

Wisconsin Showdown Over Union Rights

deadly law would eliminate public sector collective bargaining on any issue besides wages, limit raises to no more than cost-of-living increases, and require public sector unions to endure mandatory annual recertification votes that would threaten the very existence of these unions. Under the bill, employee

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This is a war being fought by the
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Forge a Class-Struggle Leadership of the Unions!
For a Workers Party That Fights for a Workers Government!



TROTSKY

FROM THE ARCHIVES OF MARXISM



LENIN

On Communist Work Among Women in Soviet Central Asia

March 8 marks International Women's Day. In honor of that proletarian holiday, we print below excerpts from a report by Varsenika Kasparova titled "Forms and Methods of Work Among the Women of the Soviet East." The report was published in a 1924 Communist Party of Great Britain pamphlet called *Work Among Women*.

By sweeping away the capitalist order throughout the tsarist empire, the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution drastically changed the lives of women. In overwhelmingly Muslim Soviet Central Asia, the Bolsheviks faced the enormous task of overthrowing pre-feudal and tribal social and economic relations that were inextricably linked to the virtual enslavement of women. Bringing the peoples from these backward regions over to the side of revolution could only happen to the extent that they understood that the transformation of society—to which they themselves would contribute—was in their own interest.

The Zhenotdel (the Bolshevik Party's Department of Working Women and Peasant Women) sent Bolshevik cadre across the Steppe to bring the vision of socialist emancipation to Muslim women and draw them actively into the work. Zhenotdel organizers and educators at times even donned the *paranja* (head-to-toe veil) in order to meet with these women. They faced threats from every sort of counter-revolutionary tendency, and both they and the brave women they worked with faced violence and death. By 1924, Zhenotdel organizations existed in many areas.

The 1917 Bolshevik Revolution began to lay the material foundations for the liberation of women. But without the international extension of the revolution, especially to the advanced capitalist countries, the material basis for the elimination of scarcity and its attendant oppressions could not be realized. The pressure of imperialist encirclement, the devastation of the working class during the Civil War and the lengthy isolation of the Russian Revolution enabled a bureaucratic layer headed by Stalin to usurp political power in a political counterrevolution in 1923-24. Beginning then, the people who ruled the USSR, the way the USSR was ruled and the purposes for which the USSR was ruled all changed. In 1930, the Soviet government liquidated the Zhenotdel. After decades of Stalinist misrule, capitalist counterrevolution triumphed in 1991-92, a world-historic defeat for the international working class and for the women of the former Soviet Union.

Varsenika Kasparova was co-director of the Zhenotdel with longtime Bolshevik cadre Alexandra Kollontai. She also headed

the Agitational Department of the All-Russian Bureau of Military Commissars, whose teams she deployed throughout Trotsky's Red Army. Of Tatar origin, Kasparova was responsible for the countries of the East in the Communist International's International Women's Secretariat (IWS). She was prominent in Trotsky's Left Opposition, which fought the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet Union, including while she held her post in the IWS. In 1941, she was executed in a Stalinist prison.

* * *

THE Soviet Government, having announced the most complete and thoroughgoing programme the world has ever known for the abolition of all forms of oppression of man by man, was not content with mere formal proclamations, but

retention of whole nations in a primitive state, had brought about the most disastrous results. The main forces had, therefore, to be diverted to the Eastern borders—the weakest section of the national front. The Soviet Government was faced with a great historical task in the East. First there was the problem of developing and quickening the economic life, of replacing the prevailing primitive forms of agriculture and cattle-breeding with more modern methods, and of building up local industrial centres capable of quickly shaking off the survivals of feudalism. Then came the problem of raising the cultural level of the working masses, of waging an energetic campaign against such relics of barbarism as polygamy, religious prejudices, ancient customs, and the purchasing of wives. Parallel with

oppression is impossible. Moreover, the emancipation of Eastern women will mean an increase in the productivity of labour in Russia as well as the broadening and reinforcing of the social basis on which the Communist Party depends in its constructive work. Although incapable of grasping the meaning and substance of Bolshevism mentally, the toiling women of the East, awakening to the new life, cannot but instinctively sympathise with the Communists for the very reason that they belong to the most oppressed class of society and they are drawn involuntarily into the struggle for liberation, carrying with them all the passion of one who but yesterday was a slave. For all these reasons the work among the Eastern women occupies a unique position, and the question of the apparatus directing the work, the conditions under which it is carried on, and the forms and methods employed, require particular attention. The Working Women's Department serves as the apparatus for organising the toiling women of the East on the basis of their economic interests, aiding in their cultural development and attracting them into Soviet and party life....

With all the heroic efforts of the Women's Department, it is impossible as yet to train a sufficient number of workers from among the masses of working women to carry on all the work that is necessary among the hundreds of thousands of unenlightened women of the East. Only if the work among the Eastern women is recognised as the problem of the party as a whole, and if the working women's department is able, through the Press and special reports at non-party peasant conferences, to develop sufficiently widespread agitation among the male population of the East, shall we have the required conditions for developing the work, or, more exactly, an apparatus capable of directing the work.

But the mere presence of a working apparatus does not necessarily ensure the success of its activities. This depends on whether the task is approached correctly, and whether the forms and methods chosen are practicable.

A certain amount of experience has already been accumulated, in relation to both these particular questions, enabling us to select those ways and means which have already been proved applicable to the unique conditions we have in the East. The first thing to bear in mind is that the work of the Women's Department must not be confined to working women employed in the factories, but should be carried on among women engaged in home industries, women peasants and housekeepers. And in every case special attention should be paid to young girls, for they are especially good material both for educational propaganda work and as prospective members of various kinds of organisations....

