the country) on March 21. The call for withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan and Iraq is packaged by the protest organizers as a plea to Obama to fulfill his promise of "change." In fact, Obama is only carrying out what he promised as a candidate. From the start of the presidential campaign it was clear that he and the Democrats differed with Bush only on where, when and how to bring the jackboot of U.S. imperialism down on the backs of the oppressed masses throughout the world.

## All U.S. Troops Out of Iraq and Afghanistan Now!

Doubtless, the various self-styled radical and leftist groups at the upcoming protests will be venting criticisms aplenty of Obama's policies. But their starting point is that this capitalist government, through pleading and pressure, can be made to carry out policies in the interests of working people and the oppressed. In fact, the various antiwar coalitions these groups have built over the years were all aimed at building a movement to put the Democrats in power, expressed in the overriding slogan, "Anybody but Bush!" In the lead-up to the presidential election, World Can't Wait, run by the Revolutionary Communist Party, screamed, "Drive Out the Bush Regime." The International Socialist Organization (ISO) enthused that the Democrats "are finally giving voice to the frustration" about the war (*Socialist Worker*, 4 May 2007). At a February 2007 rally for Obama at the University of Illinois-Chicago, ISO members were among the protesters who unfurled a banner that read: "Obama: Stand Up! Cut the Funding!" Can anyone imagine any of these groups now demanding, "Anybody but Obama"?

Whatever their rhetoric, all these self-

styled socialists and their various liberal antiwar coalitions sought to lead protesters into unity with anything that passes for an "antiwar" Democratic politician. This was true of ANSWER, founded by the Workers World Party (WWP) but now run by their split-off, the Party for Socialism and Liberation; United for Peace and Justice, in which the ISO works; and World Can't Wait. Thus all these coalitions refused to raise the elementary call for military defense of Afghanistan and Iraq against the U.S., which would have repelled Democratic Party politicians.

Having helped elect Obama with the implicit promise that the Democrats could be pressured into defending the interests of the oppressed, the reformists now seek ...to pressure Obama. Typically, *Socialist*

*Worker* online (4 March) argues that "what Obama has shown us in the first weeks of his presidency is that we will get only as much as we fight for from this administration."

Our point of departure—and our conclusions—are diametrically opposed to

those of the reformist "socialists." Marxists understand that war, poverty, recession and oppression are part and parcel of the capitalist system. Imperialism, as V.I. Lenin, leader of the Bolshevik Party that led the October Revolution in Russia in 1917, put it, is simply the highest stage of capitalism, marked by the domination of the globe by a small exclusive club of competing capitalist great powers. The scramble to leech the greatest profits possible out of the exploitation of working people is the root cause of wars of imperialist plunder and of the miserable conditions under which the overwhelming mass of the world's population lives and dies. Imperialist war is the concentrated expression of the normal brutal workings of the capitalist system, which daily

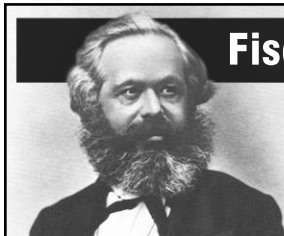
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**Fiscal Fiddling Can't Stop Depression**

**Marx vs. Keynes**

**See Page 4**



After decades of intimidation and terror, courageous abortion provider Dr. George Tiller goes on trial March 16, threatened with **19 years** in prison. One of the few remaining physicians providing “late-term” abortions in the U.S., Dr. Tiller and the staff of his Wichita Women’s Health Care Services have repeatedly been targeted by anti-abortion fanatics. Tiller’s clinic was bombed in 1986, and in 1993 he survived being shot several times in an assassination attempt. Tiller faces 19 misdemeanor counts of violating the state’s law requiring two doctors, without financial or legal ties to each other, to sign off on abortions done late in pregnancy (in Kansas, the arbitrary calculus of “late-term” is set at 22 weeks). Prosecutors claim that Tiller had a financial relationship with the doctor who provided a second opinion. These bogus charges are being used to railroad a courageous doctor who puts medical science and concern for his patients above his own well-being. The labor movement and all defenders of women’s rights must stand in defense of Dr. Tiller and demand: Stop the witchhunt against George Tiller! Drop the charges!

The attack on Dr. Tiller is part of a drive, by legal and extralegal means, to intimidate abortion providers and ultimately do away with women’s right to abortion. According to papers filed by Tiller’s lawyers, the district attorney obtained under false pretenses a court order directing a Wichita hotel to turn over registration records containing patients’ names. Under the pretext of investigating “child rape,” these records were then matched with medical records that Tiller

# Free Abortion on Demand!

## Defend Dr. George Tiller!

was required to submit to the state, in order to discover the names of Tiller’s patients. D.A. Phill Kline, who launched the legal crusade against Tiller, was so frenzied in his campaign against abortion clinics that the state Supreme Court in December chastised him for showing “little, if any, respect” for “the rule of law” (*Topeka Capital-Journal*, 6 December 2008).

Nevertheless, on February 25 the judge in the criminal case against Tiller denied a defense motion to throw out prosecution evidence and refused to dismiss the case. Noting that the charges against Tiller had been filed by Kline’s successor as attorney general, a “pro-choice” Democrat, the judge ludicrously concluded that Kline’s actions “could not have tainted the investigation and prosecution of this case” (AP, 25 February).

The law being used to go after Tiller is just one of a slew of measures which have made abortion virtually inaccessible to a large number of women in this country. This is especially true for the young, working-class and poor, who already have limited access to decent health care, childcare, affordable housing or even enough food to feed their families. Today, 36 states prohibit abortions after a specified point in pregnancy. Fully 34 states



require one or both parents of young women under 18 to be notified and/or consent to an abortion. And 87 percent of U.S. counties—**97 percent** in non-metropolitan areas—do not have an abortion provider.

Abortion is a politically explosive issue because it raises the question of the equality of women. This simple medical

procedure provides women with some control over whether or not to have children. For this reason it is viewed as a threat to the institution of the family, which is a crucial prop for the system of capitalist exploitation. In order for safe and legal abortion to become a reality for working-class, minority and immigrant women, we call for **free abortion on demand as part of free quality health care for all**.

The increasing curtailment of the right to abortion reflects the policies of both the Democratic and Republican parties. As we wrote in “Drop the Charges Against Dr. George Tiller!” (WV No. 924, 7 November 2008):

“The reactionary demagoguery of the Republicans is longstanding and obvious enough. But the fact is that there has been little ‘choice’ for poor women since Democrat Jimmy Carter (who now has become an international ‘human rights’ icon) signed into law in 1977 the Hyde Amendment eliminating Medicaid coverage for abortions. During Democrat Clinton’s eight years in office, welfare for mothers was axed, safe access to abortion was effectively gutted across much of the country, as the number of abortion providers plummeted 14 percent between 1992 and 1996, and a huge number of restrictive laws were passed.”

President Barack Obama provoked a  
*continued on page 10*

## Mexican State Seizes Transgender Woman’s Daughter

*We reprint below an article translated from Espartaco No. 30 (Winter 2008-09), newspaper of the Grupo Espartaquista de México, section of the International Communist League.*

### ESPARTACO

In 2006, the young Rosa Isela was taken from her home by the State Family Council (CEF) of the state of Jalisco, which is ruled by the neo-Cristero bourgeois PAN [Catholic clericalist National Action Party], and placed in a shelter run by nuns. Since then, her adoptive mother, Alondra Ávila, has been fighting to get her back. Why has the state ripped the child away from the person who has cared for her since 15 days after her birth? Because the CEF deems that the “conduct” of the transgender Alondra “does not fit within the elemental parameters of social coexistence for an underage person to have a moral reference point,” which is a declaration of pure fanatical intolerance. **Full democratic rights for homosexuals and transgenders—for their right to adopt!**

Numerous people have spoken up in defense of Alondra’s loving care of her daughter. Nine-year-old Rosa Isela has insisted that she wants to be with Alondra.

A declaration before the DIF [National Agency for Family Development] of Tala, Jalisco, had established that custody of the child was given to Alondra. On 28 October 2008, the Seventh Family Court judge issued a ruling ordering the child to be turned over to Alondra immediately (apparently the first such ruling in Latin America), but the authorities did not inform Alondra and the CEF simply hid the girl! The neo-Cristeros who rule the country and the state of Jalisco could not care less about the well-being of children; it’s about pushing their reactionary Catholic values.

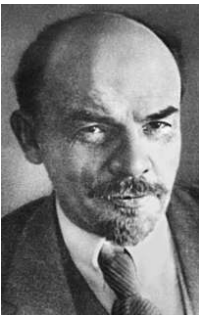
The working class should fight for full democratic rights for homosexuals and other sexual minorities—all those whom the bourgeoisie’s anti-sex religious moralism judges “deviant.” The rights of homosexuals will only be fully attained through a workers revolution; bigotry against gays flows from the deeply rooted sexual stereotypes decreed by the sexual division of labor in the family, the source of women’s oppression in bourgeois society, and is reinforced by the religious codes against “sin.” Capitalist society needs the family, which is a conservatizing force and the mechanism through which private property is passed down. The family is a key prop of capitalist class rule, which can only be fully rooted out through the overthrow of capitalism. ■



TROTSKY

### In Celebration of International Women’s Day

*International Women’s Day originated in March 1908 when the mainly immigrant female needle trades workers marched in New York City to demand an eight-hour day and women’s suffrage. A mass outpouring of women on International Women’s Day in Petrograd in 1917 sparked the revolutionary upheaval that culminated in the Russian October Revolution—the greatest victory ever in the struggle for women’s emancipation. In 1920, Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin under-*



LENIN

*scored the fact that the fight for women’s liberation is an integral part of the fight for proletarian revolution.*

The Soviet government is the first and only government in the world to have completely abolished all the old, despicable bourgeois laws which placed women in a position of inferiority to men, which placed men in a privileged position, for example, in respect of marital rights and of children. The Soviet government, the government of the working people, is the first and only government in the world to have abolished all the privileges of men in property questions, privileges which the marriage laws of all bourgeois republics, even the most democratic, still preserve.

Wherever there are landowners, capitalists and merchants, women cannot be the equal of men even before the law.

Where there are no landowners, capitalists or merchants, and where the government of the working people is building a new life without these exploiters, men and women are equal before the law.

But that is not enough.

Equality before the law is not necessarily equality in fact.

We want the working woman to be the equal of the working man not only before the law but in actual fact. For this working women must take an increasing part in the administration of socialised enterprises and in the administration of the state....

The proletariat cannot achieve complete liberty until it has won complete liberty for women.

—V.I. Lenin, “To the Working Women” (21 February 1920)

## WORKERS VANGUARD

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*Opinions expressed in signed articles or letters do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.*

The closing date for news in this issue is March 10.

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13 March 2009



### Spartacus Youth Club Events

#### BAY AREA

Thursday, March 19, 6:30 p.m.

**Defeat U.S. Imperialism  
Through Socialist Revolution  
in the Belly of the Beast!  
U.S. Troops Out of  
Iraq, Afghanistan!**

San Francisco State University  
Cesar Chavez Student Center  
Rosa Parks E

Information and readings: (510) 839-0851  
[sycbayarea@sbcglobal.net](mailto:sycbayarea@sbcglobal.net)

#### NEW YORK CITY

Wednesday, March 25, 7:45 p.m.

