

“Reform” Wall Street Can Believe In Democrats’ Health Care Scam



Getty

For Free, Quality Health Care, Including for All Immigrants! For Free Abortion on Demand!

One would think that it would be impossible to pass a health reform that did not offer something to someone. But the Democrats have managed to come close. To be sure, 30 million people now without health care are eventually supposed to be covered. But 23 million people are projected to remain uninsured by 2019. Children seem likely to be covered for pre-existing conditions at a cost to be negotiated with the insurance company vampires, a benefit to be extended in 2014 to all others. Older Americans can expect to pay even more usurious fees for such coverage.

While Barack Obama and the Democrats pat themselves on the back for passing this “historic” legislation, undocumented immigrants are proscribed from receiving benefits from this “reform.” In most states, even those with legal papers will have to be residents for five years to be eligible for such assistance as Medicaid. And women in need of an abortion, which is becoming next to impossible to get access to, need not apply. Obama went out of his way to sign an executive order reaffirming the Hyde Amendment, which bans federal funding for abortions. His bill allocates some \$250 million for “abstinence only education.”

There is supposed to be some more money for community health clinics, which are themselves minuscule in scope. But if your employer doesn’t insure you or you’re not on Medicare, you’ll have to buy coverage from the very insurance giants that have made U.S. health costs the highest on the planet, while most U.S. citizens, in comparison to those in

Uninsured and homeless patients wait for care at a Coalition for the Homeless clinic in Denver, Colorado, July 2009.

other industrial nations, receive the poorest health care. The insurance companies are the same parasites that regularly deny people coverage on the basis of “pre-existing conditions.” In Texas last month, a baby born with a rare heart defect was denied coverage by Blue Cross because he was considered to have a “pre-existing condition” (sensing a PR disaster, the insurance company eventually covered the child, though at a higher premium).

There are no guarantees of affordable premiums or decent coverage. But if you don’t buy insurance, you could be penalized up to \$695 per adult (or \$2,085 per family), or 2.5 percent of your household income, whichever is higher. And you can be sure that the insurance companies will do everything to get around the pre-existing conditions clause.

As we warned in “For Socialized Medicine!” (WV No. 943, 25 September 2009), “Obama invokes the plight of the uninsured, with promises of a level of care not much above a pledge to pick up the dead bodies, in order to massively *cut health care costs*.” The spectre of this country’s impoverished and uninsured masses is being wielded as a battering ram against unionized workers and the elderly. Some \$500 *billion* are to be slashed from Medicare. And beginning in 2018, the costs for this “reform” will in part be paid by taxing the “Cadillac” health plans held by not a few organized workers.

In a recent issue of *CounterPunch* (29 March), columnist Kevin Zeese gives the following grim prognosis:

“The new law forces Americans to buy a corporate product that is overpriced and flawed. Americans could be required to pay up to 9.5 percent of their income on insurance that only covers an average of 70 percent of their medical expenses. In addition, insurance is allowed to deny care with no court review of that decision. As a result, someone with insurance, paying an expensive premium, could find themselves in bankruptcy as a result of this law. The major cause of bankruptcy before this bill was a health care crisis and a majority of those people had insurance. That will remain true under the new law.”

Those bankruptcies are hardly an accident. For decades, employers, in the process of slashing their payroll costs, have been raising the out-of-pocket expenses for the health coverage they provide. In this period of historically low strike activity, the few strikes that have erupted have largely been over health care. This

is exactly the kind of reform bill that Wall Street wanted, with “progressive” tycoons like Warren Buffet even willing to pay a little extra in taxes for the cause of containing soaring health expenses in the U.S.

Liberal Democrats regret the absence of what was always meant to be a dwarfed “public

option,” and the trade-union tops are not pleased with the tax on “Cadillac” plans—but “hey,” as they now say, “it’s a start.” But in fact, the new law is a creature that the labor bureaucrats helped to create. Notably, SEIU service workers union leader Dennis Rivera served as Obama’s point man for the reform, gaining kudos for helping to forge a coalition of insurance and drug companies, along with the American Medical Association and the American Hospital Association and their lobbyists, that determined the bill’s real contours. These corporate foxes now not only control the chicken coop, but also, with access to abortion being even further constrained, the government has taken on the role of a priest in ensuring that the hens pay the price for their sexual “sins.”

In the aftermath of the bill’s passage, many liberals and leftists are today expressing dismay at the paucity of its benefits. These are, virtually to a man, the same gaggle who promoted Obama’s election as the road to progress after years of Republican reaction and who

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The Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement

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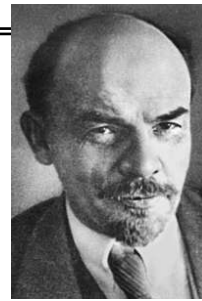




TROTSKY

FROM THE ARCHIVES OF MARXISM

Pioneer Trotskyist and Fighter for Women's Rights



LENIN

Honor Antoinette Konikow

We reprint below a 1938 speech given by Antoinette Konikow, originally published in *Socialist Appeal* (5 November 1938), at a meeting celebrating her 50 years as a revolutionary Marxist. Konikow was born in 1869 in tsarist Russia and at the age of 19 joined Plekhanov's Emancipation of Labor Group. As a result of tsarist repression, she emigrated to the United States in 1893. In her 50 years as a communist fighter, Antoinette Konikow not only stayed the course but also, with Marxist compass in hand, fought for the correct program in the major fights of the socialist movement.

Konikow joined the Socialist Labor Party in 1893; she was expelled in 1897 for her opposition to its bureaucratic practices. Already speaking five languages, she learned Yiddish in the mid 1890s in order to become a more effective organizer among immigrant Jewish workers. In 1901, Konikow was a founding member of the Socialist Party of America. In opposition to World War I, she toured the U.S., inspired by German Marxist leader Karl Liebknecht's courageous opposition to social patriotism. She threw her support to the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and became a founder of the Communist movement in the U.S. in 1919 (she was associated with Ludwig Lore, a founding member of the Communist Labor Party). Against the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet Union, which began in 1923-24, she took up the fight alongside Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky and the founders of American Trotskyism in the Communist League of America, which was later to become the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). At the time of her death in 1946, she was an honorary member of the SWP National Committee.

Konikow was not a supporter of James P. Cannon's faction within the Communist Party (CP). But she was one of the first within the American party to support the views of Trotsky's Left Opposition, and she won a group of five Boston-area party members to her views. After the 1928 expulsion of Cannon, Martin Abern and Max Shachtman for their support to the Left Opposition, Konikow was summoned to appear before the CP's Political Committee. She wrote a defiant protest letter to CP Secretary Jay Lovestone. As the Prometheus Research Library, the central reference archive of the Spartacist League/U.S., noted in the introduction to *James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism* (1992):

"After reading Konikow's letter to the November 2 meeting of the Committee,

Lovestone commented that 'it is obvious from her letter that she is the worst kind of a Trotskyite, biologically as well as politically. The sooner that we throw her out the better for the party.' Konikow, a medical doctor and a pioneer of birth control, was unanimously expelled by the Political Committee. She founded the Independent Communist League, which published her letter in its first Bulletin, dated December 1928. Konikow's League merged forces with the expelled Cannon faction to found the Communist League of America in May 1929."

In *The History of American Trotskyism*, Cannon recalls a Boston meeting



Militant

Antoinette Konikow. First issue of *Bulletin* (December 1928), published by Konikow's Independent Communist League of Boston, printed her letter in support of Trotsky's Left Opposition.

threatened by a gang of Stalinist hoodlums. The meeting was a success. As Cannon recalled, "Needless to say, my chairman on this historic occasion was Antoinette Konikow."

Konikow was always a stalwart fighter for women's rights. In 1923, she published her handbook, *Voluntary Motherhood*, the first birth control manual by an American physician, written to educate her primarily female immigrant patients. It sold more than 10,000 copies in its first three editions. She was repeatedly hounded by Boston authorities for her work on birth control, and in 1928 she was arrested for exhibiting contraceptives in public (the case was dismissed). On her own initiative, Konikow traveled to the Soviet Union in 1926 to introduce

an inexpensive contraceptive jelly she developed with John G. Wright, a chemist who was also her son-in-law and comrade and later one of Trotsky's translators. In 1931, she published *Physicians' Manual of Birth Control* to address the widespread ignorance in the medical profession itself.

One of Konikow's prized possessions was a photograph of Trotsky dedicated to her in Trotsky's own hand: "We are proud, my dear Antoinette, to have you in our ranks. You are a beautiful example of energy and devotion for our youth. I

hero-worshiper—for I have helped to pull down too many heroes from their pedestals. But in the last ten years of darkness of despair, the words of Leon Trotsky have been like a bell for a ship in distress, leading it to safe harbor.

Joined in 1888

In 1888, fifty years ago, I joined the Social Democratic Party of Russia. Life was as dark and hopeless as it may seem to many today. I was delighted to hear the words of Plekhanov at the first congress of the Second International: "Only the working class will lead the Russian revolution!" But the working class of Russia was spiritually even further away from us than the workers of the United States today. If anyone had told us at that time that 15 years later a strike of one and a half million workers would almost overthrow Czarism, and that 15 years after that the Russian soldier would turn his gun not only against Czarism but against the Russian bourgeoisie, we would not have believed it. We would have laughed. But it happened—and it will happen again. Only this time it will not take 30 years.

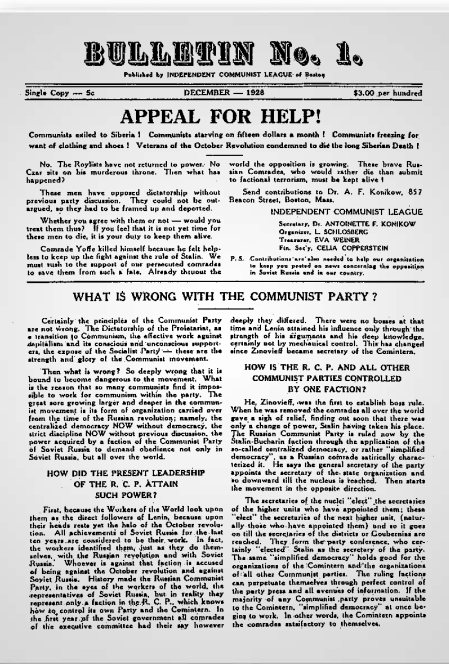
At Many Cradlesides

I have had to sponsor so many new organizations that I have often jokingly told my comrades that I feel like a mother always rocking a new cradle—and that is all wrong for me, for I am known as an advocate of birth control.

But I did rock the cradle of the Russian Social Democracy and out of it came a great giant, the Russian Bolshevik Party. After being expelled in the United States from the Socialist Labor Party, I soon began to rock the cradle of the Debs party, later the Socialist Party. It seemed to contain a healthy baby, but the war and the Russian revolution proved that there was a weak spot in its spine.

I then helped to rock another cradle, the cradle of the young vigorous Communist Party. The glory of those days of the great Russian Revolution shall never be forgotten—the tremendous enthusiasm for Lenin and Trotsky—the ten days that shook the world! But again things went wrong. "Socialism in one country" became the slogan. This meant not only socialism

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embrace you with the wish: Long Live Antoinette Konikow. Yours fraternally, Leon Trotsky, Oct. 28, 1938, Coyoacán."

* * *

The comrades have received me with warmth and friendship. It gives me tremendous happiness. The kind words written by Comrade Trotsky on his picture presented to me remind me of the greatest honor—the honor that was—given to comrades in Russia, the Order of Lenin pinned upon their breasts. I feel as if Comrade Trotsky has pinned the Order of Trotsky on my breast! Not that I am a

Prometheus Research Library Book

James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism

Selected Writings and Speeches, 1920-1928

624 pages, Smyth-sewn binding
ISBN 0-9633828-1-0
Paperback \$14.50
Shipping and handling: \$4

New York State residents add 8.625% sales tax
to book price and shipping and handling.
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to book price.

Order from/make checks payable to:
Spartacist Publishing Company
Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism

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Speeches, 1920-1928



WORKERS VANGUARD

Marxist Working-Class Biweekly of the Spartacist League of the U.S.

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The Spartacist League is the U.S. Section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

Workers Vanguard (ISSN 0276-0746) published biweekly, except skipping three alternate issues in June, July and August (beginning with the second issue in June) and skipping the last issue in December, by the Spartacist Publishing Co., 299 Broadway, Suite 318, New York, NY 10007. Telephone: (212) 732-7862 (Editorial), (212) 732-7861 (Business). Address all correspondence to: Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116. E-mail address: vanguard@tisc.net. Domestic subscriptions: \$10.00/22 issues. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Workers Vanguard*, Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116.

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

The closing date for news in this issue is April 6.