In organising work in the Eastern borderlands we must not for one moment forget that every one of these national republics and regions represents a separate world, with its own customs and habits determined by its isolated economic life. In adapting themselves to these special conditions, the Women's Department workers must avoid equally any survival of the imperialistic attitude toward the border regions, with its contempt for special national needs and mistrust of the native workers, and any tendencies in the direction of local Chauvinism, finding expression in an exaggeration of local needs to the detriment of the interest

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Central Museum of the Revolution, Moscow

Communist cadres of Zhenotdel, Bolshevik Party commission for work among women, teach literacy in Soviet Central Asia, 1924.

took immediate measures for their execution. Thus, in dealing with the question of nationalities, the Soviet Government not only proclaimed the equality of all nationalities living within the Soviet borders, but took practical steps to make them equal in fact. Since equality is only possible among nations which have attained the same level of economic, cultural and political development, the first step along this line was, of necessity, immediate assistance to the most backward nations in order to raise them to the level of development that had been attained by the more progressive peoples. Under the special conditions of the Soviet Union, particular attention had to be paid to the people living in the Eastern border countries where the colonial policy of the Tsar, resulting in the artificial

this, it was necessary to familiarise the population with the elements of culture, to abolish illiteracy, to reform their social life and finally to undertake the task of the Communist education of the workers.

But the execution of all these measures, leading to the complete liberation of the backward peoples of the East, is inextricably bound up with the question of the liberation of the Oriental women who are still incomparably more enslaved and oppressed than men. The debased position of the women of the East, which is an outrage to human dignity, is directly due to the fact that the Eastern women take no part in productive labour and are confined entirely to the subsidiary labour of the home and the care of the family. Economically helpless, the Eastern woman is completely at the mercy of her husband or her father, who are the absolute masters of her fate. Her world is limited to the bedroom, the kitchen, and the children, and thus the woman becomes sluggish and passive, a drag on every forward movement.

The backwardness of the women of the Eastern countries is the main obstacle in the road not only of the reorganisation of family and social relationships, but of the economic structure. And without that fundamental change there can be no thought of the awakening of the East. In view of these conditions, the first task is to release the suffering women of the East from the grip of ancient social forms and religious prejudices in which she is held, and help her to stand on her feet and enjoy those rights guaranteed to her by Soviet law. No matter how difficult this task appears, we cannot wave it aside or put it off until tomorrow, for without the liberation of the women, the abolition of national

WORKERS VANGUARD

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Toronto: International Socialists on Egypt, Iran

Cheerleaders for Class Collaboration

We print below a report by a comrade from the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyiste, Canadian section of the International Communist League. The report covers our intervention into a February 8 forum in Toronto, "From Tunisia to Egypt: Resistance to Revolution," sponsored by the International Socialists (I.S.), Canadian affiliate of the International Socialist Tendency of the late Tony Cliff. For more on the Cliffites and the Islamic fundamentalists in Egypt, see "Pandering to Reactionary Muslim Brotherhood" (WV No. 974, 18 February).

The room was packed with people standing up at the back and at the entrance door. There were about 50 independents, two-thirds of them youth. Most young people seemed to be Arab and were politically raw but interested in discussing the recent events. Clearly, the events in Egypt are awakening the interest of some youth.

There were two speakers. The first, Mohammed Shokr from Mohamed El-Baradei's bourgeois Egyptian National Association for Change, did not say much but showed his "anti-imperialism" by saying that it is in the interests of the U.S. and Israel to have a democratic regime because it will be stable, given that Egypt under Mubarak is unstable. He also cheered the crowd by saying that we are witnessing a revolution made by people for people, that the Egyptian people are not divided (there are only government thugs against them), that Arabs are ready for democracy and that protesters (including his son) are "having fun" in Tahrir Square.

The other speaker, James Clark from the International Socialists, spoke much longer. As expected, there was not a word of opposition to ElBaradei or the Muslim Brotherhood, but there was a lot about building an anti-Mubarak front. He said that the movement did not come out of nowhere; it started in 2003 in protests against the war in Iraq and developed through the Cairo conferences. He praised these class-collaborationist "anti-imperialist" conferences and pointed to them as examples to emulate, including the Kefaya movement (the bourgeois Egyptian Movement for Change). He said

the next stage needs to be a general strike, replicated in every workplace, and that the protests need to be escalated, for example by shutting down the Suez Canal. He added that new organizational forms will develop in which communists, socialists, Muslims, Christians, males, females are brought together.

Despite our hands being up throughout the discussion round, the Cliffites were determined to not let us speak. We had to wait until a second round and until it became embarrassing for them. Cliffite Pam Frache spoke first on independent trade unions being formed in Egypt. Another Cliffite advertised a campaign organized by the Toronto Coalition to Stop the War, so far called the "Toronto-Arab Solidarity Campaign" (they have not decided on the name yet). Its aim is to demand that the Canadian government stand with Egyptian democracy!

The Arab youth were mostly listening. Most comments from the floor were typical: "Don't tell them what to do but support whatever they do/want." The Cliffites probably anticipated that I was going to go hard against them for their support to the mullahs in Iran in 1979, captured by their headline, "The Form—Religion, The Spirit—Revolution" (*Workers Action*, February 1979). We had polemicized against them on this question at the dem-

onstration last Saturday. At the end of the first round, before I spoke, James Clark said the following in response to those who bring up Iran, including a young female in the audience who was wearing the *hijab* (headscarf) and asked about people connecting Iran to Egypt:

"What they're trying to do here is create this sense of fear that there is going to be this 'Islamist' imposition on the revolution...."

"We need to know why that particular argument is being made about Iran. We should know that while the outcome of the Iranian revolution was shifted by the early 1980s, it nevertheless kicked out the Shah, and actually was a pole for anti-imperialism in the region for a long time. There are still a lot of people, whether we agree with them or not, who look to Iran as an alternative to the situation that exists in the other parts of the Arab world. I'm not endorsing Iran as an alternative, but we need to know that that is a particular perspective that does exist, and that there is some popular support for what exists there, and that there are debates inside Iran about that...."

"We need to be clear when we're having a discussion about this particular movement: when you attempt to compare it with Iran in 1979, in most cases it's been an attempt to create fear about Islam and the Muslim community and the participation of the [Muslim] Brotherhood in a popular revolution."