**The Class-Struggle Road to  
Women’s Liberation  
For Free Abortion on Demand!**

Hunter College, West Building  
Room 407

Information and readings: (212) 267-1025  
[nysl@tiac.net](mailto:nysl@tiac.net)

#### TORONTO

Wednesday, March 18, 6:30 p.m.

**Building a  
Leninist Vanguard Party**

University of Toronto  
Sidney Smith Building, Room 1080  
100 St. George Street

Information and readings: (416) 593-4138  
[spartacan@on.aibn.com](mailto:spartacan@on.aibn.com)

#### VANCOUVER

Thursday, April 2, 6 p.m.

**The Deception of  
Capitalist Democracy**

University of British Columbia  
Student Union Building  
Room 42T

Information and readings: (604) 687-0353  
[trotskyist\\_vancouver@shawcable.com](mailto:trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com)

**Visit the ICL Web Site:  
[www.icl-fi.org](http://www.icl-fi.org)**

## Victimized After Building Occupation *Defend NYU Protesters!*

We reprint below a February 21 letter to New York University president John Sexton and New York County District Attorney Robert Morgenthau by the New York Spartacus Youth Club in defense of protesters who had occupied NYU's student center for 40 hours starting on February 18. NYU reinstated the suspended students after one week, but they have reportedly been banned from "leadership roles" in student activities

and will remain on disciplinary probation as long as they are at the university.

The Spartacus Youth Club condemns the reprisals against Take Back NYU! and all participants in and supporters of the occupation of New York University's Kimmel Center for University Life. We demand that no further reprisals be taken. Early Friday morning, NYPD officers attacked a solidarity rally held outside Kimmel, beating and

pepper-spraying demonstrators. Two were arrested: Alex Deschamps, who has been charged with unlawful assembly, inciting a riot, resisting arrest, disorderly conduct and obstruction of government administration, and Jonah Calhoun, who has been charged with criminal possession of a weapon. We demand that all charges be dropped immediately! We protest the draconian suspension, banning from campus and

eviction from their dorm rooms of the 18 students who were physically restrained and forcibly removed from Kimmel on Friday. These students face possible expulsion. Reinstatement the students, now!

The attacks by the NYU administration, NYPD and campus cops on students expressing their solidarity with the Palestinian people, supporting collective bargaining for student workers (including TAs), and demanding an extremely modest limit on NYU's exorbitant tuition are an act of intimidation against any future protests. An administration already known for vicious union-busting has demonstrated yet again to the world its contempt for students, working people and the oppressed.

## Zionism and Anti-Union Frenzy York University, Toronto

We reprint the following article from the Young Spartacus pages of Spartacist Canada No. 160, Spring 2009, published by the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste, Canadian section of the International Communist League.

**SPARTACIST** CANADA

In the wake of the savage Israeli invasion of Gaza, campus activists and trade unions are under attack for their defense of the besieged Palestinians. On February 22, 120 Zionist thugs led by the fascistic Jewish Defense League besieged a Windsor conference of a committee of the Ontario division of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). They brandished banners ominously threatening to "Terminate Sid Ryan," CUPE Ontario's president, for the union's pro-Palestinian stance. Days later, Tory immigration minister Jason Kenney escalated the Zionist witchhunt, calling on the union to get rid of Ryan and raving about "a very dangerous opinion environment for many Jewish students."

Toronto's York University is at the epicenter of the Zionist offensive on the campuses, which has seen both open repression and McCarthyite thought control of student and teacher activists. On February 11, the Zionist-led campus group "Drop YFS" held a press conference to promote their goal of deposing the York Federation of Students (YFS) on the grounds that it supported a recent strike by CUPE Local 3903, which represents teaching and graduate assistants and contract faculty. Rather than face criticism from leftist activists who sought to attend the press conference, the leaders of Drop YFS barred them at the door. Can-

celling their own event, Drop YFS scurried straight into the office of the Hillel Zionists, scurrilously claiming they were intimidated by "anti-Semitic" leftists. A day later, when Students Against Israeli Apartheid (SAIA) held a pro-Palestinian demonstration on the campus, they were met by a mob of Zionists sporting Israeli

erty line. These reactionary students provided the provincial Liberal government ammunition to force an end to the strike.

On January 27, the teachers and their supporters protested against the Liberals' strikebreaking legislation. Toronto cops attacked their rally and arrested four people on bogus charges of assaulting police.

**Canadian Union of Public Employees workers at York University during three-month strike that ended in January.**

Thompson/National Post



Defense Force paraphernalia in a sea of Israeli flags.

The Zionist witchhunt is completely intertwined with strikebreaking at York. CUPE 3903, whose leaders include well-known pro-Palestinian activists, has just come off the longest university strike in English Canadian history. Right-wing students organized anti-strike rallies on behalf of the campus administration and President Mamdouh Shoukri, as he hard-lined against the union's modest demand to raise wages to a level closer to the pov-

Behind the pompous and regal ceremony of bourgeois democracy lies the armed violence of the cops against the working class. **Hands off CUPE 3903! Drop the charges!**

### No Illusions in Canadian Imperialism!

CUPE Ontario's call for active labour support to Palestinian national rights marks a break with the pro-Zionist consensus that has historically dominated in the Canadian labour bureaucracy and especially the NDP [social-democratic New Democratic Party]. In standing with the oppressed Palestinians, the union has also slammed into the Harper government's uncompromising support for Israel as well as the ramped-up "war on terror" that targets the Muslim population for state repression. As we wrote when CUPE Ontario came under Zionist fire more than two years ago: "This is a frontal attack on the right of the labour movement to champion causes on behalf of the oppressed and an open invitation to union-busting by the capitalist state" ("Defend CUPE Ontario! Defend the Palestinians!" SC No. 150, Fall 2006).

Those leftists and trade unionists who rise to the defense of CUPE Ontario would be mistaken, however, to support its endorsement of the international "Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions for Palestine" (BDS) campaign against Israel.

BDS activists here call on the same Canadian corporations that exploit workers at home and abroad and the same Canadian imperialist state that wages bloody war on the peoples of Afghanistan to come to the aid of the oppressed Palestinians by severing ties with Israel. In doing so, BDS fosters the worst illusions in capitalist Canada as a "peacekeeper" and a potential ally of downtrodden people.

In particular, the demand to boycott Israeli universities appeals to the supposed morality of Canadian academic institutions and funding bodies to break their links with the murderous Israeli regime. It speaks volumes about the liberal-reformist outlook of SAIA that during the teachers strike they begged York president Mamdouh Shoukri to uphold "values that York University cherishes most" (!) and "publicly condemn" Israel's attacks on a Gaza university.

Universities in Canada are no less attached to the Canadian state than Israeli universities are to the Zionist state. The governing bodies of York and the University of Toronto are rogues' galleries of the Canadian ruling class. No different from their Israeli counterparts, Canadian universities are run to benefit the capitalists, in the first place by training the administrative, technical and cultural personnel the capitalist system needs. This can range from the benign (high school math teachers, say) to the deeply malignant (military researchers, CSIS [Canadian Security Intelligence Service] operatives or "industrial relations" strikebreakers).

The multiple attempts to muzzle defenders of the Palestinians underscores this fact. Since the start of this year alone, Ottawa's Carleton University has taken the Orwellian measure of banning a poster that depicts a Palestinian child under a descending Israeli missile. University of Toronto president David Naylor personally intervened to block room bookings for a conference about Israeli Apartheid after a Zionist reactionary tipped him off. Now U of T's administration plans to send its thought police into pro-Palestinian meetings.

Unlike the liberal BDS campaign, the Spartacus Youth Club is for *class struggle* against the Canadian capitalist class and its agencies like the university administrations. For worker/student/teacher control of the universities! Abolish the administration! Students must look to the social power of the working class, the only social force capable of sweeping away capitalism worldwide and ending once and for all the genocidal terror against the Palestinians and all other oppressed nations. ■



Spartacist Canada

**Trotskyist League at July 2006 Toronto protest against Israel's attacks on Lebanon, Gaza.**



# Fiscal Fiddling Can't Stop Depression Marx vs. Keynes

The deepening economic crisis has meant the loss of jobs, homes and savings for millions of working people. It has also demonstrated the utter fallacy of the economic doctrine of monetarism, which maintained that economic crises could be minimized, if not eliminated, by adjusting the amount of money in the

**By Joseph Seymour**

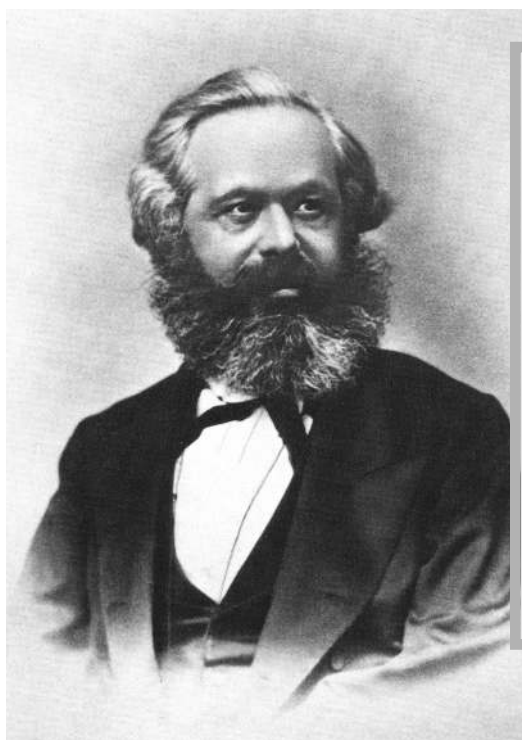
banking system along with interest rates. Monetarism was the gospel for bourgeois economists in the right-wing climate marked by the ascendancy of Ronald Reagan and Britain's Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s. The counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92 and the attendant "death of communism" triumphalism in the western imperialist countries, centrally the U.S., put more wind in the sails of the "free market" ideologues of monetarism.

Today, with the monetarist myth in tatters, bourgeois economists have rushed to embrace the ideas of John Maynard Keynes, the British economist who, during the Great Depression of the 1930s, championed the notion that capitalist economic crises could be overcome through government deficit spending. That is the idea behind President Barack Obama's "stimulus" package, an expenditure of almost \$800 billion financed by government borrowing that is supposed to "jump start" the economy. In reality, Keynesian economic schemes, no less than monetarist ones, run up against the destructive irrationality of the capitalist system, analyzed and explained by Karl Marx and highlighted by the boom-and-bust cycle.

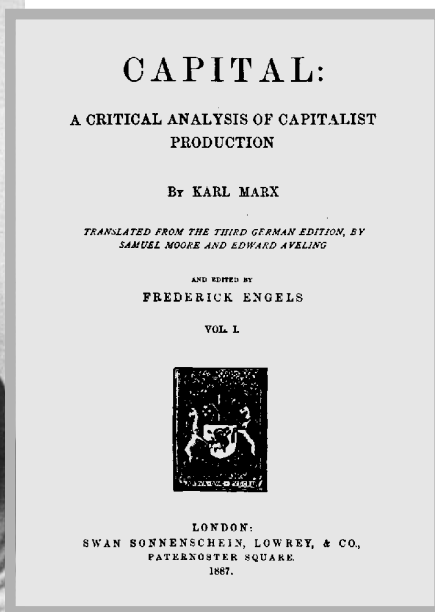
The article reprinted below, first published in WV No. 64, 14 March 1975, presents a Marxist critique of Keynes's economic theory.