No. 956

9 April 2010

Our comrade Joe Verret died on March 30 in Los Angeles after a four-year battle with leukemia. He was 64 years old. Joe fought to the end, enduring multiple bone marrow transplants and a final round of chemo in the hopes of seeing his daughter, Jasmine, graduate from high school in June. We join Jasmine and Joe's wife, Gloria, in grief for the loss of this deeply cultured fighter for humanity's future. Joe was a communist, a talented mathematician, a teacher by profession and a dedicated educator in the party. He was a founding member of the Spartacist League and a leading cadre of our organization from the day he joined in 1965.

Joe was instrumental not only in helping to recruit to the party many young people radicalized by the Vietnam War and other diverse currents of the New Left, but equally in training such recruits in Marxism and as members of a disciplined revolutionary organization. Like other young party leaders, he was active in various arenas of party work as the SL struggled to achieve political cohesiveness and national and international extension. Joe's ability to conduct himself as a Spartacist in a variety of situations reflected not only his strong character, but his hard recruitment on the Russian question and understanding of the need for a Leninist combat party.

Joe resigned in 2000 in Los Angeles, though he continued work with the Prometheus Research Library. As a sympathizer, he became increasingly close to the party again, especially as a valued mentor to the Los Angeles comrades. In April 2009, recognizing Joe's lifelong contributions and commitment to the SL, the Political Bureau voted him an honorary member of the SL/U.S.

Joe was born in New Orleans on 11 December 1945. His father came out of Cajun country, picked peppers on the Avery Island plantation and was later a member of the CIO's Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers union, where he was involved in a 1947 strike where black workers played a leading role. Joe's dad's stories about being a union member in the "open shop" Jim Crow South left a deep impression on him. Joe was always known by his comrades for his love of jazz, his talent for cooking, including rich, complicated New Orleans cuisine, and his infectious, ribald sense of humor. He and Gloria were famous for their hospitality.

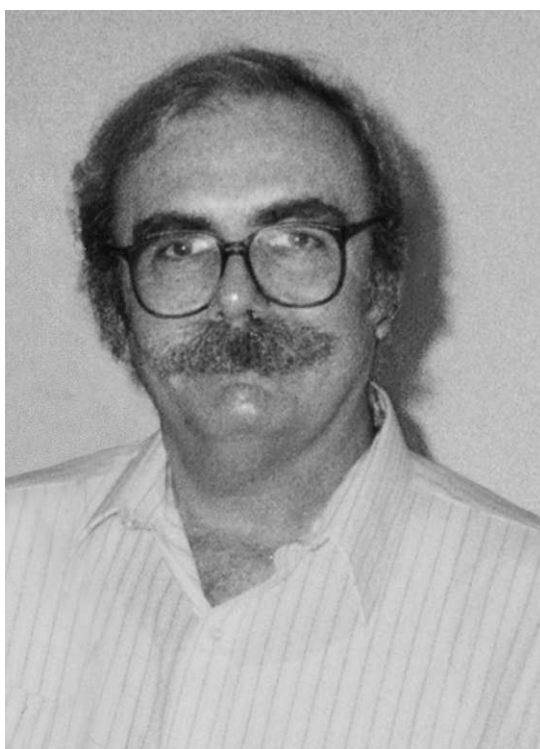
Joe was the linchpin of our work in the South, as well as a leader of our early international work. A longtime sympathizer of the Spartacist League in New Orleans recalled meeting Joe in 1971 when he helped to win her and her comrades to Trotskyism. As she described it, "We were the most unserious, politically illiterate, pot-smoking, shoplifting, horny, contentious and mismatched bunch of unreconstructed New Leftists you ever saw.... And here came Joe, telling us to spit out our gum, sit up straight, and do our homework." Joe was tough. "Rumor had it," our sympathizer in New Orleans wrote, that he "was part alligator." In fact, he was fondly known as "The Gator."

Even as the leukemia was taking its toll, he continued to contribute to party work, recommending books on everything from science and medicine to education and dialectics. Last year, he gave a class to the Los Angeles branch on the history of the SL's work in the South. Just weeks before his death, Joe attended a February 20 Spartacist public forum in L.A., where he engaged in political discussions with several of the young people who attended. Joe recently wrote two important articles for *Workers Vanguard*. "The Decline of New Orleans" (WV No. 945, 23 October 2009) contained a valuable critical appraisal of WV's propaganda on New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina and underscored the centrality of black longshore labor in the South. His "Notes on New Orleans" (WV No. 955, 26 March), which appeared in the last issue of WV, vividly demonstrated his intimate knowledge of the city.

Joe's erudition and breadth of knowledge were always at the disposal of the party, not least in educating younger comrades. Comrades in the L.A. branch often went to his house to discuss politics and books and watch movies from his enormous film library. These included highly political films on East Europe or the Near East as well as movies like *Southern Comfort*, set in the Louisiana bayou—"about my people," as Joe put it, flashing his trademark devilish grin.

Joe's political life began during the tumultuous days of the civil rights movement and Vietnam-era New Left radicalism. He was shaped by his struggle for integration in the South. Joe was a member of the

Joe Verret



Verret Family



1945–2010

Young People's Socialist League (YPSL), the youth group of the Socialist Party. He then joined the American Socialist Organizing Committee (ASOC), an offspring of YPSL's left wing. But as a fervent defender of the Vietnamese workers and peasants' struggle against U.S. imperialism, he left ASOC, which refused to call for victory to the National Liberation Front in Vietnam. He found the Spartacist tendency through a *Guardian* ad for *Spartacist* No. 1. Joe joined in 1965 and was elected an alternate member of our Central Committee at the SL's founding conference in 1966.

Joe was widely known and respected in the New Orleans left. The small group of comrades he led there were often involved in united-front defense work, including with black militants on the left wing of the Southern civil rights movement. The Deacons for Defense and Justice, formed in Louisiana in 1964, organized armed self-defense patrols to protect civil rights workers and black neighborhoods against KKK terror. New Orleans comrades visited Bogalusa chapter head Charles Sims in 1965. They raised funds for the Deacons, out of which came the slogan, "Every dime buys a bullet."

The New Orleans comrades held a united-front defense protest with SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) in 1968 to protest the cop killing of a black youth, after the NAACP called off a planned march. The protest came on the heels of Martin Luther King's assassination, and a massive police presence was expected. Our comrades contacted Charles Sims and requested assistance. As Joe recalled in his class for the L.A. comrades: "It's us and SNCC and it's like hundreds of cops are circling the demonstration.... I don't think we would have done it without the Deacons; we would have just probably gotten beaten up."

As communists working in the Deep South, our New Orleans comrades were subject to exceptional state surveillance and repression. The New Orleans Local was penetrated by three state agents almost simultaneously. The agents did their best to elicit "evidence" that the SL was engaged in or advocated violent or illegal activities. But as detailed in the 1967 Louisiana Joint Legislative Committee on Un-American Activities Report No. 9, "The Spartacist League and Certain Other Communist Activities in South Louisiana," all the agents had to admit that they never heard anyone in our organization so much as joke about violence. An internal party circular at the time noted that "the report is not a bad recruiting pamphlet for us" as it shows us to be genuine

Marxists committed to socialist revolution and working-class rule.

As the organizer of the New Orleans branch, Joe was a special target of threats. As he later told the L.A. comrades: "I can tell you that when I would get death threats, I would be afraid. I spent weeks checking around the hood of my car to make sure it hadn't been wired for bombs. But it's a question of how you manage your fear, and the party's program is what gives you the ability to manage that."

Joe was elected to the Central Committee as a full member in 1969. That same year, at the height of the Vietnam War, he was drafted into the Army, following the SL's policy laid out in "On Draft Resistance: You Will Go!" (*Spartacist* No. 11, March-April 1968). Counterposed to the largely student "Hell no, we won't go!" protesters, as Marxists we understood that if drafted, forced to choose between the military and either prison or fleeing the country, we would join our class brothers and sisters in the military and try to win them to our class-struggle program. To that end, Joe and other comrades published *G.I. Voice* beginning in 1969, urging soldiers to exercise their democratic right to protest against U.S. imperialism's dirty war.

Joe, a well-known red, was kept in basic training in Louisiana for a year. He often recalled how two officers once took him on a long drive into the bayous, where he thought he was going to disappear. At the end of 1970, Joe was sent to Vietnam for a six-month call-up. Shortly after he arrived there, his weapon was taken away from him and he was put on desk duty.

Throughout his political life, Joe intervened on a broad range of domestic and international questions in the party. This included playing an important role in the party's work on the fight for black liberation. In 1974, at the Fourth National Conference of the Spartacist League, he served on the Black Commission. A year earlier, he had written a key document on the Russian question, focusing on guerrilla movements and the formation of the deformed workers states. Joe also played a prominent role in a 1985 internal party discussion on slogans against apartheid in South Africa.

In 1979, at our First International Conference, Joe was elected as a full member of the International Executive Committee, the leading body of the international Spartacist tendency, now International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist). In the late '70s and early '80s he played a leading role in both our Canadian and British sections, including serving as National Chairman of the Trotskyist League of Canada. Joe's key fights in that section were "centrally against a narrow circle existence," as one comrade there recalled, and on the Russian question as Cold War II heated up. He was also a member of the Central Committee of the Spartacist League/Britain.

Joe was also stationed with the Spartacist League of Australia and New Zealand for several weeks in 1980 as a representative of the International Secretariat. After further international work, he returned to the U.S. in 1981 and served on the SL/U.S. Political Bureau during his brief stay in our center.

Joe led our former Atlanta Local from 1983 until 1996. In Atlanta, he was part of the leadership of a Partisan Defense Committee-initiated labor/black mobilization of 3,500 to counter a Klan provocation against Martin Luther King Day on 21 January 1989. Joe always had a hard-nosed sense of social reality in America, a product of being a communist fighter in the South. In a speech after a 1987 Democratic Party-led protest against the Klan in the racist backwater of Forsyth County, Georgia, Joe declared: "What you need is a modern-day version of General Sherman's army.... What you need is a workers government, in which the working class rules and intransigently goes after smashing racist reaction. And it's not necessarily going to be pretty." (Joe's speech is printed in "Anger Over Racist Attacks Derailed in Georgia," WV No. 421, 6 February 1987.) In 1996, Joe transferred to Los Angeles, where he spent the rest of his life.

"He came out of the bayou but rejected all backwardness," as Gloria put it on a Web site set up in Joe's memory (memorialwebsites.legacy.com/joeverret). We will miss Joe. We will miss his fine mind, his depth, his tenacity, warmth and wicked humor. But we also deeply appreciate that his role in educating and training Trotskyist cadres will continue to help our cause of building a revolutionary workers party as a section of a reforged Fourth International—the cause to which he dedicated his life.

Young Spartacus

1968 Teachers Strike Revisited *IG in Bed with Scabherders*

On March 11 the Class Struggle Education Workers (CSEW), a lash-up of “unionized and non-unionized” school and university employees supported by the Internationalist Group (IG), sponsored a forum at CUNY Graduate Center called “Behind the Drive to Privatize Public Education: Where Racism and Class Intersect.” Posturing as leading some “class-struggle wing” of students and teachers, the IG in fact provided a radical-sounding cover for the retrograde politics of union-busters, most graphically when panelist Sean Ahern bragged about strikebreaking in the 1968 New York City teachers strike. Speaking on the panel as a United Federation of Teachers (UFT) delegate and a member of the Grassroots Education Movement, the Coalition for Public Education, and Teachers Unite, Ahern proudly stated that, as a high school student in 1968, “we opened up the Liberation School, we crossed the picket lines.” He continued, “This was seen as a progressive, radical thing to do, and I was a young student and I was a part of that.”

The 1968 strike was sparked when Rhody McCoy, the newly appointed black superintendent of Brooklyn’s Ocean Hill-Brownsville school district, sought to replace union teachers with non-union ones. Mayor John Lindsay and Governor Nelson Rockefeller pulled out all the stops to bust the union by mobilizing blacks and Latinos in the ghettos and barrios against the union movement, using the demagogic slogan of “community control” of the schools. Lindsay sought to whip up anti-union sentiment to legitimize New York State’s 1967 anti-strike Taylor Law, which has been used time and again against public employee unions, not least the Transport Workers Union.

While denouncing the policies of then-UFT president Albert Shanker, a notorious Cold Warrior whose bureaucratic regime catered to racist sentiment, the Spartacist League stood with the union in a fight for its survival. We sought to link the struggles of the union and of black and Latino working people, circulating the leaflet reprinted on the facing page: “New York City School Strike: Beware Liberal Union Busters!” (13 November 1968). Most of the left came out in support of outright strikebreaking.