My intervention was the third-to-last. I started with Iran, making the point that

the mullah-led "revolution" wiped out an entire generation of leftists—it massacred leftists, women and homosexuals, contrary to how the speaker depicted it. To the youth, I pointed out the need to learn lessons from history and a crucial lesson is that workers and radical youth need to fight independently of any capitalist politicians and religious forces. This means saying down with Mubarak, opposing ElBaradei and the Muslim Brotherhood and fighting for workers revolution. I lifted the issue of *Socialist Worker* on Egypt and said that there was not a single word of opposition to ElBaradei or to the Muslim Brotherhood. I noted the I.S. line on Iran 1979 and contrasted it to ours, encapsulated in our slogan: "Down with the Shah! Don't bow to Khomeini! For workers revolution in Iran!" I ended on the need to learn the experiences of the Russian Revolution.

After, the I.S. was quick to applaud the nationalism expressed by the only young Arab who intervened, who said (in response to me) that it is not about workers but about Arab people who have found a way to express themselves after so much suffering. The speaker representing El-Baradei's organization also spoke of Iran in his concluding remarks, saying that that "revolution" was driven by ideology but the Egyptian revolution is driven by people. Clark concluded by saying that in Canada we need to find out what the obstacles are (Canadian government) and fight them (sign petitions).

We engaged the Arab youth once the meeting ended. I was speaking to a group of Arabs about the need to oppose the Muslim Brotherhood and to create a workers party that will fight for socialist revolution. The usual response was that the Muslim Brotherhood has changed, that there are many tendencies within it and that the fundamentalists do not dominate it. I said that the mullahs in Iran did not start killing leftists right away; they waited until they were sufficiently strong. They were open to discussing with me, particularly because I emphasized the need to learn from past defeats. The key point needs to be repeated to these youth: anything other than working-class independence necessarily brings defeat. ■

Mansoura, Egypt: Textile workers in Nile Delta industrial zone demand better conditions, February 14.



Zimbabwe: Hands Off Leftists, Trade Unionists!

The following joint statement was issued by the Spartacist League/Britain and Spartacist South Africa, sections of the International Communist League, on February 27.

The Spartacist League/Britain (SL/B) and Spartacist South Africa (SSA) condemn the arrests on 19 February of some 52 trade unionists, students, workers and activists attending a meeting of the International Socialist Organisation of Zimbabwe. We vehemently protest the fact that

these men and women were arrested in a raid on a lecture in Harare by police and were detained and tortured. Outrageously, they now face treason charges, which can carry the death penalty, for the simple reason that they organised a meeting in solidarity with the mass mobilisations that overthrew the dictators Mubarak and Ben Ali in Egypt and Tunisia. These arrests are a blatant attempt to suppress protest and strike fear into left organisations who oppose the government. It is in the direct

interests of the working class to oppose this naked act of state repression.

As Marxists, the Spartacist League/Britain opposes the sanctions and other machinations practiced by the racist British ruling class against Zimbabwe. From the time of Cecil Rhodes' bloody quest to establish a "British Africa" from Cairo to the Cape, to the racist "independent" Ian Smith government, to the sanctions against Zimbabwe today, imperialist Britain never hesitated to use bloody force to assert its control and was responsible for the deaths of thousands of black Africans killed during the independence struggle in Zimbabwe.

The present British government led by David Cameron and the Labour regimes that preceded it couldn't care less what the Robert Mugabe regime does to work-

ers and peasants. Their only concern is that the enormous wealth that is extracted from the exploitation of black labour continues to flow into the coffers of the City of London and Wall Street.

As revolutionary internationalists in South Africa, the dominant regional economic power, SSA fights for solidarity by the South African workers movement with its class brothers and sisters in Zimbabwe and throughout the region. In particular, we fight for the workers to vigorously oppose the South African government's harassment and threat of impending deportations against hundreds of thousands of Zimbabwean immigrants; we demand full citizenship rights for all immigrants.

We demand the immediate release of the detainees in Zimbabwe and the dropping of all charges. ■

Trotskyist League/Spartacus Youth Club Forum

Uprisings Rock Tunisia, Egypt—Capitalist Dictatorships Remain Only Workers Revolution Can Liberate the Masses!

TORONTO

(416) 593-4138
spartcan@on.aibn.com

Saturday, March 12, 7 p.m.
OISE (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education)
252 Bloor Street West, Room 5170
(at St. George subway)

Spartacus Youth Club Class Series

VANCOUVER

Wednesday, March 16, 6:30 p.m.

**The Fraud of Capitalist Democracy:
Break with Pro-Imperialist NDP!
Build a Revolutionary Workers Party!**

UBC SUB, Room 42V

Information and readings: (604) 687-0353
trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com

TORONTO

Wednesday, March 23, 7 p.m.

Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!

Room 2281
OISE (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education)
252 Bloor Street West

Information and readings: (416) 593-4138
spartcan@on.aibn.com

Visit the ICL Web Site: www.icl-fi.org

The Partisan Defense Committee held its 25th annual Holiday Appeal to raise money for its stipend program for class-war prisoners and their families. Benefits were held in Chicago, New York and Toronto, and funds also were raised in Los Angeles and the Bay Area. Nearly \$10,000 was collected, after expenses. All proceeds from the Holiday Appeals go to the Class-War Prisoners Stipend Fund. This is not charity but an elementary act of solidarity with those imprisoned for standing up to racist capitalist oppression and imperialist depredation. The Holiday Appeals' stipend program revives a tradition initiated by the International Labor Defense under James P. Cannon, a founding leader of the Communist Party and the ILD's first secretary (1925-28). Over the last 25 years, the PDC has provided stipends to over 30 prisoners, including eight union militants, on three continents.

This year's meetings again highlighted the case of America's foremost class-war prisoner, Mumia Abu-Jamal, who was falsely convicted of killing a Philadelphia police officer in 1981 and sentenced to death for his political beliefs. Though his frame-up conviction was upheld, Mumia's death sentence was overturned in 2001. In the latest threat to his life, the U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia last November heard oral arguments on whether or not to reinstate the death penalty; it has yet to rule on the case (see "Federal Appeals Court: D.A. Demands Mumia's Execution" WV No. 969, 19 November 2010).