The current extremely sharp economic downturn has produced a wave of pessimism extending from the Stock Exchange and White House to the academic redoubts of bourgeois economics. While President Ford proclaims that unemployment will not drop below 8 percent again for another two years, the president of the American Economics Association, Robert A. Gordon, declares: "I don't think we have a body of economic theory that is of great help to use in today's world" (*Wall Street Journal*, 30 December 1974).

During most of the 1960s U.S. government economic policy was dominated by Kennedyesque "whiz kids" who claimed to be able to simultaneously hold down prices and stimulate investment through



Progress



**In his seminal work *Capital*, Karl Marx demonstrated fundamental irrationality of capitalism.**

adroit manipulation of fiscal "levers." Now, however, with the onset of double-digit inflation and a slump of depression proportions, these claims are rapidly being debunked.

It was predictable that a world depression would lead to the collapse of optimism concerning Keynesian economic policies. The anti-Keynesian right (well represented in the Ford administration by the Ayn Randite Alan Greenspan and by former Wall Street bond dealer William Simon) had argued for years that government deficits must generate ever-increasing inflation, and now claims vindication.

Even the Keynesian liberals appear unsure of themselves, observing that the "trade-off" between inflation and unemployment has become most painful. Thus Sir John Hicks, one of the original architects of the "Keynesian Revolution," has recently brought out a book entitled, significantly, *The Crisis of Keynesian Economics*. And revisionist Marxists who had earlier written about the "relative stability of neo-capitalism" are now dusting off their copies of *Capital* and asserting that its venerable truths still haunt the capitalist world.

We are witnessing a notable intellectual convergence ranging from bourgeois reactionaries (Milton Friedman) to ostensible Marxists (Ernest Mandel), and including a number of liberals (John K. Galbraith, John Hicks, Abba Lerner): Keynesian economics, which supposedly "worked" for a generation, has now been

overcome, they agree, by unprecedented global inflation and the worst crisis since 1929. Despite its widespread acceptance, however, this thesis is false. Keynesian fiscal policies never did, and never could, stop the cyclical crises of overproduction which are inherent in the capitalist system.

A major world slump as severe as the present one has been possible at least since the world recession of 1958. That such a slump did not occur before 1974 is due to contingent factors and not to the effectiveness of Keynesian countermeasures. For example, in 1967 the U.S. would have had a recession except for the expansion of the Vietnam War. Output actually did fall in the first quarter of that year and there was a 1967 recession in West Germany, then the second-largest capitalist economy. Without the sudden escalation of the Vietnam War, this conjuncture would undoubtedly have caused a world economic crisis, possibly quite severe. Only an idiot objectivist could deny this historic possibility.

The fact that a major world slump did not occur in the 20 years preceding 1974 is not due to credit inflation, an ever-increasing arms budget, Keynesian stabilization policies or any other deliberate government policy. There has been no fundamental change in the structure of postwar capitalism that would justify the various labels popular in liberal and revisionist Marxist theorizing—e.g., neo-capitalism, the mixed economy, the permanent war economy, etc.

## Myths of the "Keynesian Revolution"

John Maynard Keynes was not responsible for developing or even for popularizing the policy that capitalist governments should increase their expenditures during an economic downturn, financing this through borrowing rather than increased taxation. This bourgeois reform measure has a long and respectable history going back to at least the 1890s.

Thus the minority report of the English Poor Law Commission of 1909 stated, "We think that the Government can do a great deal to regularize the aggregate demand for labour as between one year and another, by a deliberate arrangement of its work of a capital nature." In 1921 President Harding's Conference on

Unemployment recommended expanded public works during the postwar downturn, a recommendation endorsed by such conservative organizations as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Moreover, in 1930 a bill was introduced into the U.S. Senate (No. 3059) calling for "advanced planning and regulated construction of certain public works, for the stabilization of industry, and for the prevention of unemployment during periods of business depression." This principle was incorporated into the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, a half decade before the popularization of Keynesian economics.

What, then, is the significance of Keynesianism—why all the hullabaloo? While practical politicians had advocated and partly attempted expanded government expenditure during economic downturns, orthodox bourgeois economic theory (particularly in English-speaking countries) still held that slumps were easily self-correcting through a fall in the rate of interest. According to the textbooks, government policy during a downturn should be to expand bank reserves and run a balanced budget.

What Keynes did was to provide a theoretical justification, within the framework of bourgeois economic doctrine, for the deficit spending which most capitalist governments practiced in the 1930s, as well as in earlier slumps. The "Keynesian Revolution" was a revolution in university economics departments, in the writing of textbooks, not in actual government policy.

In the post-World War II period, capitalist politicians have claimed that the relative economic stability has been due to their effective use of Keynesian stabilization policies. This assertion—that capitalist governments can and do control the economy for the benefit of "the people"—is partly bourgeois propaganda and partly bourgeois false consciousness.

The notion that the proportion of government expenditure has increased greatly since World War II is so widespread that it is taken as a matter of course by virtually all political tendencies, including bourgeois reaction, Keynesian liberalism, social-democratic and Stalinist reformism, and revisionist "Marxism" à la Mandel. In truth, the supposed expanded role of state expenditure is the greatest of all myths of the "Keynesian Revolution."

It can be easily disproved by a few statistics which indicate government expenditure as a percentage of gross national product for the major capitalist powers during the interwar period (1920-39) and during the 1961-70 decade:

Country	1921-1939	1961-1970
France	14%	13%
Germany <sup>1</sup>	18%	16%
Great Britain <sup>2</sup>	21%	19%
Japan	10%	8%
United States	11%	20%

Sources: OECD, *National Accounts*, 1961-1972; U.S. Department of Commerce, *Long-Term Economic Growth, 1860-1970*; Mitchell, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics*; Stolper, *The German Economy, 1870-1940*; Maddison, *Economic Growth in the West*; Ohkawa and Rosovsky, *Japanese Economic Growth*.

<sup>1</sup> German interwar figures only cover 1925-39.

<sup>2</sup> British figures are based on national product net of depreciation, giving them a slight upward bias relative to the other countries.



Alfred Eisenstaedt

**John Maynard Keynes (right) with U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau Jr. at 1944 Bretton Woods Conference.**

These few figures utterly destroy the notion of a “Keynesian Revolution” involving major structural changes in the capitalist system following World War II. Only in the United States was there a significant rise in the level of government expenditure. In all other major capitalist countries, the weight of the state budget in the economy *declined* slightly. And the expanded role of the state budget in the U.S. is entirely accounted for by the greatly increased military expenditure required by the emergence of American imperialism as world gendarme in the postwar period.

Moreover, the relative weight of military expenditure in the U.S. has been steadily *declining* since the Korean War, except for the Vietnam War years. In 1954 (the year following the end of the Korean War) the military budget accounted for 11 percent of the U.S. gross national product (GNP); by 1965 (the year before the Vietnam buildup) the figure had fallen to 7 percent; and in 1973 military spending accounted for only 6 percent of GNP (*Economic Report of the President, 1974*). So much for the “permanent war economy” theory!

Marxism vs. Keynesianism

Before undertaking a Marxist criticism of Keynesianism it is necessary to indicate more precisely what it is that the latter asserts. According to the pre-Keynesian orthodoxy of bourgeois economics, a fall in the volume of investment that precipitated a slump would also free money capital, which in turn would enter the loan market and drive down the rate of interest. This fall in interest rates would then stimulate investment to the point that full employment of resources was restored. All the government had to do was to see that the crisis did not disorganize the banking system, i.e., to ensure that the mechanisms of credit expansion remained functioning.

Keynes accepted the theory that a sufficient fall of interest rates would restore a full-employment level of investment in a slump. His major work, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, is an attempt to explain why such a sufficient fall of interest rates does not occur. Keynes asserted that rentiers held some notion of a normal rate of interest. If the rate falls much below this, lenders will expect it to rise again, thereby producing a capital loss on bonds purchased at the lower rates. In a general sense, Keynesianism holds that at some abnormally low rate of interest (termed the “liquidity trap”) lenders will hoard money in anticipation of higher rates in the future. This is less an explanatory theory than a description of the monetary aspect of a crisis/slump.

From these premises Keynes argued that government efforts to expand money and credit during a slump would be ineffective, producing simply money hoards and/or excess bank reserves. Therefore, he argued that increased state expenditures would have to substitute for inadequate capital investment. This, in a nutshell, was the “Keynesian Revolution.”

In order to understand the difference between Marxist and bourgeois (including Keynesian) analyses of economic cycles, it is necessary to take account of a fundamental difference concerning the role played by the rate of interest. In bourgeois economics the level of investment is determined by the difference between the rate of interest on borrowed money capital and the rate of profit on the physical means of production. As long as the interest rate is substantially below the profit rate entrepreneurs will presumably borrow and invest until this gap is eliminated. A historical tendency for the rate of profit to fall, projected by many bourgeois economists (including Keynes), is not viewed as a fundamental barrier to expanded production. As long as the rate of interest is sufficiently low, a full-employment level of investment is supposedly assured.

In contrast, for Marx the level of investment is determined by the rate of profit on the privately owned means of

production. The interest rate is part of and governed by the profit rate on the real means of production. During a slump, despite abnormally low rates of interest, loanable capital remains unused. Thus Marx referred to “the phase of the industrial cycle immediately after a crisis, when loanable capital lies idle in great masses” (*Capital*, Vol. III, Chapter 30).

The validity of the Marxist position was demonstrated during the late 1930s when excess bank reserves (an index of the difference between actual loans and the legally authorized lending capacity) were at the highest level in U.S. history, in spite of the unusually low interest rates. The exact same phenomenon is occurring in the present depression. Bank deposits in the U.S. are now declining at an annual rate of 0.6 percent as bank loans fall,

of bourgeois economic theory—is a fiction. The capacity to borrow is strictly limited by one’s ownership of the capital assets required for security against loans. In reality, credit under capitalism is always rationed, on the basis of specific monopoly complexes involving financial, industrial and commercial capitalists. The clearest example of this is the Japanese *zaibatsu* system, but the same phenomenon holds throughout the capitalist world.

From the Marxist standpoint the fundamental fallacy of Keynesian economics is the assertion that the expansion of the government sector will leave the rate of profit, and therefore the level of private investment, unchanged. Whether financed through borrowing or taxation, government expenditure constitutes overhead costs of the capitalist system—a



Above: A Hooverville in Seattle, 1934. These shantytowns, sarcastically named after Herbert Hoover, U.S. president at beginning of Great Depression, sprang up throughout America. After first few years of Depression, there was an upturn in class struggle. Below: Teamsters and their supporters repel strike-breakers and police during Trotskyist-led Minneapolis strike in 1934.



although the falling interest rates are now even lower than the rate of inflation (*International Herald Tribune*, 15-16 February). The expansion and contraction of credit is a passive *result*, not a cause, of changes in production.

Underlying the analytical difference over the role of credit and interest between bourgeois and Marxist economics is the concept of class. In bourgeois economics there is no capitalist class. Instead, atomized non-capitalist entrepreneurs borrow from equally atomized rentiers, using the funds to establish productive enterprises. Entrepreneurs and rentiers are linked solely through the rate of interest.