In the late 1960s, “community control” was a major slogan used by the ruling class, mainly acting through the Democratic Party, to *co-opt* a layer of young black activists. Many of these activists, including those who voiced white-baiting

separatist rhetoric, became overseers of the segregated black ghettos. The same period saw the emergence of black Democratic Party mayors in a number of cities. One of these, Kenneth Gibson in Newark, attacked the teachers union. However, because the union had an integrated membership and a black woman president, the ensuing 1971 teachers strike had substantial support from the city’s black population. The Newark teachers strike exposed the anti-union purpose of “community control” and black-separatist rhetoric in the 1968 UFT strike.

Former supporters of our organization who are well aware of this history, the IG supporters on the panel didn’t let it stop them from assiduously pursuing an “alliance” with an apologist for strikebreaking. A preview of the lineup at the CSEW forum was given when Sean Ahern and IG supporter Marjorie Stamberg spoke on March 4 on WBAI’s *Education at the Crossroads* program. WBAI was a mouthpiece for liberal union-busting during the 1968 strike, so it was no surprise when program host Basir Mchawi sought to smear the UFT as having “a negative impact on the educational system,” asserting, “Many of us historically have had all kinds of problems with the United Federation of Teachers, historically going back at least to 1968.” Sean Ahern called to “make a fundamental break with the past [Mchawi] spoke of.” Far from defending the union, Stamberg added: “You mentioned that the UFT had been divided from the black community going back at least as far as 1968, but one of the things that I think has made us be able to overcome this lately is that [New York City schools chancellor Joel] Klein and [New York City mayor Mike] Bloomberg have simultaneously attacked the teachers union, the black community, the parents, all at once, and what has happened is that people have come together” as “allies that I haven’t seen since 1968.”

The alliance she was talking about was on display at the March 11 forum—an alliance very reminiscent of the lineup in 1968. Stamberg enthused over Ahern’s presentation and made a point of agreeing with him about the supposed “whitening” of New York City’s teachers. Ahern had ranted about “white racial privilege”; Stamberg took a swipe at white teachers coming from Colorado (while saying she had nothing against Colorado!). Then Stamberg explained that “Sean and I have been arguing over the evaluation of the ’68 teachers strike.” She went on to say: “I

support the 1968 teachers strike” and “my position is you do not cross a picket line, period.” However, she concluded that the ’68 strike “paralyzed us, it was terribly damaging. It split black and Latinos from organized labor but something has happened now,” adding that Bloomberg and Klein’s attacks have “brought us all together as allies.” So Stamberg and the apologist for scabbing could be “allies” and both agree the strike was “damaging.”

A number of teachers in the audience spoke out cogently against the use of char-

with the Coalition for Public Education, whose founding convention featured a who’s who of New York Democratic Party hustlers, and they also push a variant of ‘community control’.” Our speaker pointed people to our 1968 leaflet, saying, “We called for a radical alliance of teachers and black and Puerto Rican working people on the program and basis of opposition to the liberal union-busters and the understanding that the fight for free, quality education lies not simply in the classroom but in getting rid of the system. We



Young Spartacus

New York City, March 4: Spartacus Youth Club signs at Hunter College protest in defense of public education.

ter schools to pit some black and Latino parents against the teachers union. The decline of the quality of public education has been coupled with increased racial segregation and class inequality, so that public schools today are more segregated than at any time since the civil rights movement. The Obama administration’s program for school “reform” means cutting funds, closing schools and laying off teachers, “reforms” that will hit impoverished inner-city schools the hardest. At the same time, in an orchestrated drive to bust the teachers unions, Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan are attempting to scapegoat the teachers unions for the abysmal state of public education in the U.S. In fact, in February the entire staff at Rhode Island’s “underperforming” Central Falls High School was fired (see “Labor: Fight Union Busting Attack on Rhode Island Teachers!” WV No. 954, 12 March).

The capitalist rulers have profited immensely by sowing racist divisions among the working class, dividing native-born whites against immigrants, whites against blacks, blacks against immigrants and so forth, obscuring the fact that the class division between the workers and the capitalists is the primary dividing line in capitalist society. Pro-capitalist union bureaucrats play into this scheme as the “labor lieutenants of capital” within the working class; “liberal,” “community control” union-busters run point for the bosses’ ongoing war against the hard-won gains of the working class. Thus, although it took place over 40 years ago, the 1968 New York City UFT strike remains a live question today.

Against the unsavory lineup at the CSEW forum, a Spartacist supporter spoke early in the discussion round: “While at times the Internationalist Group may sound ‘revolutionary’ in fine print, on the ground what’s being pushed here is crass reformism and providing a left cover for others on this panel—like the guy here who’s

defended the UFT against liberal union-busting in ’68 and we defend it today despite its rotten, class-collaborationist leadership.” But one of the panelists “crossed the picket lines and defended it here as ‘progressive’.” She nailed the IG for refusing to put forward anything that might alienate its bloc partners.

Another Spartacist supporter noted that the attacks on education are part of generalized attacks on the working class internationally. He called for “a party that fights for workers revolution, socialist revolution here and internationally...a point that they are not making.” Forum facilitator Ajamu Sankofa—a CSEW member and a leader of the pro-Democratic Party lobbying coalition Private Health Insurance Must Go!—replied: “That party is now in formation.” Not from this crew it isn’t!

It was left to our comrades and the Spartacist literature they circulated outside the meeting to make the elementary Marxist point that the capitalist system, built on the bedrock of chattel slavery and racial oppression, cannot provide full social, political and economic equality for black people, but it has created the multiracial working class as its gravedigger. Black workers must play a key role in forging a revolutionary workers party that fights for socialist revolution to establish an egalitarian society where those who labor rule. This perspective is directly counterposed to the liberal, black-separatist and Third World nationalist ideologies pushed by those the IG is promoting.

Even though the IG couldn’t answer our polemics against them, they could not contain their giddiness at the successful turnout they got building their “class struggle” movement of strikebreakers, liberals and fake Marxists. In her summary, Stamberg happily praised the discussion as a model. Then she admonished our speaker that she resented the “sister’s” intervention about the 1968 teachers strike. This event showed the real face of the IG, in words and deeds. ■



Sinco/L.A. Times

Los Angeles, May 2009: Protest against teacher layoffs and class-size increases.

Spartacist Leaflet in 1968 NYC Teachers Strike

“Beware Liberal Union Busters!”

We reprint below the Spartacist League’s 13 November 1968 leaflet distributed during our intervention into the New York City United Federation of Teachers (UFT) strike.

New York City has long been faced with an immense financial crisis. While corporations rake in millions of dollars, the City government has been unable to “find” the money to provide adequate public services. Liberal Mayor Lindsay has attempted to meet this crisis in part by trying to break the power of the public employee unions. From the Sanitation-men’s strike (when Lindsay tried to call in the National Guard as scabs) to the current UFT strike, Lindsay has made it clear that he intends to break the unions. The Lindsay administration has fought a long war to legitimize the Taylor Law, which prohibits strikes by public employees, on the grounds that such strikes endanger the “public interest.” The teachers’ strike has provided him with his most potent weapon so far, as the growing liberal sentiment against the strike has reinforced the spectre of the self-interested unions as enemies of the general public.

“Community Control” Fraud

The City’s financial crisis has hit the school system this year, a year in which the City has actually made the first cut in the school budget in many years. So all of a sudden Lindsay, whose cops maintain the daily oppression of the black ghetto, suddenly comes out for black “community control”—actually a new experiment in school decentralization funded by such “community-minded” organizations as the Federal government’s Office of Economic Opportunity and the Ford Foundation. The concept of “the community” masks the question of *who* in the community controls the schools, and for what purpose. The real interests of black workers and their children are not geographic or even simply racial, but above all class, and as such are basically counterposed to the destruction of the teachers’ union which, if successful, will only strengthen the hand of the bosses and the capitalist politicians who serve them against all unions in the city.

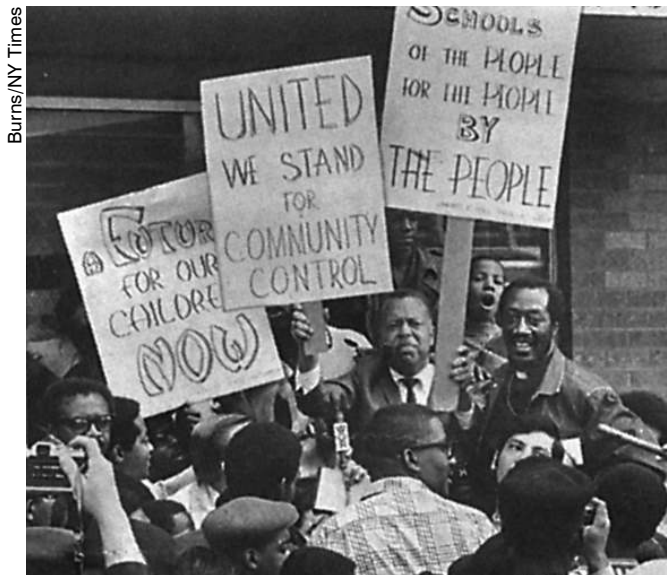
The demand for “community control” lacking a specific class content is even dangerous in some situations. The same group of people can be radical or reactionary depending on what aspect of their lives they are mobilized for. The same group of “ethnic” white workers who if approached on the job as workers will carry out a militant strike along with their black fellow workers can also, if approached as residents of their community, be capable of firing every black teacher in their district. We must recognize what classless “local control” could mean not only for teachers of “the other” race but also for rebels, radicals and “reds” of every stripe who will find themselves with only a broken union incapable of protecting their jobs in the aftermath of the substantial Wallace vote.

In Ocean Hill-Brownsville, “community control” has meant the appointment of a \$30,000-a-year black administrator, Rhody McCoy, who was given a high degree of administrative autonomy, although he had no particular connection with the black population in the district. One of McCoy’s first acts was to dismiss without due process a number of union leaders at J.H.S. 271. When 250 teachers walked out in protest, they were “transferred,” after which non-union replacements were hired. This sparked the current dispute.



Bettmann

New York City, 1968: Teachers vote to strike against union-busting. Right: Ocean Hill-Brownsville school district superintendent Rhody McCoy hands out “community control” anti-union signs.



Burns/NY Times

Were it not for the complicating racial factor, the central issue of union-busting would be clear. But the City has created a heavy smoke-screen by crying: the black ghetto children must be educated, we are helping by encouraging community control, and this racist union stands in the way. Using these arguments and some government-paid “anti-poverty” workers, Lindsay has swept the black community sentiment heavily against the union and has encouraged union-busting, school break-ins, etc.

Replace UFT Leadership

Unfortunately the [UFT president Albert] Shanker leadership has played into Lindsay’s hands by taking a purely “business union” approach to defend itself, remaining indifferent to the general needs of the oppressed and exploited black population. Much of the union’s propaganda has catered to conservatism and racial fears, with talk of “mob rule” and “extremism.” This has exacerbated the racial division between the union and the black working people, thereby preventing a real solution to the crisis. The union’s present rotten course of seeking help at higher levels of government (including an appeal to [New York governor Nelson] Rockefeller, who inspired the “community control” experiment, and requests for “protection” by the racist New York City police) can lead only to further alienation from the black population and disaster for the union.

The roots of the current impasse can be traced to last year’s school strike and the narrow, self-interested approaches of the UFT and the middle-class Black Nationalists who put themselves forward as spokesmen for the “community.” At that time the Spartacist League issued a leaflet (“Smash the Taylor Law,” 24 Sept. 1967) which criticized both the gratuitous scabbing of Floyd McKissick and H. Rap

Brown, which exacerbated the fears of the teachers that black militants would not support their demands for higher wages, and the UFT leadership’s continuing indifference to the needs, fears and concerns of the black students and their parents. Under the heading “Support Ghetto Struggles” we warned: “the equally middle-class policy of ‘professionalism’ advocated by the UFT leadership has held the union largely aloof from many of the past struggles of the ghetto communities, widening the gap between teacher, student and parent. Such a situation [of UFT indifference combined with Black Nationalist calls for ‘keeping the schools open’] provides a ready excuse for the development of racist attitudes.” We called for a radical alliance of teachers with the doubly oppressed black and Puerto Rican working people and the first steps toward building a labor party to lead united, militant struggle against the liberal union-busters. Without such a radical alliance the situation could only have developed into the present battle—the teachers convinced they will meet with hostility and anti-union attitudes from the black militants and turning increasingly to

conservative and even racist appeals in the attempt to find support elsewhere, the parents fed up with the UFT’s unconcern with poverty and racism and bewildered by a strike which, if the rationale for the Taylor Law is correct, can be nothing but an act of racism and wanton viciousness on the part of the teachers.