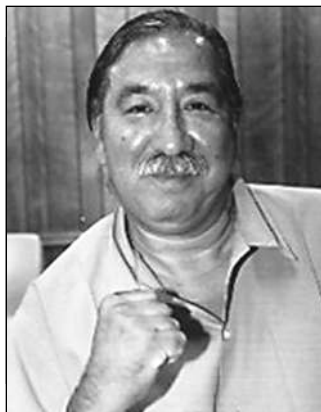
Along with Mumia, the PDC benefits

Partisan Defense Committee

CLASS-STRUGGLE DEFENSE NOTES

The PDC is a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization which champions cases and causes in the interest of the whole of the working people. This purpose is in accordance with the political views of the Spartacist League.

25th Annual Holiday Appeal for Class-War Prisoners



Cainmo.com

Left: American Indian Movement activist Leonard Peltier. Right: Former Black Panther Party spokesman and MOVE supporter Mumia Abu-Jamal.



WV Photo

honored 16 other class-war prisoners: Jamal Hart, Mumia's son, who was targeted for his prominent activism in the campaign to free his father and sentenced in 1998 to 15 1/2 years without parole on bogus firearms possession charges; American Indian Movement activist Leonard Peltier, who has spent more than 35

years in prison for his activism on behalf of this country's oppressed native peoples; eight MOVE members (Chuck, Michael, Debbie, Janet, Janine, Delbert, Eddie and Phil Africa) who are in their 33rd year of prison for the "crime" of surviving a massive cop assault on their Philadelphia home in 1978; Jaan Laaman

and Thomas Manning, the last of the anti-imperialist activists still in prison from the Ohio 7, which took credit for bank "expropriations" and bombings of symbols of U.S. imperialism in the late 1970s and early '80s; former Black Panther Party supporters Ed Poindexter and Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa, victims of the FBI's deadly COINTELPRO operation against the Panthers, framed up and languishing behind bars for 40 years; and Hugo Pinell, a militant anti-racist leader of prison rights organizing.

In 2010, the PDC added to the list of stipend recipients 71-year-old leftist lawyer Lynne Stewart, who is serving ten years in prison for the "crime" of vigorously representing her client (see article below). At the New York Holiday Appeal, Ralph Poynter, her husband, spoke on her behalf and described the ordeal she is going through.

The benefits heard greetings from Mumia, who noted that "the PDC is on the right side of history." He also thanked the PDC for being there "for all of us," including his son. Greetings were also received from other stipend recipients, including Michael Africa, who wrote that "to have sustained this type of support for 25 years is a testament to the commitment of The Partisan Defense Committee to those who stand up against the government agents of repression."

We urge WV readers to support the work of the PDC. Become a sustaining contributor to help drive the work of the PDC forward. Contributions can be sent to: PDC, P.O. Box 99, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013. ■

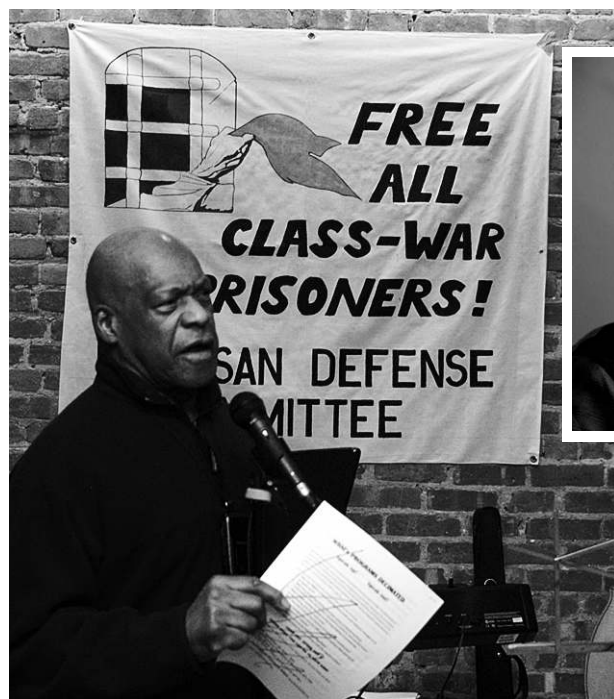
Vindictive Transfer to Texas Prison

Free Lynne Stewart Now!

Last December, radical lawyer Lynne Stewart was transferred to FMC Carswell prison in Fort Worth, Texas. The government vindictively denied her request to be sent to a prison in Connecticut, instead locking her up more than 1,000 miles away from her family and core of supporters in New York. Known for her decades-long defense of Black Panthers, radical leftists and others reviled by the capitalist state, Lynne Stewart was incarcerated for zealously defending her client, an Egyptian cleric imprisoned for an alleged plot to blow up New York City landmarks in the early 1990s.

Stewart, along with her interpreter Mohamed Yousry and paralegal Ahmed Abdel Sattar, was convicted in February 2005 of conspiracy to provide material support to terrorism and to defraud the U.S. government. What constituted "material support" was Stewart's *statement* to a Reuters reporter that her client urged his supporters in the Islamic Group to reconsider their cease-fire with the Mubarak dictatorship. As we wrote at the time of the conviction in WV No. 842 (18 February 2005): "The verdict gives the government a green light to prosecute lawyers for the alleged crimes of their clients, thereby shooting the basic right to counsel to hell.... And if nobody can get a lawyer to zealously defend him from prosecution, then fundamental liberties, from the right to a trial and an attorney, to even the right of free speech and assembly, are choked."

Stewart was originally sentenced to 28 months in prison. On 15 July 2010, federal district judge John Koeltl, who was directed by the Second Circuit Court of Appeals to resentence Stewart, more than quadrupled her original sentence. This is a loud affirmation by the Obama administration that there will be no letup in the massive attacks on democratic rights under the "war on terror." Stewart is currently appealing her conviction before the



WV Photo



lynnestewart.org

Ralph Poynter read greetings from wife Lynne Stewart (inset) at New York City PDC Holiday Appeal Benefit, January 21.

Second Circuit Court of Appeals. As for her codefendants, Yousry is imprisoned on a term of 20 months while Abdel Sattar was additionally convicted of conspiracy to "kill and kidnap persons in a foreign country" and is locked away for 24 years. None of them should have been charged or spent a day in prison.