According to Marxism, however, the capitalist class is a definite concrete group composed of those who own and have a monopoly over the means of production (including loanable capital). The capitalist class is bound together by innumerable personal, familial and organizational filiations; the atomized non-capitalist entrepreneur—the central figure

part of the total social capital expended and replaced, denoted by “constant capital” in Marx’s equation for the components of the commodity product. (For a fuller discussion of this question, see “Myth of Neo-Capitalism,” *RCY Newsletter* No. 10, January-February 1972.)

Assuming, as Marx did, that the share of wages of productive workers (variable capital) is determined in the labor market, then an increase in government overhead costs (constant capital) must *reduce* the potential surplus value and therefore the rate of profit as well. A constantly expanding government sector would tend to drive down the rate of profit, progressively arresting private capitalist investment.

The Limits of Mattick’s “Mixed Economy”

Published in 1969, Paul Mattick’s book *Marx and Keynes*, which carries the more indicative subtitle, *The Limits of the Mixed Economy*, accepts the common revisionist/reformist/liberal view that for a certain

historic period Keynesianism produced “prosperity”:

“Government induced production may even bolster the rate of economic growth. Conditions of ‘prosperity’ more impressive than those brought forth under laissez-faire conditions may arise.... At any rate, recent economic history has demonstrated the possibility of a ‘prosperous’ development of a mixed economy.”

However, Mattick at least makes a serious attempt to develop the internal contradictions of Keynesian economic policy and holds that increased government expenditure must eventually destroy capitalist stability:

“Once non-profit production becomes an institutionalized part of the economy, a vicious circle begins to operate. Government production is begun because private capital accumulation is diminishing. Using this method diminishes private capital accumulation even more; so non-profit production is increased.... The limits of private capital production are thus, finally, the limits of government induced production.”

The most orthodox of the various revisionist theoreticians of postwar capitalism (e.g., Mandel, Paul Sweezy, Michael Kidron), Mattick is the most grudging in giving ground before the claims of Keynesianism. In contrast to Mandel and Sweezy, Mattick’s work has the virtue of recognizing that expanded government expenditure drives down the rate of profit on private capital and therefore inhibits productive investment. However, Mattick would have been more consistent with Marxist economics if instead of treating government expenditure as a non-profit component of surplus value he treated it as a subtraction from the gross value of output, in the form of constant capital expended and replaced.

Mattick’s work is a partially correct explanation of why those capitalist countries bearing a heavy burden of government expenditure (the U.S., Great Britain) have grown much slower than those economies with a relatively limited state sector (Japan, France). Yet his theory cannot explain the onset of a major world depression, nor does Mattick project such a development. The logic of his theoretical model is for progressive stagnation, not a general world slump.

According to Mattick’s model, a sharp fall in private investment such as occurred in 1974 should have been preceded and caused by a sharp rise in the share of government expenditure. But this did not at all happen during the 1972-73 boom. The share of government outlays in the advanced capitalist countries remained virtually unchanged during that period, as can be seen from the following figures:

Government Expenditures as Percentage of GNP		
Country	1971	1973
France	12%	12%
Japan	9%	9%
United States	22%	22%
West Germany	17%	18%

Source: OECD, *Economic Outlook*, December 1972 and December 1974.

Thus even at the empirical level it is indisputable that the current world economic crisis cannot be attributed to the limits of Keynesianism, at least not in the sense of intolerably large government expenditure relative to private capitalist production.

The Mandelian School of Falsification

In “The Generalized Recession of the International Capitalist Economy” (*Inprecor*, 16 January 1975) Ernest Mandel, theoretician-leader of the pseudo-Trotskyist United Secretariat, attempts a major analysis of the world conjuncture. The article begins with a statement of self-praise to the effect that the author, unlike many others, always rejected the idea that Keynesian economic policies could stabilize capitalist industrial cycles:

“While the recession may be a surprise to all those in bourgeois and petty-bourgeois circles and in the workers movement who had been taken in by the claim that the governments of Capital endowed with neo-Keynesian techniques would henceforth be in a position to ‘control the cycle,’ it was foreseen and

continued on page 6



(continued from page 5)

And who are these unnamed figures in the workers movement who believed—oh, how naively—that “neo-Keynesian techniques” could “control the cycle”? Perhaps Mandel is referring to the author of the following excerpts from a well-known book on Marxist economics published in 1962:

economy is refloated by means of such injections—first of all in West Germany, then in the United States and Japan—the international capitalist economy will avert a grave depression this time.”

If this were possible, one wonders why the capitalist governments have let things go so far.

Despite his usual fine-print escape clauses, Mandel's latest contribution is a dishonest repudiation of the analysis of contemporary capitalism expressed in his principal writings during the 1960s. Having served its purpose as an impressionistic justification for opportunist policies of adaptation to the labor bureaucracy, "neocapitalism" has now been discreetly removed from the Mandelian vocabulary.

Having “disappeared” his belief in the efficacy of Keynesian stabilization poli-

Having “disappeared” his belief in the efficacy of Keynesian stabilization poli-

cial claims. The principal "multinational firms" which extract surplus value in a "great number of countries simultaneously" are today, as they have been for centuries, the great banks, not industrial corporations.

World crises are marked and intensified above all by major bank failures: the Austrian Credit-Anstalt in 1931, Bankhaus Herstatt in West Germany and Franklin National Bank in the U.S. in 1974. The partial displacement of banks by industrial firms in financing international trade and investment has a certain effect on present-day capitalism. But it certainly does not qualitatively raise the level of international economic integration, permitting world economic crises for the first time.

Mandel's second reason is that the displacement of the dollar exchange standard by managed fluctuating rates in 1971 has prevented competitive devaluation.

“stop-go” policies of various British governments before the 1968 devaluation of the pound).

Mandel's third reason is that since periods of national economic slump are becoming longer they are more likely to overlap with recessions in other countries:

“The phases of stagnation, and even recession, are beginning to be longer. Obviously, this leads to synchronization. When they occur in a dozen countries at once, recessions that last six months are less easily surmounted than recessions that last two years.”

This is, of course, a statistical truism. However, since the prolongation of an economic crisis in one country is strongly influenced by simultaneous slumps in the rest of the world, Mandel's reasoning is completely circular. Thus his third "reason" is no reason at all but simply another way of describing a general world downturn.

In short, of Mandel's three reasons why a general world slump is occurring now but was not possible in the preceding period, the first is irrelevant, the second is false and the third is meaningless.

Virtually all liberal bourgeois, reformist and revisionist economists maintain that the only obstacle to effective Keynesian policies is inflation. Expanded government expenditure can always produce full employment, they say, but sometimes only at the cost of intolerable rates of inflation. From bourgeois reactionaries like Milton Friedman to the pseudo-Marxist Ernest Mandel there is agreement that Keynesian policies must generate ever-higher levels of inflation. Is this contention valid?

The accelerated inflation of the past few years is an indisputable empirical fact. In the period 1961-71 consumer prices in the advanced capitalist countries increased at an annual rate of 3.7 percent; in 1972 this rose to 4.7 percent, in 1973 to 7.7 percent and in 1974 to 14.1 percent (OECD, *Economic Outlook*, December 1974)! Is this accelerated inflation an inevitable result of 20 years of Keynesian policies?

Earlier in this article it was pointed out that the share of government expenditure did not increase during the 1972-73 boom. Thus the price explosion during the past few years cannot be attributed to ever-greater budget deficits to finance ever-greater government spending. The very sharpness of the price increases since 1971 argues against the theory that it is an organic, inevitable outcome of a generation of deficit spending.

What then is the cause of the increased inflation of the past three years? One major cause has already been touched

talist decline which we have listed. The capitalist economy of this phase tends to ensure *greater stability* both of consumption and of investment than in the era of free competition, or than during the first phase of monopoly capitalism; it tends toward a reduction in cyclical fluctuations, resulting above all from the increasing intervention of the state in economic life.” [emphasis in original]

What is this supposedly Marxist work which claims that state intervention has ensured “*greater stability*” and “a reduction of cyclical fluctuations”? It is entitled *Marxist Economic Theory* (the excerpts are from Chapter 14) and is written by one Ernest Mandel.

To be fair to Mandel, it should be noted that he always hedges his bets. He has not completely rejected the efficacy of Keynesian countercyclical measures. Buried in the *Inprecor* article is a statement that governmental intervention can arrest and reverse the present world economic crisis:

"The recession is precisely a crisis of overproduction whose breadth and duration are limited by an injection of inflationary buying power. Thus, if the

cies, Mandel resorts to various ad hoc theories to explain the present conjuncture. His central theme is why there is a *world* crisis now, whereas during the past 20 years the various national slumps (sometimes severe) were largely isolated in time from one another. As Mandel puts it:

“The generalized recession will be the most serious recession in the post-war period, precisely because it is generalized. The lack of synchronization of the industrial cycle during the 1948-68 period reduced the breadth of recessions.”

It is an indisputable empirical fact that since the 1958 recession (not since 1948 as Mandel contends), the various national economic downturns have not reinforced and have partly offset each other. This statement can be transformed from an empirical description into a causal theory only if it is asserted that the absence of conjunctural synchronization was not due to contingent factors, but rather was inherent in the structure of postwar capitalism (at least until recently). This is precisely what Mandel now seeks to demonstrate:

“This synchronization is not an accidental feature. It results from deeper economic transformations that occurred during the long period of expansion that preceded the recession.”

Mandel advances three reasons to support this thesis. The first is that the world economy in the 1950s-1960s was not sufficiently integrated (!) to permit a generalized crisis. But during that period, the world economy became sufficiently integrated, particularly due to the expansion of multinational firms:

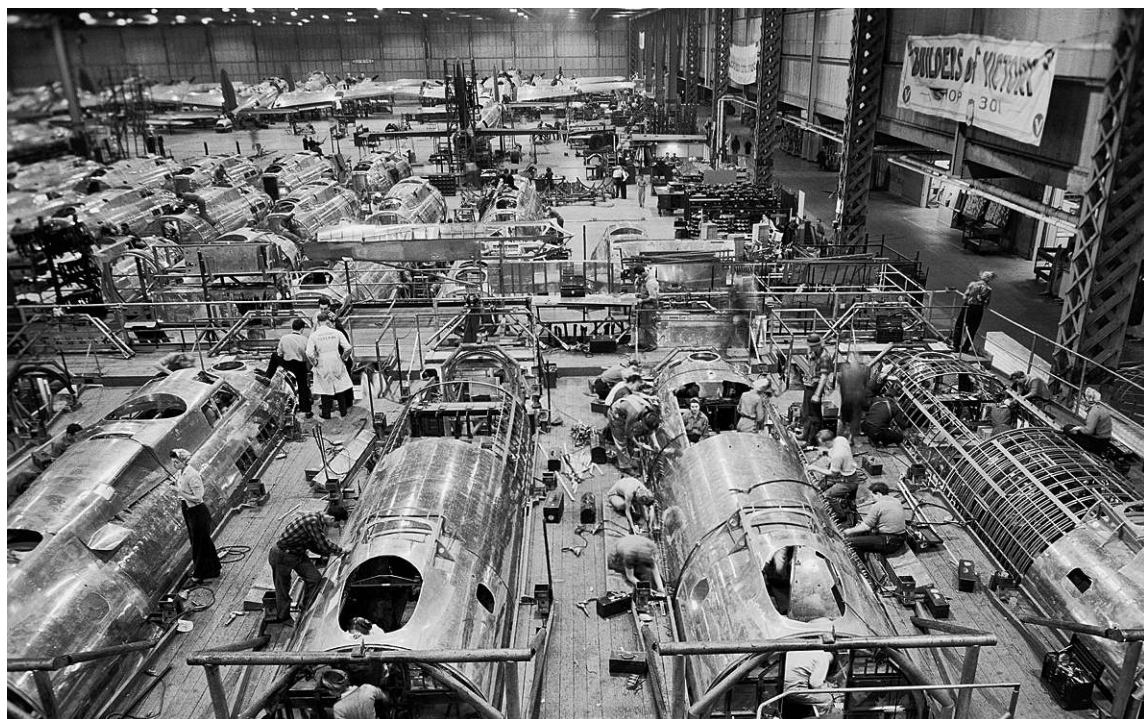
“Internationalization of production took new leaps forward, marked by advances in the international division of labor among all the imperialist countries. From the standpoint of the organization of capital, this reflected itself in the rise of multinational firms which produced surplus value in a great number of countries simultaneously....”