A radical alliance must begin by pointing out that the central problem of black education lies not in the classroom but in the political-economic system of capitalism. The capitalist system needs the product of the ghetto schools not as creative human beings but as a pool of low-skilled and unemployed workers to keep the general wage level down. The Black Nationalists have not seen through the liberal myth that “becoming educated” is the way out of the ghetto for the mass of black and Puerto Rican youth. The black schoolchildren know that they will not find decent employment and a productive, satisfying life in adulthood, and even the most dedicated teachers become cynical in the face of the bitterness and disinterest of their students who realize that their “education” is a farce. No change in the *structure* of the school administration can “reform” ghetto education without a revolutionary transformation of the society itself.

“Left-Wing” Scabs

In the liberal arena such figures as Murray Kempton, Jimmy Breslin, the [then-liberal] *New York Post*, the *New York Times* and CBS News are screaming for the blood of the UFT. The liberal strike-breaking sentiment is not too surprising, since liberals consider the government the primary agent of change and “progress.” But even so-called “revolutionary” and “Marxist” groups have been swept along by the liberal “local control” rhetoric. Such groups as Progressive Labor [PL], the Communist Party and the Socialist Workers Party [SWP] advocate simply crossing the picket line, and thereby busting the union, in order to break a “racist” strike. Even those groupings opposed to the strike should seriously consider the implications of the position that a worker is justified in scabbing whenever he disagrees with his union or does not want to strike, as it destroys the concept of a union as a body which acts together after determining its policies by a vote of the membership. For radicals to advocate scabbing only encourages any inherent racism and anti-radicalism among pro-union workers.

We ask PL and the SWP how they can now support the strikebreaking and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville administrators who justify the transfers of UFT teachers on the grounds that “we don’t want any teachers who turned their backs on our children for six weeks” (to cite a statement made by one of McCoy’s assistants over nation-wide television)—i.e. by going

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**Imperialism:
The Highest Stage of Capitalism**

San Francisco State University
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Information and readings: (510) 839-0851
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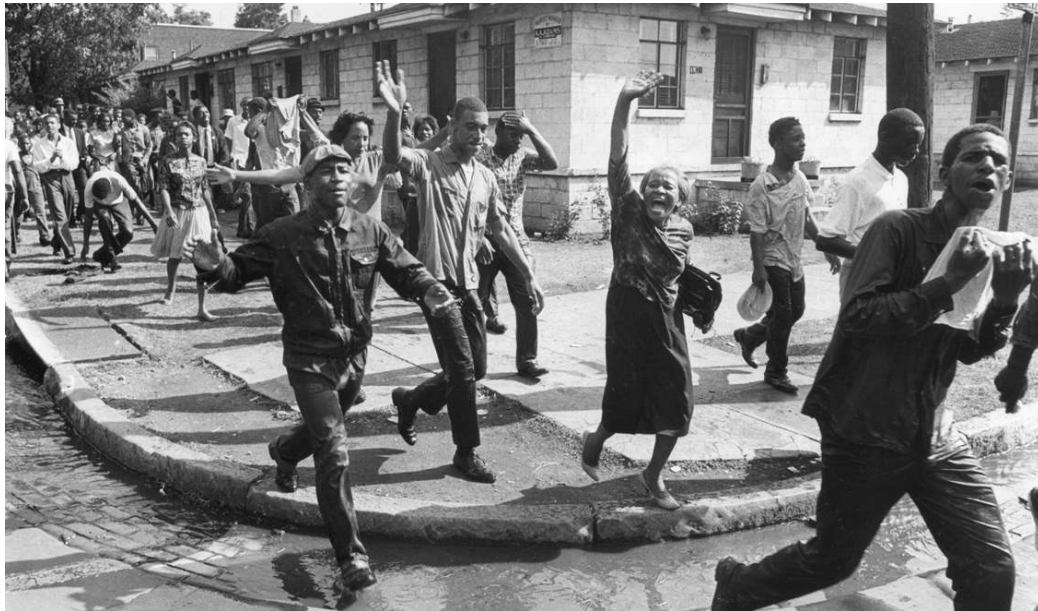
Hunter College
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For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

The Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement



Left: Demonstration in Birmingham, Alabama, 1963, against Jim Crow segregation. Right: State troopers attack protesters marching for voting rights in Selma, 1965. AP photos

We print below a Black History Month Forum given in the musicians union hall in New York City on February 20 by Workers Vanguard Editorial Board member Paul Cone.

With pictures of Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk and Dizzy Gillespie—the fathers of bebop jazz—looking upon us I thought it would be appropriate to recall a short story called “Bop,” first published in 1949 by the great writer Langston Hughes. Through his character, Jesse B. Semple, Hughes describes the origins of bebop. According to Semple, it’s “From the police beating Negroes’ heads. Every time a cop hits a Negro with his billy

PART ONE

club, that old club says, ‘BOP! BOP!... BE-BOP!...MOP!...BOP!’... That’s where Be-Bop came from, beaten right out of some Negro’s head into them horns and saxophones and piano keys that plays it.”

That was written on the cusp of the civil rights movement. With some modifications, Semple’s observations are no less applicable today. The billy club has been replaced by the retractable truncheon, the revolver has been replaced by the semi-automatic and the cops have added the Taser stun gun to their arsenal. In the first nine months of last year, nearly half a million men, women and children were subjected to the degrading “stop and frisk” by New York City cops—84 percent of them black or Hispanic. As

Break with the Democrats! For a Revolutionary Workers Party!

Hughes’ character, Semple, pointed out, “White folks do not get their heads beat *just for being white*. But me—a cop is liable to grab me almost any time and beat my head—*just for being colored*.”

Welcome to our Black History Month forum. We study the history—often buried—of the struggles for black freedom, which are strategic for the American socialist revolution. Our pamphlet series is named *Black History and the Class Struggle* precisely to express the inextricable link between the emancipation of the proletariat and the fight for the liberation of black people in the U.S.

We meet here today a little over a year after Barack Obama became the first black president of the U.S.—the Commander-in-Chief of the most rapacious imperialist power on the planet. Obama governs on behalf of the capitalist class, whose rule is maintained on the bedrock of black oppression. Obama’s election was hailed by bourgeois pundits and reformist “socialists” alike as the realization of Martin Luther King’s “dream”—a dream that, as King put it in his famous speech at the 1963 March on Washington, was “deeply

rooted in the American dream.” Malcolm X saw things quite differently: “I’m one of the 22 million black people who are the victims of Americanism. One of the 22 million black people who are the victims of democracy, nothing but disguised hypocrisy.... I don’t see any American dream; I see an American nightmare” (“The Ballot or the Bullet,” 3 April 1964).

While Wall Street barons wash down lobster dinners with 25-year-old single malt Scotch—paid for by government bailouts—the past year has seen the devastation of the lives of many workers: the loss of jobs, homes, savings and medical coverage, hitting the black population disproportionately hard. I work near 125th Street in Harlem and regularly pass an ever-increasing number of apparently homeless and obviously desperate people asking for help to buy a cup of coffee or some food; blaring from the loudspeakers set up by merchants is Obama’s voice boasting of “change we can believe in.”

Obama has beefed up the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, threatened crippling sanctions against Iran; he has built on the police-state measures implemented

first by Bill Clinton and enhanced by George W. Bush in the name of the “war on terrorism,” and escalated attacks and repression against immigrants. Before the election, the Spartacist League declared: “McCain, Obama: Class Enemies of Workers, Oppressed” (WV No. 923, 24 October 2008). We gave no support to any bourgeois candidate, Democrat, Republican or Green like Cynthia McKinney, a former Democratic Party Congresswoman supported by reformists like the Workers World Party.

Just as the reformists’ forebears followed King to John F. Kennedy’s Oval Office, today’s reformists deliver their followers to Obama’s doorstep. *Workers World* (27 November 2008) proclaimed Obama’s election “a triumph for the Black masses and all the oppressed.” Today, Larry Holmes still recalls the “shock and elation” while watching Obama’s inauguration (*Workers World*, 18 February). The International Socialist Organization (ISO) enthused in their *Socialist Worker* (21 January 2009): “Obama’s victory convinced large numbers of people of some basic sentiments at the heart of the great struggles of the past—that something different is possible, and that what we do matters.” To the extent they have any influence, what the reformists do is prop up illusions in the capitalist Democratic Party.

The Demise of Jim Crow

The title of this forum is a bit of a misnomer. It’s not narrowly about the Cold War. I want to try to explain a bit the context in which the mass struggles for civil rights took place. In the Programmatic Statement of the Spartacist League, we wrote regarding the civil rights movement:

“The bourgeoisie eventually acquiesced to the demand for legal equality in the South, both because Jim Crow segregation had grown anachronistic and because it was an embarrassment overseas as American imperialism sought to posture as the champion of ‘democracy’ in the Cold War, particularly in competition with the Soviet Union in the Third World.”

And that is roughly what I will be talking about. But not yet.

As Marxists, we see the motor force of history as the struggle between oppressor classes—today, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production like the banks, land and factories—and the oppressed classes. Under capitalism, this is the proletariat, workers who have nothing



Left: Unionists picket Woolworth’s in New York City, 1960, as part of national campaign in solidarity with Southern civil rights sit-in movement. Right: Civil rights activists sit in at a lunch counter to protest segregation in Jackson, Mississippi, 1963. Bettmann photos

but their labor power, which they sell to the capitalists in order to live. Capitalism is an irrational system based on production for profit, born “dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt” as Marx put it in his classic work *Capital* (1867). The capitalist rulers, who claim the banner of “freedom” and “civilization,” have carried out mass murder and torture on an immense scale in their drive to secure world markets, cheap labor and raw materials. And history has shown that this system cannot be made to be more humane or the imperialist rulers more peace-loving. Nor can capitalism provide for the needs of the world’s masses, despite the vast wealth it possesses.

In order to preserve their class rule, the tiny capitalist class has at its disposal the vast powers of the state—which at its core is made up of the army, cops and courts—and means of ideological subjugation through the schools, press and religion. The capitalist state cannot be reformed to serve the interests of workers and the oppressed. On the road to revolution, it must be smashed by the revolutionary proletariat, and a workers government established in its place.

A key prop of capitalism is to keep the working class divided along ethnic and racial lines, which in this country means foremost the segregation of black people. We fight for black freedom on the program of revolutionary integrationism: while the working class must fight against all instances of racist oppression and discrimination, genuine equality for black people in the U.S. will only come about through the smashing of capitalism, preparing the road to an egalitarian socialist order. This perspective is counterposed to liberal integration, which is premised on the utopian notion that equality for black people can be attained within the confines of this capitalist society founded on black oppression. It is also counterposed to go-it-alone black nationalism—a petty-bourgeois ideology of despair which at bottom accepts the racist status quo.

Freedom for blacks in the U.S. will not come about without a socialist revolution. And there will be no socialist revolution without the working class taking up the fight for black freedom. As Karl Marx

of capital. It was an inspiration to the oppressed masses of the world and had a direct impact on the struggle of black people in the U.S. The American rulers have always seen a connection between the Russian Revolution and the struggles of black people in the U.S.—and rightly so. The Bolshevik Revolution was popular among wide layers of urban blacks and even among moderate black newspapers and organizations. The *Messenger*, published by prominent Socialist Party member A. Philip Randolph, who would later become a vicious anti-Communist, captured this sentiment with articles like, “We Want More Bolshevik Patriotism” (May-June 1919).

It was the intervention by the Communist International in the 1920s that turned the attention of the American Communists to the necessity of special work among the oppressed black population—a sharp break from the practice of the earlier socialist movement. After the Russian Revolution, J. Edgar Hoover railed that “a certain class of Negro leaders” had shown “an outspoken advocacy of the Bolshevik or Soviet doctrines,” had been “openly, defiantly assertive” of their “own equality or even superiority” and had demanded “social equality” (quoted in Robert Goldstein, *Political Repression in Modern America: 1870 to the Present* [1978]). The government immediately put together an apparatus of surveillance, harassment and terror that would be a model for the later FBI COINTELPRO (Counter-Intelligence Program) in the 1950s through the 1970s. COINTELPRO meant massive wiretapping, burglaries and surveillance against even tame civil rights leaders like King, and the killings of 38 members of the Black Panther Party and imprisonment of hundreds more. As Martin Dies, head of the witchhunting House Committee on Un-American Affairs declared in the mid 1940s, “Moscow realizes that it cannot revolutionize the United States unless the Negro can be won over to the Communist cause” (quoted in Gerald Horne, *Black and Red: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War* [1986]).

From the beginning, the young Russian workers state was surrounded and besieged by hostile capitalist countries. The

Robert F. Williams (center) with other members of the Monroe, North Carolina, NAACP chapter, 1957. Williams was suspended from NAACP in 1959 and driven out of the country in 1961 for organizing black armed self-defense against Klan terror.