In sentencing Stewart to ten years, the government is essentially seeking to impose a death sentence on this 71-year-old woman who has been battling breast cancer and chronic diseases. Her transfer to FMC Carswell places her health at even greater risk. The reality of "Federal Medical Center Carswell" prison has been extensively documented by Betty Brink, an award-winning journalist with the *Fort Worth Weekly*. Brink has written numerous exposés chronicling the deaths of prisoners through "medical mistakes,

substandard care and unconscionable delays" in treatment, to use the words of a former Carswell doctor. Eight prison employees have been convicted of rape and other crimes against the inmates at this women's prison.

Speaking at the January 21 New York City Partisan Defense Committee Holiday Appeal for Class-War Prisoners, Stewart's husband, Ralph Poynter, conveyed a defiant message from her: "I'm going to continue speaking out about what's wrong with this government." He had recently returned from Texas, and described the ordeal both he and Lynne went through just to be able to see each other, with prison officials forcing him to wait more than three hours to get into the visiting room. Poynter thanked the PDC—which recently added Stewart to its monthly stipend program—for continuing to defend her when some liber-

als abandoned her cause. He also read Lynne's greetings to the event, in which she roundly denounced the FBI persecution of the Freedom Road Socialist Organization, pro-Palestinian activists and other leftists (see "FBI Infiltration Exposed" WV No. 973, 4 February):

"We stand strong with the resisters who elect not to become part of the same prosecution team that has terrorized the world. Now the so-called Department of Justice (ha!) has decided to focus on support groups of the world's peoples and also on ecoterrorism. Why? Because they can! It sends a message to the people that it's dangerous; don't join, don't resist. That message once again must be shouted down, first by the resisters who will go to jail and second by us, the movement who must support them by always filling those cold marble courtrooms to show our solidarity and speaking out so that their sacrifice is constantly remembered."

The defense of Stewart and her codefendants is an elementary duty for socialist opponents of U.S. imperialism. Yet in their capitulation to "respectable" bourgeois liberals who sought to separate Stewart's defense from that of her codefendants, Workers World Party, Socialist Action and the Party for Socialism and Liberation have abandoned the defense of Yousry and Abdel Sattar, refusing to raise the call for their freedom. National Lawyers Guild attorney Liz Fink, who quit the legal team just days before Stewart's resentencing, filed court papers that despicably attempted to exonerate Stewart by framing up Yousry! The prosecution seized on this in the resentencing to mock the defense team. Stewart, to her credit, directed the defense attorney to reply that those were Fink's words, not Stewart's.

Lynne Stewart must not become another forgotten person locked up in this country's vast prison system. The government vendetta against her and the other class-war prisoners is intended to intimidate and silence opponents of racist oppression, capitalist exploitation and imperialist war. It is in the vital interest of the labor movement and all defenders of civil liberties to demand immediate freedom for Lynne Stewart, Mohamed Yousry and Ahmed Abdel Sattar.

The PDC has contributed to Stewart's legal defense fund and encourages others to do the same. Send donations to: Lynne Stewart Organization, 1070 Dean Street,

Work Among Women...

(continued from page 2)

of the Union of Soviet Republics as a whole....

First of all, we shall consider those methods directed toward the economic liberation of women. In this sphere measures must be used for raising the qualifications of women's labour, for combating unemployment and for the organisation of industrial artels [cooperative associations]. With the aim of acquainting the working women of the East with industrial methods, special trade and factory schools have been organised. In certain cases these schools are conducted with women's clubs and schools....

But the measures described represent only one side of the activities of the Women's Department. Side by side with its efforts to raise the cultural level of the women of the East, the Women's Department is carrying on the extensive work of implanting the elements of culture in the minds of the Eastern Women, and attracting them into community work. The methods used in this work are many and various. First of all, as a means of combating the high mortality and social diseases so prevalent in the national republics, and the various ancient customs physically disabling women and children, the Women's Department has organised a chain of medical stations, maternity homes, children's consultations, creches, etc., and is carrying on a wide propaganda of sanitation and hygienic information. Special attention is also directed to such survivals of barbarism as the marriage of minors, the wearing of veils, the binding of women in childbirth, etc. In addition to these forms of direct help to the backward population of the Eastern borderlands, instituted by the organs of the Commissariat of Health, the Department for the Protection of Mothers and Infants, and the Commissariat of Social Insurance, the Women's Department has devoted no less attention to the combating of national ignorance. Along with the various medical and children's institutions, the Women's Department has tried to develop a chain of educational institutions. Special efforts have been made in the direction of liquidating illiteracy and in increasing the attendance of girls at the Soviet schools....

As experience has proved in Azerbaijan, the women's clubs attain great popularity and hold great promise for development among the Eastern women. One inestimable advantage of the clubs is that they attract even the most backward and apathetic women, who are unconsciously drawn into community work, and thus the influence of the club is extended far beyond its circle of membership....

No small part in supporting the work of the educational institutions is played by the Press. Nine newspapers are published in the Soviet East which contain special pages devoted to the needs of the

them into work in the capacity of assessors, advocates, judges, etc., with the aim of doing away with all the barbaric survivals in the realm of women's rights and position. The best means of attaining this, in addition to widespread propaganda through the Press and platform, is through the organisation of a series of legal bureaux connected with the clubs or the Women's Department, to which women may turn for advice and protection in cases of infringement of their rights by their husbands or fathers; the arrangement of special public trials from time to time and the staging of mock tri-

is to draw the women into the government, trade union, co-operative and party structure. The Women's Department endeavours to have women included on the election tickets to all Soviet organs, and particularly to the village Soviets, the volost Congresses, the Volost Central Executive Committees, and the town Soviets. With the aim of increasing the activities of the members elected to the Soviets the Women's Department should bring up at their meetings questions having to do with the family, and the social and economic position of the Oriental women. Those delegates who are not members of the Soviet must be urged to participate in the discussions on these questions.

In addition to drawing the women of the East into government organs, it is also necessary to increase the activities of women in trade unions, and to attract the peasant and proletarian women into consumers' co-operatives.