Apparently it really is necessary to point out to Mandel that the world economy has been sufficiently integrated to generate international crises/slumps for more than a century! The principal basis of that integration is world commodity trade and its associated complex of finan-

thus requiring simultaneous deflationary policies:

“...as soon as the collapse of the international monetary system led to the system of floating exchange rates, that is, as soon as it became impossible to resort to sharp devaluations to boost exports, *all* governments were obliged by interimperialist competition to apply an antiinflationary policy *simultaneously*.” [emphasis in original]

This argument is simply false, totally wrong. The fixed exchange rate system set up at Bretton Woods in 1944 was deflationary and acted as a limit to deficit spending. Several prominent British Keynesians, such as Roy Harrod and James Meade, long advocated fluctuating exchange rates in order to pursue



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bomber factory.  
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pulled U.S. out  
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Tet Offensive  
by North  
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and National  
Liberation Front  
fighters was  
powerful blow  
against U.S.  
imperialism.  
Long losing war  
in Vietnam  
undermined  
American  
global economic  
supremacy.**

more expansionary monetary and fiscal policies.

Before August 1971 competitive devaluation was exceptional, to be used only *in extremis*; today it is the rule. During the 1950s and 1960s governments often resorted to deflationary measures to protect an overvalued exchange rate (for instance, the policies of the second Eisenhower administration, the austerity program of the early Gaullist regime and the

**Programmatic Statement  
of the Spartacist League/U.S.**



**For a Workers Party  
That Fights for a Workers Government!**

**For Socialist Revolution  
in the Bastion  
of World Imperialism!**


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**Organizational Rules and Guidelines  
of the Spartacist League/U.S.**

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**Opponents of the Revolutionary  
Internationalist Workers Movement**

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# New York City Transit LRP Squirms Over Its “Critical” Support to Toussaint



TWU Local 100

In the article “TWU Local 100 Tops Sign No-Strike Pledge” (WV No. 926, 5 December 2008), we drew attention to the class collaboration practiced by various left-talking labor fakers in Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100, especially the supporters of the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP), who distribute *Revolutionary Transit Worker* (RTW). Despite their occasional militant posturing, these self-described socialists practice rank trade-union opportunism. Squealing like stuck pigs because we exposed their accommodation to the union tops’ fealty to the Democratic Party and other betrayals, the LRP posted online a “Response to Spartacist Slanders about RTW” (2 January).

The LRP/RTW hides the fact that in 2000 it urged transit workers to vote for Roger Toussaint in his successful bid for local president on the New Directions (ND) “opposition” slate. Their support for Toussaint, albeit with some empty criticisms, reflects an underlying programmatic agreement with the trade-union bureaucracy, which chains workers to the capitalist system, largely by preaching reliance on the Democrats. That’s why LRP/RTW supporter Eric Josephson ran for a mid-level local union post last spring on a program that did not breathe a word against the Democratic Party, much less the union’s endorsement of Barack Obama. The TWU bureaucracy was pulling out all the stops to get out the vote for the Democrats at the time.

The counterfeit “Marxists” of the LRP and sundry reformists make a practice of braintrusting and giving left cover to one or another wing of the trade-union bureaucracy, thereby further strengthening the hold of the Democratic Party on the working class. The LRP’s backing of the union-suing, pro-capitalist ND caucus is one glaring example. When he was pushing votes for Toussaint, Josephson acknowledged in a 19 October 2000 leaflet that “the program which ND is really enthusiastic about is, of course, filing lawsuits.” But Josephson and the LRP concluded: “Despite our differences with ND, we stand with our co-workers’ desire for a new Local leadership. We will support ND.”

For the LRP, bringing the capitalist courts into the unions is *not* a matter of principle. In typical slimy fashion, they have asserted: “Revolutionaries cannot absolutely rule out that there may arise exceptional and extreme situations under which using the courts in a union struggle may be necessary” (*Proletarian Revolution*, Summer/Fall 1998). It is class treason to use the courts or other government agencies against rivals in the union. Doing so only serves to shackle the power of the union and place it under the thumb of the capitalist state. Labor must clean its own house!

This same appetite was revealed following the 2005 strike, when Josephson enthusiastically helped build a “Vote No Coalition” of all manner of Toussaint’s opponents, most of whom were onetime ND members and Toussaint supporters. Addressing the LRP’s strike article in *Proletarian Revolution* (Winter 2006), we wrote: “The article includes not one word of criticism of Josephson’s bloc partners—not on their history of supporting ND and suing the union, not on [then-

Local 100 executive board member Ainsley] Stewart’s opposition to the strike. Not only that, it calls for extending the ‘united front,’ aiming for the union’s elections this fall—i.e., they want a warmed-over version of New Directions” (WV No. 863, 3 February 2006).

Before, during and after the strike, WV denounced the policies of the Local 100 leadership as a whole and put forward a class-struggle strategy. The leaflet that we distributed to striking workers called for a fighting alliance of all the unions at the head of the oppressed, combated illusions in the Democrats, cops and courts, and urged the organization of elected strike committees as against the policies of both the Local 100 and the TWU International tops (see “Victory to the Transit Workers Strike!” WV No. 861, 6 January 2006).

So why does the LRP howl that we “failed to criticize Toussaint’s mishandling of the 2005 strike while it was going on” and claim that we now give the Local 100 president “backhanded support, in the name of defending the union”? Like typical trade-union opportunists, the LRP fixates on Toussaint as an individual, rather than the class-collaborationist program that he represents, in order to bloc with anti-Toussaint bureaucrats who share the same politics. During the strike, the LRP joined a chorus of disgruntled elements in



WV Photo

**TWU workers on the picket line at Manhattan’s Clara Hale bus barn during December 2005 NYC transit strike.**

going after Toussaint, who was the main target of the capitalist rulers’ attempt to divide and isolate the union through racist vilification of its elected leader. We did not denounce Toussaint by name in the midst of this class battle, even as we counterposed a class-struggle program to the class collaboration of the local leadership.

The LRP was playing to the same “anti-Toussaint” elements with its “amnesty” plan to grant full union and voting rights to backward workers who had stopped paying union dues. The capitalist rulers’ vengeful effort to bankrupt the union in the wake of the strike by levying heavy fines against the union and its members and by taking away dues checkoff did in fact inflict real hardship on the union and its membership. But the answer to that is not to coddle backward workers or to appeal to the employers to retake control of dues collection.

The LRP quotes from a 22 August letter to the *Chief-Leader* by RTW supporters calling on Toussaint to “publicly, loudly, urgently and continuously wage the legal case for restoration” of dues checkoff, which was revoked by the capi-

**LRP Leaflet, 19 Oct. 2000**

**VOTE FOR NEW DIRECTIONS — BUT DON'T TRUST THEM FOR A SECOND!**

Despite New Directions's conservative electoral approach, workers are so fed up with the current

**Transport Workers Union Local 100 president Roger Toussaint (left) with New York Democratic governor David Paterson at West Indian Day Parade in Brooklyn, September 2008. LRP called for vote to pro-capitalist New Directions/Toussaint slate in 2000 union elections.**

talist courts in retaliation for the 2005 strike. Earth to LRP: dues checkoff means the bosses control union finances. For the labor bureaucrats, dues checkoff reflects a desire to live in “harmony” with the class enemy and allows them to evade the responsibility of facing the membership to collect dues. The logic of making the bosses the union’s banker is to undermine the capacity of the union to strike. In fact, dues checkoff was restored last November after Toussaint pledged never to strike again. As we wrote in our December 2008 article, “With Toussaint’s no-strike pledge, RTW got what it wanted.”

The dues checkoff is an example of the tendency for trade unions in the absence of revolutionary leadership to

collaborationist TWU tops can aim such attacks against any worker who gets “out of line.” We demand Josephson’s reinstatement and defend victimized union members against bureaucratic attacks and violations of workers democracy.

Having repudiated the union’s right to strike, Toussaint voluntarily submitted the Local 100 contract to binding arbitration just days before its January 15 expiration this year. The arbitration panel is not “neutral” but rather is a tool of the bosses and stacked against labor’s interests. Transit workers can rely only on their own independent strength and organization and must oppose traps like arbitration. These are tough times for the working class. But not fighting will only ensure greater misery in the future. It is necessary to mobilize union power to fight for your jobs and your livelihoods, to stop attacks on pensions and health care, to oppose service cuts and fare hikes.

Time and again, the LRP tramples on the elementary principle of complete and unconditional independence of the trade unions from the bosses and the agencies of the capitalist state. Pandering to illusions in the new U.S. imperialist Commander-in-Chief, the LRP looks forward to “struggles to put Obama to the test of demands that he address the working class’s needs” in a flyer distributed to a large NYC union rally on March 5. In fact, the Obama administration has already moved to break the power of the United Auto Workers through the so-called bailout package and is gearing up to impose savage austerity on workers, blacks, minorities, immigrants and the poor.

This whitewashing of the representatives of the class enemy goes hand in hand with the LRP’s lining up against the Soviet Union and the bureaucratically deformed workers states from the Cold War to the present. This outfit cheered capitalist counterrevolution in the USSR. Just as we defend the unions, despite their pro-capitalist misleaders, against the employers, genuine Marxists defended the Soviet Union, and today we defend the remaining deformed workers states of China, Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam, despite their Stalinist misleaders, against imperialist attack and capitalist restoration. In spitting on the workers states, which embody historic victories of the international proletariat abroad, the LRP is in no position to defend the organizational gains of workers struggle at home: the trade unions. Our task is to break the working class from the “lesser evil” Democratic Party of racist U.S. imperialism, to forge a class-struggle union leadership, and to build a revolutionary workers party capable of leading the working class in a struggle for power. ■



# Milk...

(continued from page 12)

the bounds of the capitalist courts and the ballot box is fully in keeping with the politics of *Milk*, which represents quite accurately the fulsome confidence in capitalist democracy that Harvey Milk pushed. With the election of the first black president, Barack Obama, the American ruling class is hoping for an extended honeymoon of race, class and social peace, while refurbishing illusions in American imperialist democracy. *Milk* is “the first openly Obama-iste movie,” quipped the *Village Voice*. *Slate* agreed: “Few reviewers will miss the opportunity to point out—the parallels are hard to ignore—that Harvey Milk was the Barack Obama of his day, a minority candidate who represented change, opposed the party machine, and preached the gospel of hope.” Not to be outdone, the *New York Times* reviewer wrote: “This is how change happens. This is what it looks like.”