John Herman Williams

Despite the profoundly deforming bureaucratic means employed by the Stalinist regime, which undermined the Bolshevik Revolution’s gains, state ownership of the means of production and economic planning made possible the transformation of what had been an impoverished, backward, largely peasant country into an industrial and military powerhouse within the span of two decades. The Soviet Union provided a military counterweight to U.S. imperialism, making possible the survival of overturns of capitalism in East Europe and the social revolutions in China, North Korea, Cuba and Vietnam.

We fought to the end to defend the Soviet degenerated workers state against imperialism and counterrevolution, while at the same time fighting for a proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist misrulers and restore the working class to political power. Today, we continue to defend the remaining deformed workers states of China, Cuba, Vietnam and North Korea. The counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92 was a world historic defeat, not merely for the working people of the former Soviet Union but also for the international working class. The collapse of the USSR has meant U.S./NATO imperialist slaughter from the Balkans to Iraq and Afghanistan—accompanied by devastating attacks on the workers and oppressed minorities domestically.

The Civil Rights Movement

We study past struggles—victories and defeats—in order to politically arm ourselves and the proletariat for future battles. There are very few historical conjunctures in which a small Marxist propaganda group with a few hundred members could within a few years have transformed itself into a workers party leading a significant section of the proletariat. The South in the early 1960s offered such a rare opportunity.

The mass mobilization of black people in the Southern civil rights movement, and the subsequent Northern ghetto rebellions, disrupted and challenged the racist American bourgeois order. It shattered the anti-Communist consensus and it paved the road for the mass protest movements that followed—against the U.S. dirty war in Vietnam, for the rights of women, gays, students and others.

The civil rights movement achieved important—though partial—gains for black people largely in the realm of *formal* democratic rights whose main beneficiaries have been a thin layer of the black petty bourgeoisie. Public facilities were desegregated, black people won the right to register to vote in the South, and mandated school segregation was outlawed. But the liberal-led civil rights movement did not and could not challenge the root cause of black oppression. The hellish conditions of ghetto life—the mass chronic unemployment, racist cop terror, crumbling schools, poverty and hunger (the “American nightmare”)—which remain the lot of the mass of black people nearly 50 years after the Civil Rights Act was adopted are rooted in American capitalism. The civil rights movement

smashed its head against this fact when it swept out of the South and into the North in the mid 1960s.

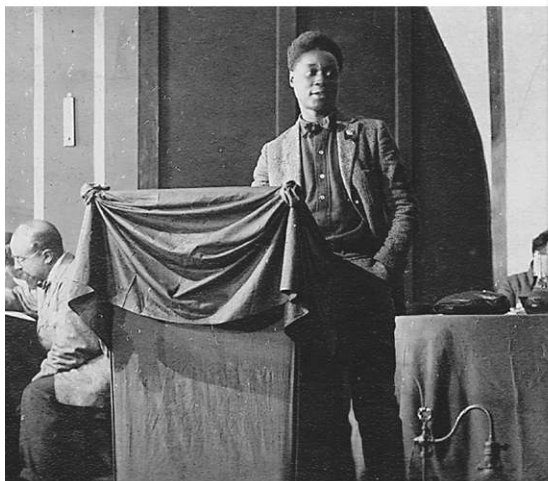
From its onset, the civil rights movement was dominated by a black middle-class leadership allied to Democratic Party liberalism. The aim of this leadership—whose most effective exponent was King—was to pressure the Democratic Party administrations of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson to grant formal, legal equality to blacks in the South. Walter Reuther’s United Auto Workers (UAW) and Randolph’s Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters—assisted by elements of the decomposing American social democracy like Bayard Rustin and Michael Harrington as well as by the Stalinized Communist Party (CP)—worked to keep the civil rights movement within the confines of bourgeois reformism and the Democratic Party. And this they did very well. Ultimately, millions of youth, whose opposition to racist oppression and growing animosity toward U.S. imperialist depredations were leading them to seek revolutionary solutions, were channeled into the Democratic Party of racism and war. In his classic work in defense of the Bolshevik Revolution, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* (1918) Lenin nailed Karl Kautsky, the granddaddy of the later social democrats and reformists:

“Even in the most democratic bourgeois state the oppressed people at every step encounter the crying contradiction between the *formal* equality proclaimed by the ‘democracy’ of the capitalists and the thousands of *real* limitations and subterfuges which turn the proletarians into *wage-slaves*. It is precisely this contradiction that is opening the eyes of the people to the rottenness, mendacity and hypocrisy of capitalism. It is this contradiction that the agitators and propagandists of socialism are constantly exposing to the people, *in order to prepare* them for revolution! And now that the era of revolution *has begun*, Kautsky turns his back upon it and begins to extol the charms of *moribund* bourgeois democracy.”

If you didn’t live through it, I think it’s hard to appreciate how tempestuous and volatile this period was, and how the struggle for black rights dominated domestic politics for over a decade. That era has become sanitized in movies, newspapers, books and the accounts of many of its participants—even former militants from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Black Panther Party, who are today comfortably ensconced in the Democratic Party.

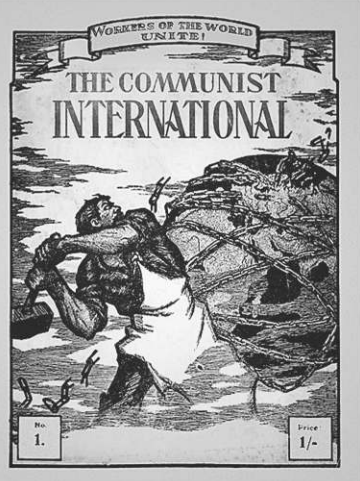
Now I’ll confess, I was a bit young, only ten years old at the time of the March on Washington, for example, so I wasn’t a participant in these events like some of my comrades. A lot of my focus that year was on the upcoming Dodgers/Yankees World Series; the Dodgers swept them. But even at that age and younger, I was surrounded by the images of the assassination of Medgar Evers, Mississippi governor Ross Barnett blocking the steps of the University of Mississippi to blacks, the burning churches, the vilification of one of my childhood idols, Muhammad Ali, when he appeared with Malcolm X by his side after winning the heavyweight title. I recall the fear that

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Beinecke Library

Jamaican-born poet Claude McKay speaking at Communist International’s Fourth Congress in Moscow, 1922. Right: First issue of *The Communist International*, 1919.



wrote shortly after the Civil War, “Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded.”

Our model is the Bolshevik Party of V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky that led the October Revolution in Russia in 1917. This was the greatest victory for the working people of the world: it gave the program of proletarian revolution flesh and blood. The proletariat seized political power and created a workers state based on soviets (workers councils). The young workers state eliminated laws discriminating against women and homosexuals and recognized the right to self-determination of the many peoples oppressed under tsarist/capitalist rule. The Soviet government proclaimed the right of working people to jobs, health care, housing and education.

The Russian Revolution was not made solely for Russia, but was seen as the opening shot of a necessarily international struggle of labor against the rule

Revolution prevailed in a bloody civil war against the counterrevolutionaries and the forces of 14 invading capitalist powers. But the poverty, backwardness and isolation of the country, especially following the defeat of the 1923 German Revolution, laid the ground for the development of a bureaucratic caste, led by Stalin, which expropriated political power from the working class. The nationalist outlook of the bureaucracy was given expression in Stalin’s proclamation in the fall of 1924 of the anti-Marxist “theory” that socialism—a classless, egalitarian society based on material abundance—could be built in a single country, and a backward one at that. In practice, “socialism in one country” came to mean opposition to the perspective of workers revolution internationally and accommodation to world imperialism—leading to the sellout of revolutionary opportunities—and in particular the propping up of capitalist rule in West Europe after World War II.

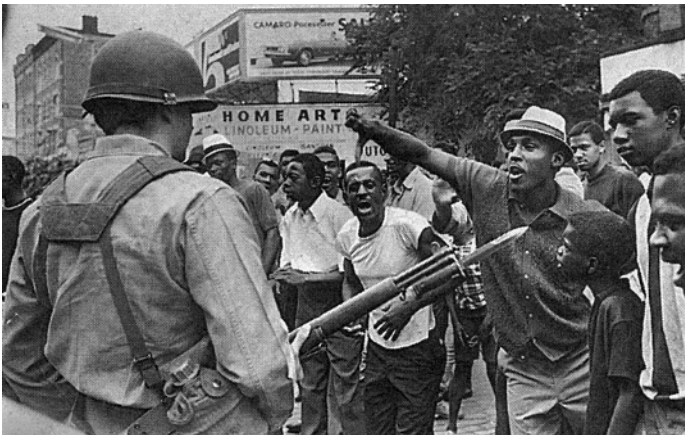
Civil Rights...

(continued from page 7)

Malcolm generated, seen in the eyes and heard in the voices of the bourgeois press corps and politicians, who in turn embraced the same conservative civil rights leaders whom they earlier castigated for wanting to move “too fast.” I also remember the cities in flames, starting with Harlem in 1964.

Largely ignored by accounts of that period is the ferment in the North, where black people had already attained the formal rights blacks in the South were fighting for. But discrimination in housing was public policy. In New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Cleveland, Milwaukee and other cities of the North, black newcomers were forced into overcrowded ghettos, where they paid high rent for rat-infested slums; black children were sent to inferior schools, and black adults had few job opportunities and few, if any, public facilities. By 1962-63, there were as many protests in the North and West as in the South—for jobs, an end to segregated housing, and for school integration.

Fueling this rage was the grim reality that the economic advancement of much of the black working class—which came with wartime employment, U.S. industrial dominance and, most importantly, unionized jobs—was coming to an end. Between 1947 and 1963 Detroit lost 140,000 manufacturing jobs. In New York City, over 70,000 garment industry jobs were lost in the 1950s. The same was happening to meatpacking workers in Chicago and longshore, warehouse and shipbuilding workers in Baltimore, Newark, Oakland and Philadelphia. In large part this was because the capitalists were increasingly moving production to the South. Much of the indus-



New York Times

Newark ghetto upheaval, 1967. Poverty, unemployment and racist cop terror helped trigger ghetto explosions in the North in the 1960s.

vicious bourgeois campaign of racist hysteria. The purpose was, as we wrote at the time, “preparation and justification for the smashing, through police terror, of the coming stage of the Negro rights struggle” (“Negro Struggle in the North,” *Spartacist* No. 2, July-August 1964). In July of 1964, New York City cops exploited the protests against the police killing of 15-year-old James Powell to justify a full-scale offensive to smash every sign of these struggles. Such cop terror as that in Harlem would trigger many of the ghetto upheavals that took place in over 300 cities over the next three years. In New York, as the cops sealed off Harlem, we Spartacists launched the Harlem Solidarity Committee, which organized a protest of 1,000 in the garment district.

Adding to the civil rights movement’s turbulent character was the fact that activists were on a daily basis forced to confront and grapple with questions of where their movement was going. Such questions ultimately bring to the fore the nature of the capitalist state, class divisions in society, the “rottenness, mendacity and hypocrisy of capitalism”—leading to the heart of the question of reform vs.

correct as they were outnumbered—the influence of pacifist ideology was slight, and, notably, the students undertook self-defense measures to protect their campus and themselves from the racist terrorists.

Armed defense of meetings of black activists in the Klan-ridden South had been a well-established tradition, stemming not least from the efforts of the Communist Party to organize sharecroppers in the 1930s. This had been a necessary measure to make sure such gatherings took place without anybody being killed. This tradition however was anathema to the accommodationist wing of the civil rights movement led by King. Be clear: this question was not an issue of whether or not an individual whose home or family was under attack would repel the invaders. In a well-known 1959 statement, King himself acknowledged this basic human impulse. The issue was quite different. By pledging non-violence, the civil rights leaders were pledging allegiance to the white power structure, asserting that the movement could not go beyond the bounds set for it by the liberal wing of the ruling class represented by the Democratic Party. To say that the civil rights movement had the right to defend itself against racist terror was to say that you didn’t accept the rules of the capitalist ruling class and its racist “democracy.”

The ISO portrays King’s statement as part of a “debate” with black militant leader Robert F. Williams. This was no “debate.” King’s statement was used by the NAACP leadership in suspending Williams as president of the Monroe, North Carolina, chapter. Williams was targeted by the state and ultimately driven out of the country in 1961 for organizing black self-defense against KKK terror. To King’s argument that “violence” by black Americans “would be the greatest tragedy that could befall us,” Williams responded, “I am a man and I will walk upright as a man should. *I will not crawl!*” (quoted in Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power*, 1999). We defended Williams. In 1965, the SL initiated a fund-raising campaign for the defense of the Deacons for Defense and Justice in Bogalusa, Louisiana, who also organized armed self-defense. In doing so we advanced our class perspective—the revolutionary mobilization of the working class independent of the capitalist rulers.