It is difficult to over-estimate the importance of the phase of the work of the Women's Department that has just been indicated. The participation of Oriental women in active, constructive work will advance the Communist movement just as far as their backwardness and apathy have held it back. Furthermore, the practical work in Soviet institutions and social organisations means the gradual separation of the most conscious and dependable women from among the backward women of the East, and these women swell the ranks of the Communist Party and increase the number of active builders of the new life. And among the remaining masses, the work in the capacity of delegates or practical workers serves to awaken them to the decrepit condition of the Oriental social forms and customs, which is the first step to their complete support of the activities of the Soviet government. Not until all the hundreds of thousands of women in the East have been thus awakened, can our work among them be considered successful. Under present conditions the work among the Eastern women occupies a very prominent place. The attention of all the enemies and friends of Soviet Russia in other countries is riveted on this work. The former observe the awakening of the East with alarm, but the latter are carefully noting the ways and means applied by the Communist Party in order to make use of the experience of the Russian Communist Party in their own countries, after the imperialistic and colonial system has been brought to an end. ■



International Institute of Social History

Photo published in 1926 shows trial in Tajikistan, Soviet Central Asia, where woman accuses her husband of abuse. According to original caption, the female judge was "the first to remove her headscarf after the [Russian] Revolution."

working women of the East. In Turkestan a special paper for women is published, and in Azerbaijan and Georgia there are two women's journals, *Jenshina Na Vostok* (The Woman of the East) and *Nash Put* (Our Path). All of these organs are printed in the native language so that the local women may understand them.

Another form of cultural activity which should be noted is the question of women's rights. The first task of the Women's Department in this field is to inform the native population of the decrees of the Soviet Government establishing complete equality of the sexes, the protection of mothers and infants, and the protection of women in industry. The second task is to stimulate the women to make use of the rights which have been secured to them and to draw

als for the consideration of matters connected with the local convention of marriage and family relations.... This work must, however, be preceded by a certain amount of political education. The institution of delegates is the instrument for carrying on political education among the wide non-party masses of women. The women delegate meetings should bring together the working women, the peasant women and the housekeepers, and at the present time when the solution of the national question requires the forming of ties with the peasants of the national minorities, the work among the peasant women of the countries of the East must be given first consideration....

The chief task of the delegate meetings both in the separate political campaigns and in the general non-party conferences

Brooklyn, New York 11216. Letters can be mailed to: Lynne Stewart, #53504-054, FMC Carswell, Federal Medical Center, P.O. Box 27137, Fort Worth, TX 76127. ■

Support Fight to Free Private Bradley Manning



AP

The release by WikiLeaks of some 250,000 State Department cables has provoked a vicious campaign of retaliation by the rulers of U.S. imperialism against both WikiLeaks and Army Private Bradley Manning, who is accused of leaking secret material. WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, who has been held under house arrest in Britain since mid December, faces patently trumped-up accusations of "rape" and "sexual molestation" in Sweden. On February 24, a British court ordered his extradition, a decision Assange is fighting. Manning is being held under torturous conditions of solitary confine-

ment at the U.S. Marine brig in Quantico, Virginia.

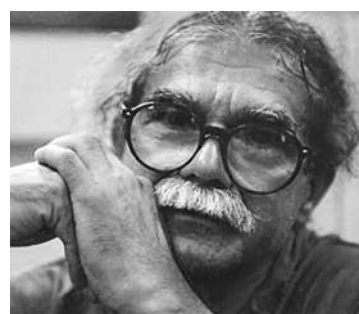
Manning incurred Washington's wrath when a video of a U.S. war crime in Baghdad was posted last April by WikiLeaks. It showed an Apache helicopter gunning down and killing at least 12 people, including two Reuters journalists, as the pilots gloated over the carnage. Manning is a courageous individual who—if he was, indeed, the source of the leaks—performed a laudable service by lifting, however slightly, the veil of secrecy and lies that shrouds the imperialists' machinations.

Manning was put on "suicide watch," meaning that he was stripped of all his clothes except his underwear, and his glasses were taken away, leaving him in "essential blindness," as he put it. He is now under "prevention of injury watch." He is given no sheet or pillow and is confined to his cell for 23 hours a day. Even his one hour of exercise is done in solitary. Guards check on him every five minutes and his cell is constantly lit, including when he tries to sleep. A 24 January Amnesty International report stated: "Manning is classed as a 'maximum custody' detainee, despite having no history of violence or disciplinary offences in custody. This means he is shackled at the hands and legs during all visits and denied opportunities to work, which would allow him to leave his cell."

Workers and the oppressed throughout the world must champion the cause of Private Manning and demand his immediate freedom. The Partisan Defense Com-

mittee has contributed to Bradley Manning's defense and encourages others to do the same. Send checks earmarked "Manning defense" to: The Courage to Resist, 484 Lake Park Avenue #41, Oakland, CA 94610. ■

Parole Denied for Puerto Rican Independence Fighter Free Oscar López Rivera!



AP

We reprint below a February 12 letter from the Partisan Defense Committee to the U.S. Parole Commission demanding the release of Puerto Rican political prisoner Oscar López Rivera. López Rivera was denied parole on February 18 and remains incarcerated in the federal prison in Terre Haute, Indiana.

The Partisan Defense Committee joins those across the country and around the world calling for the release of Oscar López Rivera. Mr. López Rivera is a principled and courageous political prisoner who was convicted of seditious conspiracy in 1981 for struggling for the inde-

pendence of his native Puerto Rico. After moving to the mainland as a youth, he was drafted into the Army where he served with distinction. He became a well-respected community activist in Chicago, where he fought for bilingual education and an end to anti-Latino discrimination in education and public utilities.

Mr. López Rivera has now been incarcerated for nearly three decades, subjected to the oppressive conditions in maximum security prisons in Marion, IL, and then Florence, CO. He has described his situation as being enclosed like a zoo animal in a cell eight feet wide by nine feet long for an average of 22 hours a day. This cruelty must end now.

In 1999 Mr. López Rivera was one of many Puerto Rican political prisoners who was offered conditional clemency by then President Bill Clinton. But he rejected the chance to reduce his sentence out of solidarity with Carlos Alberto Torres and Marie Haydée Beltrán Torres, two of his *compañeros* who were not included in the clemency offer.