Sure, that’s what they want the exploited and oppressed to believe. Milk himself said, “If a gay can win, it means there is hope that the system can work for all minorities if we fight. We’ve given them hope.” With such words Harvey Milk funneled the votes of the large homosexual community in San Francisco to the Democratic Party, which is no less a capitalist party of racism, war and “family values” than the Republicans.

## Gay Oppression and “Coming Out”

With scenes of handsome, bare-chested men and exuberant parties and parades, *Milk* makes constituency politicking look like a lot of fun. It also represents Milk’s personal take on “gay liberation”: all the closeted gays should “come out” so that the bigots will see that homosexuals are “just folks” like them. But while this may seem to be true in the small bubbles that are San Francisco’s Castro district and New York’s Christopher Street, seeing politicized lifestylism and constituency politics as the answer to the oppression of gay people is a most dangerous illusion.

The oppression of homosexuals is not merely or even primarily the result of narrow-mindedness. Homosexuals continue to be repressed by capitalist law. Widespread bigotry on this issue is fundamentally conditioned by the institution of the monogamous family unit, the main



21 May 1979: Protest at S.F. City Hall against light sentence given to Dan White, who murdered Milk and Moscone.

social source of the oppression of women, youth and homosexuals in class society, and by the considerable power of organized religion. Such oppression does not make homosexuality in itself political. Sexuality is a complex and essentially personal and *private* matter; thus the Spartacist League most vehemently opposes any government intrusion into consensual sexual activity and private life—we say, “Government out of the bedrooms!”

A corollary is the SL’s political opposition to the *program* of “coming out” pushed by “lifestyle liberationists” such as Milk, which may defy but cannot eradicate class-rooted repressive institutions. We defend those who choose to “come out” against victimization by reactionaries. But living as an open homosexual or transvestite or whatever one’s individual choice—courageous as it is—can be deadly in this violent, backward, anti-sex society. Recall the brutal killing of Matthew Shepard in 1998—beaten and left hanging on a barbed-wire fence to die—and of Gwen Araujo, a transgender youth, in 2002. A 2006 survey by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network reported that violent attacks are a daily part of life for gay, lesbian and transgender youth: nearly two-thirds reported feeling unsafe at school, over a third experienced physical harassment, and nearly a fifth were assaulted because of their sexual orientation.

Young gays in the Castro today might note that the cross on Mt. Davidson still dominates the city’s southern skyline and bear in mind that the first big concentration of gays in the Bay Area was not the

footloose youth of the late 1960s-’70s “sexual liberation” era. During World War II, with San Francisco as its West Coast embarkation point, U.S. imperialism threw tens of thousands of young men out of the military as homosexuals, giving them blue discharge papers marked with a capital H. The Department of Defense still refuses to say how many thousands were discharged. Not relishing the prospect of returning to their hometowns, many of these young men stayed in San Francisco. An excellent book by Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire*, details the history of these gay men and women, many of whom first met others like themselves in the military in World War II. Today, gays still aren’t allowed to serve openly in the U.S. military. According to a 2004 report by the gay rights group Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, in the ten years after Democratic president Bill Clinton adopted the infamous “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy, around 10,000 service members were discharged for being gay or bisexual.

## Who Was Harvey Milk?

As Randy Shilts recounts in his 1982 biography *The Mayor of Castro Street*, Harvey Milk was a latecomer to the politics of “gay power.” After his 1951 college graduation, Milk, a fervent anti-Communist who wanted to stop the Reds from taking over Asia, enlisted in the Navy during the Korean War, where he rose rapidly through the ranks to become an officer. After leaving the Navy, Milk worked as an insurance broker and a researcher at a Wall Street investment firm. A staunch conservative, he was a supporter of Republican Barry Goldwater, opposing any kind of government intervention in the capitalist economy. Milk was at this time entirely uninterested in his homosexuality as a political question. But as ’60s New Left radicalism swung into full sway, Harvey Milk got into hippie lifestylism, growing his hair long as he hung with the cast of the flower-power hit *Hair*. By the early ’70s, he and his lover Scott Smith had moved to San Francisco.

Harvey Milk’s transformation from New York stockbroker to San Francisco Democrat moved him from the conservative to the liberal wing of capitalist politics. He built his power base in the Castro as a small businessman, defender of his community and president of the gay-dominated Castro Village Association. The movie portrays Milk’s politics quite accurately. Sean Penn gives us pretty much word-for-word Milk’s speech at the San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade in June 1978. Milk quoted patriotic passages from the verses engraved on the Statue of Liberty, phrases from the Declaration of Independence and the national anthem, and continued:

“No matter how hard you try, you cannot erase those words from the Declaration of Independence. No matter how hard you try, you cannot chip those words from off the base of the Statue of Liberty. And no matter how hard you try, you cannot sing the ‘Star-Spangled Banner’ without those words. That’s what America is. Love it or leave it.”

Milk said in his inauguration speech as San Francisco supervisor: “I fully understand the debt and responsibility that

major corporations owe the shareholders.... American business must realize that while the shareholders always come first, the care and feeding of their customer is a close second.” And gays, Milk insisted, were among their best customers—if not fellow players.

## The Democratic Party Machine in San Francisco

Played by actor Josh Brolin, reactionary bigot Dan White is first shown in the movie spouting a sentence from his election campaign: “I’m not going to be forced out of San Francisco by splinter groups of radicals, social deviates and incorrigibles.” Ex-cop Dan White didn’t fit in with the clique of slick professional politicians who made up the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. For most of these well-off businessmen, realtors and lawyers, open contempt for the oppressed is considered bad taste. But there was no fundamental difference in the class loyalties of the three players, despite how White’s vengeance drama played out against Moscone and Milk. As we pointed out following the murders in “Reformists Weep for Strikebreaker Moscone” (WV No. 222, 5 January 1979): “Just who are these ‘elected officials’ anyway? Isn’t Moscone the same capitalist politician who crushed the 1976 San Francisco municipal craft workers strike? Isn’t Milk responsible for funneling votes of the large homosexual ‘community’ to the party of Anita Bryant, the Dixiecrats and the Vietnam War?”

In the ’60s and ’70s the Democratic Party machine in San Francisco was undergoing certain tactical shifts spurred by social and economic changes in the area. As the industrial base shrank and gentrification took over many old working-class neighborhoods like the Castro, San Francisco looked to tourism and to building up the downtown financial district as a corporate center. Old-time party bosses, with ties to the Catholic church and the white ethnic neighborhoods, were giving way to the new liberal-chic politicians who remain in power today. It is really these changes that are responsible for this huge falling out in the Democratic Party power structure, which exploded in Dan White’s murder of Moscone and Milk.

The movie ends with a candlelight march of tens of thousands in mourning for Harvey Milk. But the important aftermath is reduced to a couple of sentences on the screen: Dan White, who committed two coldblooded killings—of elected government officials, no less—that couldn’t have looked more like deliberate, premeditated murder in the first degree, was slapped on the wrist with two counts of voluntary manslaughter and sentenced to less than seven years in prison (he served five). If some gay person had murdered ex-cop White and Moscone, you can bet that nothing less than the death penalty, on the spot, would have sufficed.

So naturally the “gay ghetto” exploded in rage. Well into the night, thousands battled with the cops. Nearly every window in City Hall was broken and the doors were smashed, while Mayor Dianne Feinstein (now a U.S. Senator) and other bigwigs were trapped inside. Cop cars and paddy wagons went up in flames. We wrote in “Behind S.F. Night of Gay Rage” (WV No. 234, 22 June 1979):

“Revolutionaries solidarize with the legitimate outrage of San Francisco’s homosexuals over the light sentence given to this bigoted, reactionary, killer ex-cop. And we fully support their defending themselves against the rampaging goons of the capitalist state. But the identification of many San Francisco gay people with Harvey Milk generally translates into political support for the liberal-chic wing of the Democratic Party, a ruling-class group whose policies toward workers and the poor are often harsher than their more traditional old-line ‘machine’ opponents.”

How did Dan White get off so easily? The infamous “Twinkie defense” claimed that sugary junk food contributed to a mood disturbance that resulted in “diminished capacity.” At the time, there were cries of collusion between the cops and the D.A. as well as charges of homopho-



McLeod/SF Examiner

Supervisor Harvey Milk (left) with ally, Mayor George Moscone, April 1978. Below: Striking workers face Moscone’s cops at San Francisco City Hall, April 1976.



WV Photo



bia against the judge and jury. But the real point is that the jury wanted to believe Dan White’s defense. The jury, largely working-class and middle-class, was drawn from those areas of San Francisco that were seen as the last bastion of family life. WV commented:

“What the jury shared with White was not simply ‘homophobia’ but a fear, exploited by the reactionary White, that San Francisco has become unlivable for ‘just plain folks.’  
“But this ex-cop turned Supervisor was not ‘just plain folks’; he was not some working-class guy driven into a crazy frenzy by some posh liberal snobs. Dan White was a dangerous reactionary politician. He exploited the fears, grievances and economic distress of San Francisco’s ethnic Catholic lower classes for the politics of racist, anti-gay bigotry, just as Harvey Milk exploited homosexual oppression for the liberal-sophisticate face of capitalist rule.”

After Dianne Feinstein was elected mayor in her own right in 1979, one of her first acts as she sought the support of gay voters was to mandate the recruitment of gay cops into the San Francisco police force. By 1980, one in seven new police recruits was either a lesbian or a gay man. Such “diversity” does not alter the cops’ role as agents of repression for the ruling class, which includes persecuting immigrants, black youth and striking workers.

Jimmy Carter, “Human Rights” and the Anti-Sex Witchhunt

*Milk* shows a 30-second cameo of then-president Jimmy Carter calling on Californians to vote against Prop 6, the John Briggs initiative on the 1978 state ballot that sought the firing of homosexual teachers and their supporters. Aside from this issue and the “Save Our Children” campaign promoted by homophobic “sun-



June 1977 NYC gay rights demonstration: SL contingent (left) called for proletarian perspective, opposed reformist/liberal adaptation to Democrat Carter’s anti-Soviet “human rights” campaign.

the resignation of Republican president Richard (“I am not a crook”) Nixon in 1974. For the American bourgeoisie, this all-sided social turmoil and defiance of authority was deeply disturbing, and the potential for an alliance of black militants and radicalized students with an increasingly restive labor movement was a threat that had to be stopped. Thus a major bourgeois ideological assault was launched to overcome the “Vietnam syndrome” and to instill an unquestioning acceptance of capitalism, God and family, including the desirability of dying for one’s country.  
The Carter administration brought “born again” religious fundamentalism front and center into the White House. This was the

eral social and political attitudes. The SL has always recognized that democratic rights are indivisible—and indeed has stood out in opposing reactionary state repression of the most oppressed or marginalized, including Mormon polygamists and NAMBLA (North American Man/Boy Love Association), a group shunned by more “respectable” gays for simply advocating the decriminalization of consensual sex between men and boys. As we wrote in “Rightist Reaction Pushes Anti-Homosexual Hysteria: Stop Anita Bryant!” (WV No. 165, 8 July 1977):  
“To struggle effectively against the persecution of homosexuals, ‘gay rights’ activists must begin by understanding that bourgeois democracy is partial, fragile and reversible.... The struggle fundamentally is not about sex but about all-sided democratic rights. The ‘Save Our Children’ mobilization is presently the most visible component of a much broader rightist offensive aimed at rolling back real and token gains of the last decade of liberalism. Recent targets include legal and safe abortions, especially for poor women; the Equal Rights Amendment; busing to combat school segregation; preferential minority-group college admissions. The ‘right-to-lifers’ screaming for the death penalty grasp the logic of the Bryant crusade far better than do some of its opponents.”