During the civil rights movement, as government forces, not only the Southern municipalities but at the federal level, either stood by or facilitated the beatings of activists, the question of the nature of the capitalist state was brought to the fore.

In part, dealing with such issues accounted for the receptivity among students to Marxist literature during that 1960 trip to the South I just referred to. Notable as well was the absence of the social democrats and Stalinists, which also provided openings for Marxists, and the distrust by many student activists of the adult leadership groups that acted as a brake on the movement—specifically including King and preachers identified with him.

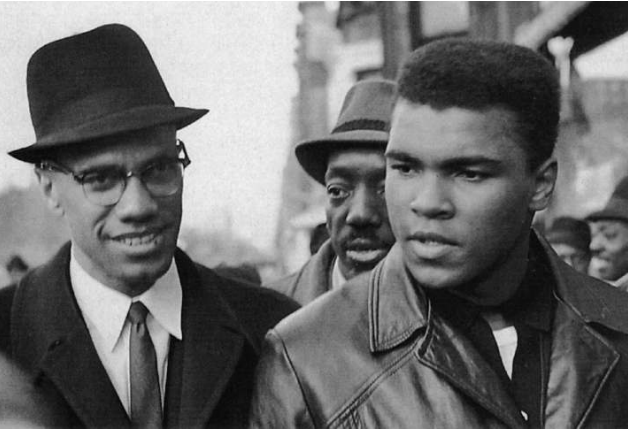
The RT’s Fight for Revolutionary Integrationism

It is during these years that our organization originated as the Revolutionary Tendency (RT) opposition within the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). (Among the founders of the RT were the former editors of the Trotskyist *Young Socialist*, who had initiated a nationwide campaign of picket line protests at Woolworth’s in support of the Greensboro sit-in.) Our strategic perspective was to transform the left wing of the civil rights movement into a revolutionary workers party capable of leading much of the black working class and impoverished petty bourgeoisie in the South.

The SWP had for decades been the Trotskyist party in the U.S. It maintained a revolutionary course through the difficult World War II years and the immediate period thereafter. In 1941, under the thought-crime anti-Communist Smith Act, 18 Trotskyists and Minneapolis Teamsters leaders were sent to prison by the Roosevelt administration for their opposition to the imperialist slaughter of World War II. During the war, the SWP took up and publicized the defense cases of black soldiers victimized for opposition to Jim Crow segregation. In the aftermath of anti-black riots in Detroit in 1943, they fought for flying squadrons of union militants to stand ready to defend blacks menaced by racist mobs.

In contrast, following Hitler’s attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941, the Stalinist CP hailed U.S. entry into World War II in December and worked overtime to enforce the trade-union bureaucracy’s “no strike” pledge. They demanded that the black masses forsake their struggle for equality in the interest of the imperialist war effort. The SWP viewed black liberation as the task of the working class as a whole, and intervened in the struggle against racial oppression with a militant integrationist perspective. The party won hundreds of black recruits, including a major breakthrough in Detroit. However, under the intense pressure of the Cold War period, most of them left the party over the next few years.

By the early 1960s, the SWP had lost its revolutionary bearings and tailed non-proletarian class forces, seen domestically in its policy of abstention from the Southern civil rights struggle and later embrace of black nationalism. By 1965 it had become a thoroughly reformist party. As opposed to the SWP majority, the RT fought the party’s criminal abstentionism and pointed out that the young radicals would not come to a Marxist program simply by virtue of their militancy—the intervention of a revolutionary party was necessary. Building a revolutionary vanguard necessarily meant participating in and building a revolutionary leadership in



Howard L. Bingham

Malcolm X with Muhammad Ali in New York City, 1963.

trial Northeast and Midwest was soon rendered rotting hulls. This was largely a product of the union tops’ failure to organize the South—a failure that stemmed from the anti-Communist purging of militant organizers during the Cold War, the union tops’ allegiance to the Democrats and failure to take up the fight for black rights.

On 13 May 1963, in solidarity with blacks in Birmingham, Alabama, who were fighting back against the racist terrorists and in protest against brutal cop terror in their city, some 3,000 black teenagers in Chicago pelted cops with bricks and bottles. In New York City, 1963 and 1964 saw thousands of Harlem tenants forming tenants councils, withholding rent and winning services and repairs from the slumlords. This was met with a

revolution. This played out in the first instance in the issue of armed self-defense or the strategy of “non-violence,” which was the calling card of King. For this, King won the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize. This prize itself has no noble history. It was also later awarded to such peace-loving people as Menachem Begin, Henry Kissinger, Jimmy Carter and now Barack Obama.

In 1960, Trotskyist activists got a first-hand view of how the question of armed self-defense was perceived by student activists during a visit to Southern black campuses shortly after the student sit-in movement was launched at the Greensboro, North Carolina, Woolworth’s in February. While the student militants were for peaceful picketing—perfectly

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the current struggles of the working class. The RT fought inside the SWP for the party to seize the opportunity to recruit black Trotskyist cadres to their ranks. The RT put forward a series of demands linking the fight for black rights to broader struggles of the working class and addressing immediate needs such as organized self-defense and union organizing drives throughout the South.

Many SNCC activists were open to a revolutionary perspective. Shirley Stoute, a black member of the RT, received a personal invitation to work with SNCC in Atlanta, which the SWP majority had to accede to. Then they called her back to

slated to play an exceptional role in the coming American revolution.... “The victory of the socialist revolution in this country will be achieved through the united struggle of black and white workers under the leadership of the revolutionary vanguard party. In the course of this struggle unbreakable bonds will be forged between the two sections of the working class. The success of the struggle will place the Negro people in a position to insure at last the end of slavery, racism and super-exploitation.”

The Rise of the Civil Rights Movement

The civil rights movement did not just fall from the sky. The elimination of legal

people were lynched between the end of Reconstruction in 1877 and the dismantling of Jim Crow in the 1960s.

Black people in the U.S. constitute a race-color caste integrated into the capitalist economy at its lower rungs while socially segregated. As historic Trotskyist leader Richard S. Fraser noted:

“Discrimination and prejudice in the rest of the United States derives directly from the southern system, feeds upon it, and like racial discrimination throughout the world is completely dependent upon it.... In every possible way it [the capitalist class] perpetuates the division of the working class by establishing throughout the entire nation the basic reciprocal

ization and industrialization of the American South during and after World War II created large concentrations of black workers, and proletarianized poor agrarian and middle-class whites. This created a clear identity of interests between white and black exploited industrial workers, establishing conditions for the emergence of broader class struggle and the struggle for black freedom. The practice of landlords and sheriffs picking up isolated tenants, sharecroppers or black transients at will, and forcing them into the prison slave-labor system (powerfully depicted in the book *Slavery by Another Name* [2008] by Douglas A. Blackmon) was not very effective when dealing with black workers concentrated in factories—particularly if organized into unions.

For black people, the Deep South in the early 1950s remained a racist totalitarian police state. When black soldiers came back from integrated units in the Korean War, they swore they would no longer submit to Jim Crow. The emergence of a mass movement of blacks in the South that not only protested but also defied racist legality posed a problem for the Northern bourgeoisie, which controlled the federal government. They could either go along with the suppression of the civil rights movement by the Southern state authorities and local governments, or they could utilize the federal government to favor policies that would introduce to the South the same bourgeois-democratic norms that existed in the rest of the country.

Dominant sections of the Northern bourgeoisie concentrated in the Democratic Party opted for the latter. They would use the federal government to pressure, but not compel, their Southern class brethren to grant democratic rights to blacks. The Eisenhower and Kennedy/Johnson administrations engaged in a continual series of compromises between the civil rights movement and Southern authorities. At the same time they did very little to prevent the violent suppression of civil rights activists by the Southern authorities and sometimes collaborated in that suppression. For instance, when asked what the government would do about attacks on civil rights activists, Kennedy answered, “We’ll do what we always do. Nothing.”

It is to this wing of the bourgeoisie that the leaders of the civil rights movement shackled the fight for black freedom. The bourgeoisie could acquiesce to *partial* gains for blacks—desegregation of public facilities, voter registration, as well as a degree of school integration—as these did not undermine their class rule. Moreover, continued denial of civil rights to blacks in the South was a liability to the ambitions of U.S. imperialism internationally. In short order, as the federal government granted civil rights concessions, the NAACP and other civil rights organizations and celebrities would be signing on to the Cold War against the Soviet Union and anti-communist witchhunts at home—even as they found themselves in the gun sights of the McCarthyites, HUAC and their Southern replicas.

[TO BE CONTINUED]



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Spartacist

Left: 1968 Tet Offensive by North Vietnamese and National Liberation Front fighters was a powerful blow against U.S. imperialism. Right: Spartacist banner at New York antiwar demonstration, 1970. Spartacists fought for victory of Vietnamese workers and peasants.

New York on a pretext a month later. After a bitter political fight over this and other questions, the RT was expelled from the SWP in 1963-64, going on to found the Spartacist League in 1966.

In an August 1963 document, “The Negro Struggle and the Crisis of Leadership,” the Revolutionary Tendency wrote: “We must consider non-intervention in the crisis of leadership a crime of the worst sort.” Had the SWP remained a revolutionary party and concentrated its forces in the Southern civil rights movement, it could have won to Trotskyism a large fraction of those young black radicals who eventually became black nationalists. After being expelled from the SWP, we intervened with our small forces in the civil rights movement in both the South and North. We called on militants to break with the Democratic Party. Our call for a Freedom Labor Party was an axis to link the exploding black struggle to the power of labor, North and South. As we elaborated in “Black and Red—Class Struggle Road to Negro Freedom,” adopted at the founding conference of the Spartacist League/U.S. in 1966:

“Ultimately their road to freedom lies only through struggle with the rest of the working class to abolish capitalism and establish in its place an egalitarian, socialist society. “Yet the struggle of the Black people of this country for freedom, while part of the struggle of the working class as a whole, is more than that struggle. The Negro people are an oppressed race-color caste, in the main comprising the most exploited layer of the American working class.... Because of their position as both the most oppressed and also the most conscious and experienced section, revolutionary black workers are

segregation cannot be portrayed as an idea whose time had come, as the fulfillment of American democracy’s supposed “moral mission,” as the realization of the ideals of the Declaration of Independence or, as Martin Luther King claimed, the cashing of a promissory note from the “founding fathers” to blacks whose ancestors were enslaved. As I mentioned earlier, the Jim Crow system, designed to control and terrorize blacks in the rural South, had become anachronistic—i.e., it no longer served the needs of the U.S. bourgeoisie. This is important to understand.

The Civil War, America’s second bourgeois revolution, had smashed the slave system, paving the way for the development of industrial capitalism in the U.S. as a whole. But after the betrayal of Reconstruction by the Northern bourgeoisie, “the Negro was left in the South in the indefinite position of semi-slavery, semi-serfdom and semi-wage slavery” as then-Trotskyist Max Shachtman put it in his 1933 piece “Communism and the Negro” (reprinted as *Race and Revolution* [2003]). Sharecropping and tenancy formed the labor backbone of Southern agriculture. Sitting atop this was the system of Jim Crow, the systematic legal segregation of black people in the South enforced by legal and extralegal violence. It was designed to prevent blacks from voting, becoming educated or fighting for their rights. When blacks did challenge Jim Crow—either by personally refusing to follow its rules or, more rarely, by organizing against it—they faced racist terror, whether by the local sheriff or the Klan (who were often one and the same). At least 3,000 black

relations between discrimination, segregation and prejudice which are so successful in the South.”

—“The Negro Struggle and the Proletarian Revolution” (1953), reprinted in “In Memoriam—Richard S. Fraser: An Appreciation and Selection of His Work,” *Prometheus Research Series* No. 3, August 1990

Fraser added, “the scar of race antagonism” serves to fortify and stabilize “the structure of American capitalism by dividing the population into hostile racial groups, who find it difficult to get together in defense of their common interests against the master class.”

The industrial needs of both world wars, and the murderous terror blacks faced in the South, led to mass emigration out of the South and into Northern and Western industrial centers. Rural sharecroppers were transformed into proletarians in modern mass production industries. Following the strikes in the 1930s that formed the CIO labor federation, black workers were integrated into powerful industrial unions.

At the same time, by the 1930s, Southern agriculture in this most advanced capitalist country was still economically backward, retaining significant remnants of the slave system. In search of cheaper labor markets, and to accommodate the economic needs of World War II, American capitalism had been forced to abandon its earlier conception of the agrarian South as mainly a source of raw materials and very limited industrial development. By the Depression, textile, iron, coal, steel and chemical industries had been developing in the South. The urban-

'68 Strike...