As has become the norm for the continued incarceration of political prisoners, Mr. López Rivera has been accused of showing no "remorse" or "contrition." Mr. López Rivera has no reason to apologize for his part in the struggle for Puerto Rican independence. The people of Puerto Rico have every right to demand an end to the more than a century of colonial oppression meted out by the United States of America. We demand that Oscar López Rivera be released immediately and unconditionally. ■

For a Class-Struggle Fight Against Tuition Hikes and Budget Cuts!

Britain



Defend Student Protesters!

The following article is reprinted from Workers Hammer No. 213 (Winter 2010-11), newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain, section of the International Communist League.

In the final months of 2010 the country was rocked by furious student protests against the Tory-Liberal Democrat coalition government's attacks on university education. Tuition fees for students at England's universities will be allowed to rise to £9,000 [\$14,500], three times the existing level, while university budgets have been slashed by 40 per cent. The education maintenance allowance, a mis-

WORKERS HAMMER

erable payment of up to £30 per week on which seven out of ten college students depend, is being scrapped. The anger among students in universities and colleges exploded on the streets on 10 November 2010, when some 50,000 students marched in London against the new legislation. A section of the demonstration broke away and briefly occupied Tory [Conservative Party] headquarters, chanting "Tory scum" and vowing: "This is only the beginning." In the weeks to follow, students occupied campuses in several cities and mobilised in their thousands in London on December 9, the day of the vote on university fees in the House of Commons.

Tory prime minister David Cameron and his Liberal Democrat coalition partners narrowly won the vote, despite a rebellion among Liberal MPs [Members of Parliament]. Having pledged before the election to oppose any rise in tuition fees, the Liberal Democrats are now hated and the party leader is derided on demonstrations with the chant "Nick Clegg, we know you—you're a f---ing Tory too!" Despite the fact that it was a Labour government that introduced student fees in 1998, Labour MPs on this occasion voted against the Con-Dem fee increase.

The December 9 demonstration saw thousands of students, from universities, schools and colleges, marching to London's Parliament Square. Despite a gargantuan police operation on the city streets that evening, students in Regent Street chanced upon the Rolls-Royce carrying Prince Charles and his wife Camilla sitting in traffic. Demonstrating more apparent sense of British history than the schools might be expected to provide, protesters recalled the fate of Charles I

London: Cops assaulted protesters on same day House of Commons voted to impose university fee hikes, December 9.

and chanted "Off with their heads!" Students spattered the royal car with paint and seemingly gave the Duchess a poke in the ribs while they were at it.

The police, who came under heavy criticism for not protecting the heir to the throne, and previously for the fact that students got into the Tory Party headquarters, are now carrying out a witch hunt against protesters. Hundreds of students have been arrested and the numbers continue to rise. Outrageously, on January 12 an 18-year-old protester, Edward Woollard, was jailed for 32 months for throwing a fire extinguisher from the roof of the Tory building, hitting *nobody*. Criminal charges remain against many of the other demonstrators. **Free Edward Woollard! Drop all charges against student protesters!**

Sentencing Woollard, judge Geoffrey Rivlin said those who "indulge in serious violence must expect a lengthy sentence." For students who are new to political protest, lesson number one is that the good judge's words do not apply to the police, the actual source of serious violence on the demonstrations. The police "kettled" protesters for hours in freezing condi-



Edward Woollard, arriving at London court on November 24, received 32-month prison sentence for role in student protest.

tions, terrorised protesters by lunging at them on horseback and knocked student Alfie Meadows unconscious on December 9, causing life-threatening brain injuries. That same evening Jody McIntyre, a young protester, was yanked from his wheelchair by four riot cops and dragged across the street.

Terror and violence is routine for the

police, who killed Ian Tomlinson during the April 2009 protests against the G20 summit; who executed Brazilian electrician Jean Charles de Menezes on the Tube [subway] in 2005 in the name of the racist "war on terror" and who daily harass black and Asian youth using "stop and search" powers. The police are at the core of the capitalist state—which also includes the courts, prisons and military—the purpose of which is to maintain through violence the system of exploitation of the working class by the bourgeoisie.

Student organisations are building for demonstrations against student fees called for January 29 in London and Manchester, which are backed by some of the country's largest unions, including the civil service Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union, Unite and the GMB [general union]. As revolutionary Marxists, we fight for free, good quality education for all! For open admissions and a cost-of-living allowance for students! The question is how to get this. The money and resources exist for funding of schools, university education, hospitals and other infrastructure that is being gutted, but to seize that wealth requires breaking the power of the bourgeoisie. The Spartacist League/Britain intervenes into these protests with the understanding that the attacks on education, as well as attacks on working people, racism and exploitation, are endemic to the capitalist system. We seek to win students to our programme for the overturn of that system through socialist revolution.

What Program to Fight Budget Cuts?

The coalition government's budget cuts amount to a breathtaking attack on the living standards of working people, the poor and elderly, as well as youth. Across Europe and in the U.S., the capitalist ruling classes are seizing on the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression to slash jobs and to demand massive concessions on working hours, wages and pensions. Any capitalist government in Britain—whether Labour, Tory and/or Liberal Democrat—will try to restore the "health" of the system by bleeding working people; while of course cuts in company profits and the stratospheric bonuses paid to bank executives are off limits. At the mere suggestion that a "mansion tax"

be imposed, Blairite Peter Mandelson cried, "Surely the rich have suffered enough!" Indeed, some of Britain's richest have been reduced to asking for hand-outs from the state: it recently came to light that in 2004 the Queen turned to a public fund earmarked for "schools, hospitals and low-income families" to help her in the onerous task of heating Buckingham Palace! In these hard times, Her Majesty cut corners by eliminating Christmas luncheon for the palace staff.

What's needed is a class-struggle fight to defend the working class and poor against these attacks. Winning decent healthcare and quality education for the working class, including its black and Asian minority components, requires hard struggle against the capitalist class, a handful of people whose obscene wealth is gained from exploiting the working class and whose rule is reinforced by racial and other forms of social oppression. Students themselves have no social power and therefore must mobilise behind the organised working class, particularly the public sector unions, which have the social power and a vital interest in fighting against all the attacks on social services, including on state education.