Today, over 30 years later, the bitter truth of that warning is all too apparent. In the 1980s, reactionaries seized on the deadly AIDS epidemic to demonize gays. Who even remembers the Equal Rights Amendment, a proposed amendment to the Constitution simply affirming formal equality for women? Busing and affirmative action are dead, the racist death penalty has claimed over a thousand lives since its reinstitution in 1976, legal and safe abortion is ever more out of reach for poor women. And the Soviet Union has been destroyed by counterrevolution, a world-historic defeat for the working class. In *Milk* you see the occasional picket sign demanding “human rights” for gays. This was a major demand of the anti-Bryant demonstrations, an implicit endorsement of Carter’s anti-Soviet “human rights” crusade to rearm U.S. imperialism, extending its buzzwords to homosexuals in the U.S.

We Marxists opposed the imperialist campaign against the USSR. We called for unconditional military defense of this bureaucratically degenerated workers state against imperialist assault and internal counterrevolution. We also called for political revolution by the working class to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy and restore soviet democracy and the proletarian internationalism of Lenin’s Bolsheviks.

Full Democratic Rights for Gays!

The alliance of lifestyle radicals, reformists and Democrats can promise only token reforms that enrage American backwardness and touch off new waves of backlash. Today, over 40 states have enacted laws banning same-sex marriage. In California, an unholy alliance of the Mormons, the Catholic church and evangelical Protestants went on a rampage to get Prop 8 passed. Recognizing that with Obama’s candidacy black voters would

turn out at the polls in record numbers, a big push was made to find allies among conservative black Baptist preachers. A full-page ad in the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, the city’s major black newspaper, urged a yes vote on Prop 8 to restore “the sanctity of marriage.”  
Perhaps the most effective campaign tool to boost Proposition 8 was the “robocalls” to people’s cell phones with recordings of Obama addressing a crowd with the declaration: “I believe marriage is a union between a man and a woman. Now, for me as a Christian, it is also a sacred union.” While proclaiming that he did not support Proposition 8 because it was “unnecessary,” Obama’s opposition to gay marriage is a direct echo of Bush and other fundamentalist yahoos of both capitalist parties. After all, Bill Clinton signed the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act that pronounced, “The word ‘marriage’ means only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife.” In the same year, he signed the “Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act,” part of his ending “welfare as we know it,” consigning millions of impoverished mothers and children to misery and hunger.  
The Spartacist League and Spartacus Youth Clubs joined protests against Prop 8 with placards demanding: “Down With Prop 8! For the Right of Gay Marriage... and Divorce!”, “State, Church and Family: Holy Trinity of Women’s Oppression!” and “Don’t Crawl for the Democrats—Build a Workers Party!” As fighters for the socialist liberation of humanity, we are committed to full democratic rights for gays, lesbians and transgenders, and we support any legal advances that can be wrested from this cruelly bigoted society, including the right to marry. But we do not advocate or prettify the institution of marriage. We fight for a society in which no one needs to be forced into a legal straitjacket in order to get medical benefits, visitation rights, custody of children, immigration rights, or any of the many privileges this capitalist society grants to those, and only those, who are embedded in the traditional “one man on one woman for life” marital mold.  
In the ’70s, politicians like Harvey

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shine girl” and spokeswoman for Florida orange juice Anita Bryant, the crucial context of national and international politics is absent from the movie. But Anita Bryant and Briggs were not isolated nut-cases out to wreck things for the progressive gays. They were the voices of larger political forces at work, directed from the White House. While Prop 6 was defeated, Carter’s formal opposition signified no commitment to gay rights (even supreme bigot Ronald Reagan opposed Prop 6 at the time).  
Coming to office in 1977, the Democratic Carter administration kicked off an onslaught of domestic social reaction and the renewal of U.S. imperialism’s Cold War drive aimed at the destruction of the Soviet Union, garbed in the call for “human rights.” These policies reflected the attempt of the American ruling class to overcome widespread fear and loathing of the government following the explosive years of the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, the rise of the New Left, the women’s liberation movement and black radicalization, and finally the Watergate break-in that forced

national backdrop for Bryant’s “Save Our Children” campaign of hate and Briggs’s witchhunting of gay teachers. While the movie makes good fun of these bigots, showing Milk’s sharp wit in debate with Briggs, Milk is also shown promoting the deadly illusion that the bigots had actually done gays a favor by publicizing their oppression, forcing them to “unite” against it. In fact, the Bryant campaign, which rallied the forces of the aggressive hard core of virulent reaction, was a grave threat not only to homosexuals, but to all concerned with democratic rights. Indeed, paired with Briggs’s Prop 6 on the California ballot was a tougher death penalty initiative, Prop 7. Briggs insisted that the two issues were inexorably tied together. A fund-raising letter issued by his campaign raved against California’s “ineffective” death penalty law and listed homosexual teachers as an equally horrendous threat.  
The Spartacist League intervened heavily into the nationwide demonstrations against anti-gay bigotry. The oppression of homosexuals, like the oppression of women, serves as an index of more gen-

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Keynes...

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devaluation further feeds domestic inflation, producing a vicious spiral. Britain and Italy are the clearest examples of this process.

The second reason for the accelerated inflation is that the sharp 1972-73 world boom had an effect on agricultural and raw material supplies similar to that of a major war. From the Korean War through 1971 the terms of trade for agricultural products/raw materials had deteriorated relative to manufactures, producing a fundamental imbalance in global productive capacity. During 1972 when industrial output in the advanced capitalist countries increased by 8 percent, global food production actually fell slightly (OECD, *Economic Outlook*, December 1973). These physical shortages quickly generated speculation, hoarding and cartel manipulation. Between 1971 and 1973 the index of world raw material prices increased by over 80 percent, as did the price of internationally traded food products (OECD, *Economic Outlook*, December 1974). Thus two factors—the widespread resort to competitive devaluation after 1971 and the effect of the 1972-73 boom on agricultural and raw material supplies—account for the price explosion of the last few years.

Even discounting the fact that it is em-

pirically false, the argument that Keynesianism is now ineffective because it leads to intolerable inflation is not a fundamental but rather a temporary, conjunctural one. As an attempted objective analysis it is similar to the present position of certain right-wing Keynesians, such as Federal Reserve Board chairman Arthur F. Burns and Ford’s economic adviser William Fellner, who contend that a few years of high-unemployment slump are needed to drain the inflationary pressures out of the world capitalist system. After that, they contend, Keynesian policies can again produce 10 or 20 years of low-inflation, mild-recession expansion.



Getty

Line for food handouts in Detroit, December 2008.

Tiller...

(continued from page 2)

hysterical uproar among anti-abortion bigots when he nominated as Health and Human Services Secretary Kansas governor Kathleen Sebelius, a “pro-choice” Democrat who sponsored an April 2007 event at the governor’s residence with Tiller and his clinic’s staff. Yet during the election campaign, Obama told the Christian magazine *Relevant* that he opposed mental health exceptions for “late-term”

abortion bans because “I don’t think that ‘mental distress’ qualifies as the health of the mother” (AP, 4 July 2008). In office, Obama stripped from his economic stimulus package a proposal to allow states to expand Medicaid coverage of contraception and other family planning services. Obama’s proposed 2010 budget has been hailed by liberals for setting aside \$634 billion for health care, but the reality is that about half that sum would come from spending cuts in programs such as Medicare and Medicaid.

The attacks on abortion rights are part

If there is no major war nor a mass revolutionary upheaval in West Europe during the next few years (both are genuine possibilities), the world depression should deepen this year, giving way to high-unemployment stagnation lasting at least through 1976. If this occurs, in two years the rate of inflation will be greatly reduced; it already shows numerous signs of slowing. Those leftists whose central argument against bourgeois economic reformism is that it leads to ever-accelerating inflation will then find themselves theoretically defenseless against the claims of resurgent Keynesianism.

The “theory” that for a generation capi-

talist governments were able to prevent major crises and stimulate exceptional economic expansion has an implacable revisionist logic. Whatever the subjective attitudes of its proponents this view leads straight to the conclusion that we have been living in an epoch of capitalist economic stability. Such arguments have nothing in common with Marxism. On the contrary, the Transitional Program of the Fourth International has as its cornerstone the Leninist theory of imperialism as the highest (last) stage of capitalism, its epoch of decay and a period of wars and revolutions. This must be our perspective. ■

Milk...

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Milk represented the wing of the gay rights movement at peace with capitalism. But there were others, disaffected with capitalism, who broke from sectoralism—the “left” version of plain old capitalist “constituency politics”—and found their way to communism. A dozen cadre of the Los Angeles-based “gay liberation/communist” Red Flag Union (RFU), formerly the Lavender & Red Union, fused with the Spartacist League in 1977.

In the course of their political journey, the RFU rejected the false programs of a number of our reformist opponents. Against both crude Maoists like the

RCP and anti-Communist “state capitalists” like the Shachtmanite Revolutionary Socialist League (since deceased), they came to the Trotskyist position of defense of the degenerated and deformed workers states while calling for workers political revolution. Opportunist groups like the feminist Freedom Socialist Party sought to cater to the supposed “lifestylism” of the RFU by slandering the SL’s so-called “closet rule,” which simply states that in public our members seek to be known by their politics, not by their lifestyles. The RFU agreed with the SL’s position and sharply refuted the opportunists’ slanders.

The RFU wrote in *Red Flag* No. 3, a special fusion supplement to *Workers Vanguard* (WV No. 172, 9 September 1977): “There is no special revolution-

ary program for homosexuals. The communist program includes demands which address the special oppression of homosexuals. But unlike sectoralists, revolutionaries understand that the fate of homosexuals—like that of any other oppressed group—is determined by the course of the class struggle.” The RFU comrades came to understand that only the road of the Bolshevik October Revolution can open up a future of a socialist world where all forms of oppression and exploitation will be eradicated.

Only a socialist revolution can lay the basis for the replacement of the institution of the family with socialized childcare and housework. In the first five years of the Russian Revolution under Lenin and Trotsky, the Bolsheviks, insofar as they could in conditions of extreme poverty and international isolation, sought to liberate women through collectivized kitchens, childcare, dwellings and schools. As well, laws against *all forms* of consensual sex were abolished, establishing the noninterference of the state in all matters of private life. While a revolutionary gov-

ernment will always act to promote all measures to bring about freedom for all, bigotry cannot simply be abolished by decree. But the Bolsheviks understood that liberation is a material act, requiring resources far beyond those available to a backward peasant society like Russia. Nonetheless, the forces of *proletarian* state repression put the bigots and former oppressors on the run.