(continued from page 5)

out on strike in previous UFT actions which the SWP and PL supported! We ask these organizations how they can ignore the blatant anti-union, anti-strike attitude of McCoy and his supporters. These “Marxists” in the SWP and PL are taking the easy way out by labeling the social-democratic UFT leadership as “racist” and washing their hands of the union instead of fighting in the union against Shanker for the correct policies. Serious radicals must ask themselves what *New York City’s black population will gain* by the destruction of the UFT; by the legitimatization of the Taylor Law and the phony, classless rhetoric that strikes are against the “public interest”;

by the replacement of UFT teachers by docile, hand-picked teachers who have no weapon of struggle against the Board of Education; by the attempt to direct the anger and frustration of the poor working people of Ocean Hill-Brownsville against the teachers rather than against the system which guarantees the continuation of their oppression.

Militants in the UFT must fight to replace the Shanker leadership and its conservative and dangerous policies of “professionalism,” elitism toward other trade union struggles and condescension toward the black working people. The union must recognize the militant parents as their needed allies against the liberal union-busters and must seek a radical alliance of teachers and militant parents and students based on student-teacher-parent control of the schools. ■

New York City, July 1964: Spartacist-initiated Harlem Solidarity Committee rally in garment district to mobilize working-class support for ghetto residents besieged by cop terror.



New York Times

Health Care...

(continued from page 1)

more recently begged him to hold tough on the public option. Yesterday, trade-union bureaucrats like AFL-CIO head Richard Trumka drew lines in the sand around the issue of the public option, while threatening to withdraw support if union-negotiated health policies were taxed. But no longer. Now they down-play the tax on these supposedly opulent union health benefits. After all, 2018 is a long way away. But the 2010 mid-term elections are just around the corner. Union bureaucrats now plan to campaign strongly against those Democrats who voted against the bill and redouble their search for really, truly “progressive” Democrats, while holding Obama’s feet to the flame of popular pressure. This quest is similar to Ponce de Leon’s search for the fountain of youth.

For Socialized Medicine

In contrast to what is available in the United States, health care in the European “welfare states” seems luxurious. This is no accident. These benefits were ceded, mostly after the Second World War, to placate working-class militancy in societies where the advanced layers of the proletariat were not averse to entertaining thoughts of socialist revolution. Such thoughts and aspirations were inspired by the 1917 October Revolution in Russia. Even with the degeneration of the Soviet Union under the Stalinist bureaucratic usurpation of political power beginning in 1923-24, the planned economy that survived provided all with a job, health care, education and housing. It is similarly no accident that the capitalist counterrevolution in the USSR in 1991-92 was followed by havoc and precipitous societal decline there, with life expectancy plummeting. Today, as a result of this world-historic defeat, the consciousness of workers around the world has been thrown back, albeit unevenly, to the point where politically advanced workers no longer identify their struggles with the goals of socialism. And the benefits that were once wrested from the various ruling classes of Europe are under attack.

At home, the American bourgeoisie has faced no such challenge to its rule. America’s rulers have very successfully wielded anti-black racism, anti-immigrant nativism and sexual bigotry to preserve their class rule. The giant class battles that led to the formation of the CIO in the 1930s and the social struggles of the 1950s and ’60s did not result in the formation of a mass proletarian party of even reformist dimensions. And the reforms that issued from these conflagrations—whether health care concessions from the bosses or governmental reforms such as Social Security and Medicare—were correspondingly modest, but gains nevertheless. Today, in the absence of any significant working-class struggle, the current health care reform has more in common with the gutting of retirement benefits, the slashing of educational opportunities and the disappearance of the good, or any, job that now face poor and working people.

That the U.S. is the only major industrialized country on the face of the planet without a national health care program is, in large part, testament to how the race-caste oppression of black people has been used by America’s rulers to divide and weaken the working class. Cries against “big government” have long been synonymous with axing social programs such as health care and welfare, with these painted as a drain on the tax dollars of “hard-working folks” to benefit the ghetto poor.

We say that all must have access to medical care at no cost, including access to abortion and contraception. We are for socialized medicine—the expropriation of the parasitic health care and drug companies, which are an immediate threat to the well-being of just about everyone in this country. We call for full citizenship rights for all immigrants and

free abortion on demand. As we wrote in WV No. 943:

“Free, quality medical care for all should be an elementary right. But achieving that will require a genuine socialist assault by the multiracial working class to rip the ‘health’ industry out of the hands of the profit-gorged insurance giants and drug companies. Only with the destruction of this entire capitalist system of exploitation, which measures human life in dollars, can the wealth generated by those who labor be committed to providing the highest level of medical care for all and eradicating the poverty and hunger that condemn countless millions to a life of misery, disease and early death.”

America Needs Workers Revolution

Such health care benefits as the multiracial working class has won have been the product of militant class struggle against the bosses. The dearth of strikes over the past decades helped pave the way for the exploiters to butcher health care, pensions and other union gains with impunity. And they have gotten away with it thanks to the acquiescence of the union misleaders, who share the bosses’ concern of maintaining the profitability of American capitalism.

There is plenty of justified fear and apprehension, especially among unionized workers and the elderly, over the health care “reform.” But with the labor movement on its back and the trade-union bureaucrats actively collaborating with the Obama administration, opposition to the bill has served as a boon to the Republicans and far right.

Today’s “militants” are the racist militiamen and reactionary Christian fundamentalist types who have been mobilized by the Tea Party movement, which is supposedly anti-tax although there have been no tax increases of significance in years.



Rally in support of UFCW grocery workers strike, Inglewood, California, January 2004. Defense of health benefits has been central to many labor struggles.

Mistakenly believing that the black man who now occupies the White House is interested in significantly improving the lot of working people, blacks and the poor, these yahoos now rise in defense of a testosterone-dominated “white America” that is threatened not by what they ludicrously claim is a “socialist Obama” but merely by demographic realities.

Obama is seen as one of “them” by the racist Tea Party types. In fact, he is the Commander-in-Chief of the most vicious, racist and powerful imperialist power on the planet. The usual Democratic hype of “justice” and “reform” for working and black people, who are the base constituency of this other party of the bosses, is laid aside once the votes are counted. With that party’s most recent ascension to dominance in Congress and most state-houses and major city administrations, immigrants face increasing victimization and the right of women to abortion is further threatened, with abortion providers murdered and clinics closing. Meanwhile, the focus of U.S. imperialism’s unending wars, which are designed to preserve America’s dominance as its economic strength declines, has been shifted from Iraq to Afghanistan. Working people and

Cuban nurse cares for newborns in hospital maternity ward. Planned, collectivized economy enables Cuba to provide health care to all.



the oppressed—not the fat-cat bankers and Wall Street hustlers—are the ones who are paying and will continue to pay for this most recent eruption of capitalism’s anarchy and decay.

The social debris that constitutes the Tea Party movement would be confronted by a revival of labor struggle. Programmatically, any such revival must link the struggle against all exploitation and injustice with the fight for black equality. This in turn demands the forging of a revolutionary proletarian party committed to the overturn of American imperialism through socialist revolution. All of this cannot go forward unless the pro-capitalist bureaucrats who control the trade unions in this country are driven from their positions of power and replaced by class-struggle militants who understand that the bosses and the workers share no common interest.

The normal rejoinder to this Marxist perspective by those leftists who would reform this decaying capitalist order is that one begins with a small step to the

sentiment in favor of transforming the dysfunctional health care system.” The ISO’s answer to this “twisted outcome” is provided in a 31 March article:

“For many people who are sick and tired of conservatives getting their way, the bill’s passage signaled a potential shift in the political winds in Washington. So after months when it appeared that the right was making a big comeback, the health care reform could translate into a growing confidence that working people can make real progress today after all....

“We deserve much better. To get it, we have to build independent organizations and movements that take on probusiness, anti-worker policies—whether they’re put forward by Republicans or Democrats.”

Here, there are not even the words “class struggle,” let alone the suggestion that capitalist rule itself is inherently “pro-business” and “anti-worker.”

In spelling out its program of pushing the Democrats to fight against the Republicans’ “Fascist Agenda,” the Maoist Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) goes so far as to make common cause with America’s slaveowning “founding fathers.” The RCP writes in *Revolution* online (4 April):

“The Republicans are for *tearing up and rewriting the social contract forged by the founders of the United States in the U.S. Constitution*—and in particular, the concept of the U.S. as a secular nation.

“The Democrats are convinced that this agenda—for a Christian fundamentalist theocracy based on extreme individualism and brutal repression—is *not* a viable way to maintain the U.S. as the world’s dominant superpower. Nor do they see this as a viable way to re-cohere domestic social stability of the U.S....

“As conflict between rival sections of the ruling class intensifies, and even breaks out into open clashes [guess which side the RCP is on], the legitimacy of the *entire* old order could be called into question” (emphasis in original).

All these reformists argue that it is disruptive to their slog toward goodness for us to expose their (sometimes implicit, sometimes explicit) support to “democratic” American imperialism, as this supposedly divides the “movement.” The reality is that working people’s lives are being savaged. Their children’s futures are turning to dust. In all quarters it is realized that the path will continue to go downhill, albeit with occasional feeble upside pulsations. The anger of working people is both deep and just. The problem is that they see no alternative to imperialism’s decay. Against the reformists and the trade-union bureaucrats they tail, we underline that the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution remains the beacon of progress for all humanity.

The various would-be reformers of the capitalist order are in one way or another adamantly opposed to the path of international proletarian revolution that was the banner of that historic victory. Thus, they lull the working class with pipe dreams as a way forward. The only successful proletarian overturn of capitalist rule to date occurred because the Bolshevik Party convinced the working masses, through its relentless exposure of the treachery of the reformists, that the only way forward was to smash the bourgeois order through proletarian revolution. The perspective of the International Communist League and its U.S. section, the Spartacist League, is to forge revolutionary working-class parties that fight for new Octobers. ■

ILWU...

(continued from page 12)

by executing them. This was merely par for the course for a company that has left a trail of broken unions, brutal repression of indigenous peoples, torture and death in its wake.

Between 1969 and 1972, an Australian subsidiary of Rio Tinto backed by the Australian government opened its copper mine on the island of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea (PNG). The indigenous peoples of the island were driven from their land. This brutal repression provoked an uprising that closed the mine in 1989. Bougainville's population, which sought its independence from PNG, was then besieged by the PNG government, backed by the mining giant and the Australian Labor Party government. A ten-year military blockade was instituted, and at least 10,000 people were killed between 1990 and 1997.

In the 1970s, Rio Tinto opened its uranium mine in Namibia, which was then militarily occupied by the South African apartheid regime. A UN report at the time described the company's operations there as being "mined by virtual slave labour under brutal and unsafe conditions." In more recent years, continued apartheid-style segregation and racist discrimination against black workers at Rio Tinto in Namibia as well as its Pilabara copper mine in South Africa have provoked strike and wildcat actions by miners unions in both countries.

For years, Rio Tinto has carried out a union-busting offensive against workers at its Australian operations, which include uranium, iron ore and coal mines. Refusing to negotiate with the unions, the company offered workers individual contracts with higher wages if they quit the union. In 1995, the company's declaration of war against striking workers at its Weipa bauxite mine led to coal miners and maritime workers shutting down the docks and pits in Australia for days. Aborigines, who had been driven off their land when the Weipa mine was founded in the early 1960s, joined the picket lines and formed a strike support group. The strike was also supported by the Bougainville Freedom Movement.

This powerful solidarity against Rio Tinto was demobilized by the Australian trade-union tops, who are guided by the same treacherous politics as their American counterparts: preaching the lie of a partnership between labor and capital, obedience to the bosses' laws, reliance on the capitalist courts and flag-waving nationalism. A significant factor in the labor statesmen's sellout of the Weipa struggle was their desire to defuse the situation for the benefit of the Labor Party in elections that year. The labor misleaders' sabotage of the fight against Rio Tinto in 1995 helped pave the way for an all-out attack on the powerful Maritime Union of Australia three years later.



Namibian

February: Miners at Rio Tinto's Rössing Uranium Mine in Namibia demonstrate over working conditions. Miners around the world have been at the receiving end of union-busting assaults by the giant mining conglomerate.

Similarly, a defeat for the Boron miners could be a body blow to the ILWU, which is increasingly the last bastion of union power in the West Coast ports. What is needed is an internationalist class-struggle fight based on the elementary understanding that the interests of the workers are irreconcilably counterposed to those of the bosses, whatever flag they fly under. Instead of the deadly trap of American patriotism, the workers should be guided by the words of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' *Communist Manifesto*: "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries, unite!"

Lessons of the 1974 Boron Strike

A generation ago, in 1974, the bosses turned the Boron mine into an armed camp to smash a strike by the miners. In the course of the bitter 132-day strike, miners were arrested, shot at and viciously beaten. In the end, the strike was defeated at a cost of some 400 miners' jobs. As we wrote at the time: "ILWU Local 30 was decisively smashed because the union failed to keep scabs from going in and out of the plant and failed to stop shipments of scab borax. This was despite the fact that *ILWU longshoremen* were doing some of the shipping. The company, U.S. Borax, achieved record production using salaried employees and scabs recruited from Los Angeles, San Diego and other cities" (WV No. 60, 17 January 1975).

At the time, the ILWU International was headed by the union's founder, Harry Bridges, whose supposed tradition of class struggle is hailed today by the likes of Jack Heyman and other left-talking ILWU bureaucrats. In fact, the defeat of the Boron strike was seen by the American bourgeoisie as a big win for their side against a union with a lot of power that

was not brought to bear. An article in the December 1974 issue of *Fortune* magazine made the defeat a model for union-busting bosses across the country, declaring: "A mine in the Mojave Desert might seem an unlikely place for a band of white-collar scabs to take a stand against a militant union. But managers, salesmen, and office workers, doing jobs they'd never done before, gave some refreshing lessons to top management."

In the aftermath of the Boron defeat, employers at the small KNC Glass Company near Oakland, California, were emboldened to launch a union-busting attack on the plant's workforce, which was organized by ILWU Local 6. The company did not prevail, thanks to Local 6 union militants, who were supported by *Workers Vanguard*. The union militants' leaflet, demanding "Defend KNC Glass Strike! Mass Union Pickets Against Scabs! Don't Handle Scab Goods!" brought an immediate response. A picket of 75-100 backed the company off its threat to bring in scabs. When it was learned that four truckloads of glass were

Konikow...

(continued from page 2)

in no other country, *but no socialism in any country.*

I began to rock another cradle and today the baby is ten years old. Who can deny that it is a sturdy, strong young fellow? The Socialist Workers Party is the only bright ray that today penetrates the horror of present-day nightmares.

I saw the beginning of the Second International and its fall. I saw the beginning of the Third International and *its* fall. Now together we launch the Fourth International which will accomplish the tasks betrayed by the Second and the Third.

A Magic Word

We live now in the atmosphere of impending war. My war memories remind me of many encounters. I was sent on tour by the German-language federation of the S.P. to speak in German at anti-war meetings. That was no easy task at the height of the war frenzy. Many times comrades would approach me, pale and trembling, begging that I speak on another subject. They pointed to German detectives and the sheriff sitting in the crowd. Often I felt like weakening—but there was one magic word that gave me strength to do my duty. I tell it to you comrades—it may again help you. The magic word was *Liebkecht*.

Before I conclude, let me say a few words to the youth. No sermons or admonitions, for you do not need them! I am proud of you. I want to tell you that I envy you, your youth and vigor. I would like to be 50 years younger to work with you, for your task in the coming years will be the most important in human history. You have great monsters to fight, Fascism, Stalinism. It was easier to work under the Russian Czar than under Sta-

bound for shipment from the Oakland docks to the plant, members of Teamsters Local 70 and ILWU Locals 10 and 34 refused to handle the loads. Local 6 bureaucrats later attempted to victimize the union militants.

As we wrote in "KNC or Boron—Victory or Defeat?" (WV No. 62, 14 February 1975):

"The union leaderships, including the 'progressive' Bridges regime in the ILWU, are committed to pro-capitalist business unionism which worships every letter of bourgeois legality. Under such leaderships, unions scab on each other (AFL-CIO craft unions crossed picket lines at Boron) and tamely they will submit to injunctions against mass picketing or proscriptions against 'secondary boycotts.' "The labor bureaucracy dooms the unions themselves to an ignominious end unless it is uprooted and replaced with class-struggle leadership."

Today ILWU Local 6, which once organized many hundreds of warehouse workers in the Bay Area region, is little more than a shell. With the passive acquiescence of the ILWU tops, the majority of warehouse jobs were moved inland by the employers, where they are overwhelmingly non-union. This has contributed to the increasing isolation of longshoremen and left the ILWU smaller and weaker.

The Boron miners' battle poses the vital necessity of reviving the unions as fighting organizations of the working class. The labor misleaders, complicit in the gutting of the unions, must go. The fight to replace them with a new leadership based on a program of class struggle is at bottom a political question. The starting point must be the unconditional independence of the working class from the capitalist class enemy and all of its parties and state agencies. The workers need their own party, an internationalist multiracial workers party that will aim to do away with the entire system of capitalist wage slavery. When the wealth of this country belongs to those whose labor produced it, the American working class can lead the fight for an international planned socialist economy that will rid the world of the depredations inflicted on the working and oppressed masses by the imperialist rulers. *Victory to the Boron miners!* ■



Militant

Photograph dedicated to Antoinette Konikow by Leon Trotsky on the fiftieth anniversary of her entry into the Marxist movement.

lin, easier under the German Kaiser than under Hitler.

An Unsoiled Banner

But you have better weapons than we had, more knowledge, the experience of 50 years of the leadership of the greatest living genius of the revolution, Leon Trotsky.

We place in your hands a banner unsoiled. Many times it was dragged into the mud. We lifted it up and lovingly cleansed it to give it to you. Under the red banner of Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky, you will conquer.

And when that great moment arrives, pause for a moment and think of us, who will not be with you at that glorious time, and say: "Comrades, sleep in peace. The work has been done." ■

SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S. Local Directory and Public Offices

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National Office: Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116, (212) 732-7860

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Public Office: Sat. 2-5 p.m., 222 S. Morgan (Buzzer 23)

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Public Office: Sat. 2-5 p.m., 3806 Beverly Blvd., Room 215

New York Box 3381, Church St. Sta., New York, NY 10008, (212) 267-1025
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Public Office: 1st and 3rd Sat. of every month, 1-4 p.m., and by appointment, 299 Broadway, Suite 318

Oakland Box 29497, Oakland, CA 94604, (510) 839-0851
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ILWU: Don't Handle Scab Borax!

Nearly 600 workers, members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 30, are in a battle against a massive union-busting offensive by the giant Rio Tinto mining conglomerate at the U.S. Borax mine in the small Mojave Desert town of Boron, California. The Borax miners have been locked out for over two months as the company aims to enforce a contract that would allow it to hire non-union labor; to cut wages whenever it wants; to slash full-time jobs and turn them into part-time positions with little to no benefits; to rip up work rules and reorganize work hours, assignments and shifts at its whim; and to impose mandatory overtime. The Boron mine produces about half of the world's borax, which is used in numerous products like soap, fertilizer and, most importantly, many types of glass. Hundreds of scabs and security thugs from J.R. Gettier & Associates, hired by Rio Tinto, are running operations at the mine, producing scab borax.

The Boron miners' fight has evoked widespread sympathy and support from organized labor in California and unions internationally from Australia to South Africa to Canada, many of which have been on the receiving end of strikebreaking, union-busting assaults by Rio Tinto. But the top leadership of the Boron miners' own union, the ILWU, has not even stopped the processing of borax by ILWU members. Solidarity is more than a few fine words of support and donations of food and money. What is needed is the mobilization of *labor action*, most importantly through dockworkers, rail and other transport unions "hot-cargoing" (refusing to handle) scab borax!

It is not for want of solidarity with the Boron workers that workers at the privately owned Rio Tinto terminal on the docks in Wilmington, California, members of ILWU Local 20, are continuing to work scab borax. These ILWU members have been kept on the job by the union misleaders who bow in homage to the bosses' laws banning hot-cargoing and other "illegal" labor actions, like building mass pickets that no scab would dare to cross. Having worked overtime to help get Obama elected to the White House, the labor bureaucrats are striving to maintain class peace for the Democrats. ILWU longshoremen and Local 20 processing plant workers told *Workers Vanguard* that scab borax is trucked from Boron into

For International Labor Solidarity with Locked-Out Boron Workers



Locked-out Rio Tinto miners confront cops in Boron, California. ILWU borax workers have been locked out for over two months.

the Wilmington plant, where it is processed, loaded into containers and then trucked to other docks in the L.A. area and elsewhere.

In February, the Executive Board of ILWU Local 10 in San Francisco passed a motion put forward by left-talking local bureaucrat Jack Heyman. Declaring the ILWU "has already pledged full support" (!), the motion calls on the International Dockworkers Council, an affiliation of dockworkers unions from around the globe, to demand that transport workers internationally refuse to handle scab borax. Real labor solidarity begins at home! It must start with hot-cargoing borax by the ILWU itself!

Among the labor officials praising the strategy of the ILWU tops is Ken Riley, president of International Longshoremen's Association Local 1422 in Charleston, South Carolina. Following a solidarity rally with Boron miners on February 16, Riley told Mike Davis (see "Labor War in the Mojave," *Nation*, 29 March):

"The ILWU is doing a terrific job marketing Boron's importance to the rest of the labor movement. Internationally, our unions

understand that we have to organize the logistics chain, from producers to transport to distributor to retailer. This is a new model of power for the labor movement, like industrial unionism in the 1930s, but adapted to the reality of globalization."

Publicizing a labor struggle is a first step. But the point is for labor to then stop the "marketing" of the borax mined by the scabs! Instead, the ILWU tops have substituted solidarity rallies and "moral witness" protests for coordinated action. Such tactics, far from a "new model," are a well-worn losing strategy. No amount of public outcry can replace getting the bosses where it hurts: shutting down the flow of their products. Whether turning back Rio Tinto's union-busting assault or organizing the unorganized in the ever-growing chain of world trade, what is needed is the kind of hard-fought class struggle through which the industrial unions were founded.

Rail workers from the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen (BLE) have refused to take their trains across the borax miners' picket lines. But the purpose of the labor principle "picket lines mean don't cross" is to *stop* the production and shipment of scab goods. Instead, the BLE tops have allowed the trains to be taken across the lines by managers and then returned outside the mine, where BLE members transport the scab borax. According to ILWU workers, the scab borax is then transported to non-union docks on the Gulf of Mexico, particularly in Houston. There it is shipped out around the world to be offloaded and transported by other workers, many of them in unions which themselves are under attack by the shipping, mining and transportation industry magnates.

Fight the Bureaucrats' American Chauvinism!

In this face-off with the world's third largest mining company—with uranium, copper, coal, gold, iron ore, industrial diamond and other operations in 40 countries around the world—international labor solidarity is key. But this is under-

mined by the labor bureaucracy's flag-waving American patriotism. The latest example is a leaflet by the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor calling for a protest picket against Rio Tinto at the British Consulate in L.A. on April 16 (protests are also planned in San Francisco and Seattle). The leaflet, done up in red-white-and-blue, declares: "A British-owned company wants to starve our workers into submission.... Together we will send a message... You can't starve out AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL."

This is nothing more than an alibi for America's capitalist rulers, who are the authors of union-busting and the soaring joblessness, hunger and poverty of the masses of workers, blacks and immigrants in this country. In competition with its imperialist rivals for ever-greater profits, the aim of the American bourgeoisie is indeed to pummel workers all over the world into submission to their interests. And the bureaucrats, who preach the lie of a partnership between the workers and their "own" exploiters, particularly expressed in chaining the unions to the Democratic Party, have long served as the handmaidens for the resulting destitution. Now they portray the fight against Rio Tinto in Boron not as a class-struggle fight of the working class against the capi-

talist class enemy but rather as a defense of America against a "foreign-owned company."

Such chauvinism easily slides over into blaming foreign workers for "stealing American jobs." It is poison to international working-class solidarity and serves only to foment the racist and ethnic hostilities that have been so ably wielded by the U.S. rulers to keep the working class divided. It is in this same vein that Rio Tinto cites the lower wages of Turkish borate miners, whose union sent a delegation to Local 30 in support of the locked-out miners, as a rationale for its union-busting in California.

There is no question that Rio Tinto has a long and savage history. But American-owned companies, backed by the military might of the U.S. imperialists, have inflicted their own ravages on the workers and oppressed of the world. Nor is it a big step from complaining about foreign-owned companies to supporting the U.S. ruling class in its trade wars against the other imperialist powers. The same logic has been used to justify lining up behind the U.S. imperialist bourgeoisie when trade wars exploded into military conflicts—such as World Wars I and II—the ultimate means for rival capitalist states to secure foreign markets and spheres of exploitation. It is the sons and daughters of the working class who have been and will be used as cannon fodder to fight for capitalist America against its foreign competitors.

Boron is a small desert mining town of some 2,000 people. But the whole history of Rio Tinto, a multinational conglomerate based in England and Australia, powerfully drives home that the workers' fight is and must be an international one.

The company got its start in 1873, funded by British capital, to mine the Rio Tinto copper deposits in Spain. In the midst of the Spanish Civil War in 1937, the head of the company, Sir Auckland Geddes, applauded General Franco for eliminating militant miners from its operations

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Maritime workers express support for the Boron miners at International Maritime Conference in New Zealand, October 2009.