To finally arrive at classless communism requires the destruction of capitalist imperialism as a world system and the establishment of a world socialist division of labor, leading to a tremendous leap in the productive forces that can provide material plenty for all. The withering away of the family as the basic institution defining sexual relations will result in the eventual disappearance of patriarchal relations and of generalized anti-homosexual oppression. Our task is to build a revolutionary workers party like the Bolshevik Party that will act as a tribune of the people, a defender of all the oppressed, to lead the fight for world socialist revolution. ■

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Jonathon D. Colman



Chicagoist



“Anybody but Bush” reformists got what they wanted: a (warmongering) Democrat in the White House. From left: RCP’s World Can’t Wait at 2007 march in Washington; ISO-led appeal to Obama at Chicago campaign rally, February 2007; *Workers World* (13 November 2008) cheers Obama’s election.

# U.S. Troops...

(continued from page 1)

condemns countless numbers of people to death by malnutrition, lack of medical care, etc. Our standpoint is one of proletarian class opposition to the U.S. capitalist rulers and to the imperialist system as a whole.

Thus, we forthrightly called for the military defense of Afghanistan and Iraq against imperialist attack in the 2001 and 2003 invasions, without giving any political support to the reactionary, woman-hating Taliban cutthroats or the bloody capitalist dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. We underlined that every victory for the imperialists in their military adventures encourages more predatory wars; every setback serves to assist the struggles of working people and the oppressed the world over. We have stressed from the beginning that the chief means of defending neocolonial Afghanistan and Iraq against the overwhelming military might of American imperialism and its allies is international working-class struggle, especially by the multiracial U.S. proletariat. Today, we call for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. troops and bases from Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia!

Democrats and Republicans may differ over which tactics are most effective in pursuing the interests of U.S. imperialism, but they are both bourgeois parties that defend the interests of the capitalist ruling class. We oppose on principle *any* political support to bourgeois politicians—Democrats, Republicans or Greens. We fight instead for a program based on the mobilization of the multiracial proletariat independent of and in opposition to the parties of capitalist imperialism. As James Burnham, then a leader of the Workers Party, the Trotskyist organization in the U.S. at the time, argued in his 1936 pamphlet “War and the Workers”:

“To suppose, therefore, that revolutionists can work out a common ‘program against war’ with non-revolutionists is a fatal illusion. Any organization based upon such a program is not only powerless to prevent war; in practice it acts to promote war, both because it serves in its own way to uphold the system that breeds war, and because it diverts the attention of its members from the real fight against war. There is only *one* program against war: the program *for* revolution—the program of the revolutionary party of the workers.”

Only the working class has the objective interest and social power to smash the capitalist system. And it is only the eradication of capitalism through a series of workers revolutions in the U.S. and around the world that the basis can be laid for a classless, communist society in which war, poverty and exploitation are relics of a benighted past.

The reformist alternative to this revolutionary perspective is today captured in the groveling displayed by much of the left toward the new Commander-in-Chief of U.S. imperialism. This was expressed in a particularly craven form by WWP, whose Teresa Gutierrez raved in *Workers World* (20 November 2008):

“As communists and revolutionaries we take joy with the oppressed and other progressives as they gathered in jubilation from Harlem to Colombia to Japan to Kenya with the election of Obama....

Our love of the oppressed masses—like our solidarity with the working class—extends even when it involves the presidency of the strongest imperialist country ever.”

An ordinary New Leftist of a generation or two ago would have found this expression of love for an American president repulsive. It is a measure of how far to the right the reformists have moved under the sway of the imperialists’ “death of communism” crusade that avowed “leftists” now openly embrace the chief executive of the ruling class that brought humanity the nuclear incineration of 200,000 people in



V. Deni and M. Cheremnykh

**1920 Soviet poster reads: “Comrade Lenin cleans the world of its filth.” Bolshevik Revolution pointed way forward to proletarian revolution internationally against capitalist system that breeds war.**

Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, the slaughter of millions in counterrevolutionary wars in Korea and Vietnam in the 1950s and ’60s, and countless CIA-sponsored coups and death squad regimes in Latin America and elsewhere—to cite just a few of the crimes of U.S. imperialism. We say: Anti-imperialism abroad means class struggle at home! The reformists practice the inverse: Class collaboration at home means whitewashing the crimes of the imperialist butchers abroad.

Far from being a potential ally in the struggle against imperialist war and social injustice, Obama is, if anything, a potentially more effective and therefore more pernicious guardian of imperialist interests than his dunderhead predecessor. The president of the U.S., whether Democrat or Republican, stands at the head of the most massive military power in history and of the domestic machinery of repression that maintains social oppression and capitalist exploitation. As Marxists, we do not run for president, mayor or other executive offices in the bourgeois state. To stand for election to an executive position carries the implication that one is ready to accept responsibility for the administration of the machinery of the capitalist state. It is an elementary tenet of revolutionary Marxism that the working class cannot wield the capitalist state for its own interests; rather it must smash that state and re-

place it with a workers state, the dictatorship of the proletariat.

One small organization that claims to stand apart from the pro-Democratic pack is the Internationalist Group (IG). In an article recently posted on their Web site, “Obama Presidency: U.S. Imperialism Tries a Makeover,” dated February 2008 (*sic*), the IG proclaims: “The Internationalist Group did not call for a vote for Obama, the candidate of the Democratic Party, one of the twin parties of racist American capitalism, nor do we celebrate his presidency.” True enough, but the IG was more than willing to provide left cover for the Obama swamp in pursuing its own opportunist appetites. The IG’s role in the syphilitic chain that keeps labor tied to the capitalists and their political parties was made clear in the way it cozied up to the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) bureaucracy at the time of the West Coast port shutdown in opposition to the war in Iraq last May Day.

That shutdown pointed the way to the kind of working-class action that is needed against the imperialist occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. But the ILWU leadership undermined this action by channeling the ranks’ anger at the Iraq occupation and desire to defend the union into pro-Democratic Party “national unity” patriotism. Shortly after announcing the May Day action, the ILWU International announced its endorsement of Obama. At the ILWU May Day rally in San Francisco, a statement by ILWU International president Bob McEllrath was read from the platform, declaring that “longshore workers” are “loyal to America” and “won’t stand by while our country, our troops, and our economy are destroyed” by the war. The rally was politically dominated by capitalist politicians, including a representative of black Democratic Congresswoman Barbara Lee.

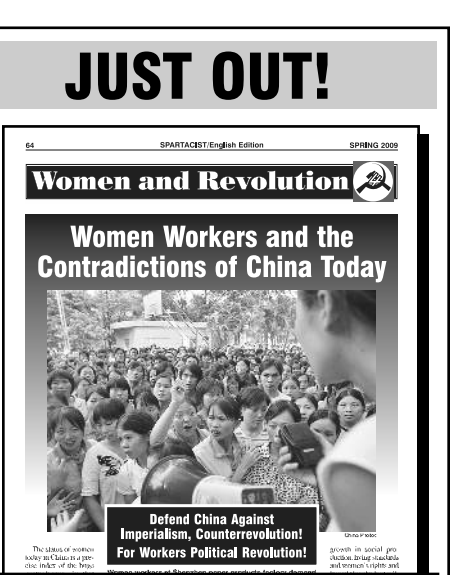
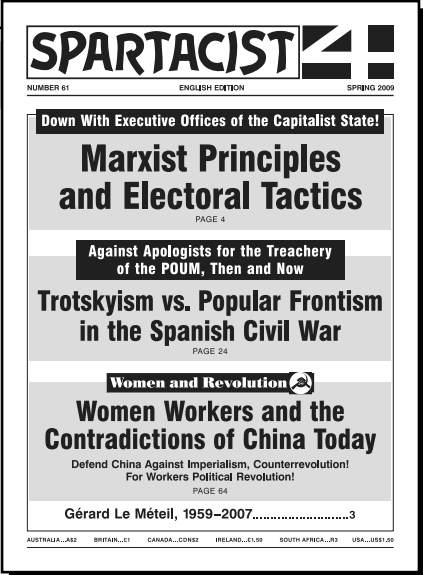
Breaking workers in the U.S. from their illusions in the Democratic Party as a “lesser evil” is a central strategic task for Marxists fighting for the class independence of the proletariat and for a revolutionary workers party. This requires a political struggle against the trade-union bureaucracy, which subordinates the working class to its capitalist class enemy, not least through political support to the

Democratic Party. Yet in three lengthy articles enthusing over the ILWU action last year, the IG downplayed the role of the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy in supporting the Democrats—and this in an election year.

The first of these articles, in March 2008, had all of three references, in passing, to the Democrats—and none at all to the labor bureaucracy’s support to same. Their second article, in April, at least included a reference to the need to break with the Democrats, lamely opining that “The ILWU leaders’ endorsement of Obama hurts rather than helps the struggle against imperialist war and undercuts the May 1 work stoppage.” As we noted at the time, “How delicately put! The unions’ endorsement of Obama provided the entire political framework in which the May Day action played out” (“Labor: Break with Democrats, ‘National Unity’ Patriotism! ILWU Shuts West Coast Ports on May Day,” WV No. 914, 9 May 2008). And to complete the picture, the IG’s third article, in May, includes no mention of Obama at all.

In a follow-up article, the IG denounced the various reformists who “could care less about the ILWU’s dramatic action” and whose “entire strategy is, has been *and must be* to pressure the Democrats” (*Internationalist*, May 2008). But in the hands of the ILWU bureaucracy, the longshore stopwork was aimed, no less than the reformists’ antiwar coalitions, at pressuring and enhancing the authority of the Democrats.

We fight for a workers party with a revolutionary internationalist program aimed at the liberation of the proletariat and all the oppressed. The current recession demonstrates anew that the workings of the capitalist system inevitably lead to crises. Notwithstanding the recent prolonged absence of significant labor struggle on the American scene, the coming years will undoubtedly see outbreaks of sharp class struggle. The task is to forge a revolutionary leadership capable of leading those struggles in the direction of an overturn of the entire capitalist system. As opposed to the Obama-enthralled reformist opponents, we follow the proletarian, internationalist and revolutionary road of the Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky. ■

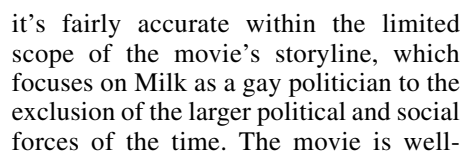


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# The Communist Program and the Fight Against Homosexual Oppression

## By Amy Rath

Has any film been as good for the city's political and business establishment as *Milk*? Newsom opened City Hall to on-site filming of Moscone's murder, while various worthies of the San Francisco establishment appeared in person in the



*Milk* tells the story of how “gay power” became institutionalized in City Hall, and

The International Socialist Organization (ISO) hails the movie's opening "at a crucial teaching moment in the struggle" and comments that the "latest explosion of

For such reformists, politicians like Harvey Milk are the stuff of their illusions in “fight the right” Democrats. George Moscone, the supposed “friend of labor” mayor, and Harvey Milk, the uncloseted gay supervisor, are cast as progressive martyrs cut down by hoary reaction in the person of the bigoted ex-cop Dan White (who was *also* a Democrat, although no one likes to admit it). This is just a means of tailing the Democratic Party establishment in San Francisco, where the votes of homosexuals are corralled to fuel a vicious anti-labor drive. Moscone came into office in 1976 with a tough-on-labor line, signaled by a series of anti-union propositions on the city ballot attacking the pay scales and benefits of city workers. In 1976—during the period covered by the movie, which restricts labor struggle to the Coors beer boycott that Milk assisted—Moscone’s anti-labor offensive led to a bitter, hard-fought strike by city craft workers backed up by Muni mass transit drivers.

Keeping social protest safely within  
*continued on page 8*