But to engage the strength of the unions in an effective battle against the government's cuts requires a struggle against the pro-Labour politics of the trade union bureaucracy who are committed to defending the interests of the British capitalist rulers. What's needed is a new class-struggle leadership that will fight—in the face of capitalist austerity—for the basic needs of the working class. Forging such a leadership is key to building a revolutionary workers party.

Refurbishing Labour's Image

The student protests have sparked a debate about the role of the trade unions in fighting the budget cuts. Len McCluskey, newly elected head of Unite, said that the students had "put the trade union movement on the spot" and that the unions "have to be preparing for battle." The aim of this "battle" is to channel discontent among students and workers into support for a Labour government. McCluskey hopes that "Ed Miliband is going to continue his welcome course of drawing a line under Labour's Blairite past" and warns that: "These are Con-Dem cuts, and this is a capitalist crisis. An attempt to blame Labour local authorities for the problem is a shortcut to splitting our movement and letting the gov-

ernment off the hook” (guardian.co.uk, 19 December 2010).

Reformist organisations such as the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) tail the trade union bureaucracy and share the same goal: to pressure the Labour Party—which before the general election promised cuts “deeper and tougher” than Margaret Thatcher’s in the 1980s; which during 13 years in office carried out imperialist butchery in Afghanistan and Iraq and racist immigrant-bashing at home.

The SWP backed Labour in the 2010 general election and now runs the National Right to Work coalition, whose prominent slogan is “Break the Con-Dem Coalition!”—a barely disguised appeal for a Labour government (backed by the Liberal Democrats). Last June the SWP provided the Cameron government with a helpful way out of Britain’s economic crisis, issuing a glossy “anti-cuts” poster titled “Why There’s No Need to Slash Spending.” With a series of colourful graphs and pie charts, the SWP demonstrated in regard to the deficit that “we could raise the whole of that every year,” merely by taxing the rich, clamping down on tax evaders, and cutting defence spending by scrapping Trident [submarine-launched missile system] and ending the war in Afghanistan. The SWP calculates that these simple measures would bring £310 billion to Britain’s coffers. Quick—someone alert David Cameron! He should be informed that he needn’t throw people out of council housing, raise student fees or threaten workers’ livelihoods.

In fact—as Marx and Engels explained over a century and a half ago—the capitalists and their government behave the way they do not because they are ignorant, irrational or simply mean people, but because they must pursue their class interests: maximising profits and all that this entails, which includes securing



“Off with their heads!” chanted London student protesters who interrupted Prince Charles and wife Camilla’s night on the town, December 9.

last October: “Ed Miliband elected Labour leader by workers’ votes: Now make him fight!” (Workers Power website, 2 October 2010). Ed Miliband is already fighting: he has told the compliant union leaders that he is opposed to strikes against the cuts and is appalled at the very idea of a strike in London Underground on the day of Prince William’s wedding in April.

Counterfire is heavily involved in the so-called “Coalition of Resistance,” supported by retired Labour MP Tony Benn, darling of the reformists, plus Labour MPs John McDonnell and Jeremy Corbyn. Also included are Green Party MP Caroline Lucas, filmmaker Ken Loach and author Iain Banks and numerous trade union leaders including Mark Serwotka, leader of the PCS, and Bob Crow, general secretary of the Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union as well as Len McCluskey. The Coalition of Resistance aims not for the overthrow of capitalism but for “a radical alternative, with the level of determination shown by

nist Party leaders, who called off the strikes for a few crumbs from the capitalists’ table (see *Workers Vanguard* No. 972, 21 January).

The Socialist Party-dominated National Shop Stewards Network has launched an “All-Britain anti-cuts campaign.” The politics of the Socialist Party amount to craven reformism, notably on the state. Their position is that the police and prison guards are “workers in uniform,” a flat denial of the Leninist position that the police are a core part of the armed fist of the capitalist state whose purpose is to maintain capitalist rule through repression of the working class. The Socialist Party is known on the left for pandering to chauvinism and backward consciousness. Grotesquely, these “socialists” played a leading role in the chauvinist strikes against foreign workers at the Lindsey oil refinery in Lincolnshire in 2009 in which the slogan “British jobs for British workers” was prominent. (See “Labourites Whitewash Chauvinist Strikes,” *Workers Hammer* No. 206, Spring 2009 [reprinted in WV No. 937, 22 May 2009].)

Reformist politics cannot address any of the fundamental problems facing students today. These were summed up by one of a group of minority youth interviewed by the BBC’s Paul Mason on the December 9 protest, who said: “We’re from the slums of east London. How do they expect us to pay £9,000 for uni fees, and EMA [education maintenance allowance] was the only thing keeping us in college. What’s stopping us from doing drug deals on the streets any more? Nothing.” The willful neglect of education under capitalism hits hardest at the poorest in society, especially ethnic minorities, who are more likely to attend resource-starved and decrepit schools in run-down areas. An authoritative recent study into inequality in Britain showed that:

“children from the poorest families are half as likely to achieve good GCSEs [secondary education certification exams]; black pupils of Caribbean descent are three times more likely to be excluded; four out of five young people with special needs are being bullied; between a quarter and a third of Muslim women have no qualifications.”

—*Guardian*, 10 October 2010

Labour’s much talked about “reforms” in education amounted to a “free-market” bonanza for private companies and an insidious attack on the unions in education. Education services—from teaching to catering to building maintenance and cleaning—were outsourced to private companies. This meant many different employers operating in schools and colleges, many of whom are hostile to the existence of unions. Blair saw the teaching unions as a potential obstacle to his education “reform,” and thus teachers were blamed for schools that were designated as “failing.” Performance-related pay is increasingly used, supposedly to reward good results, but in fact it undermines the national pay scales and national terms and conditions negotiated by the teachers’ unions. Blair’s legacy also includes more “faith schools,” which boost the promotion of anti-scientific religious obscurantism and creationism, and city academies which are all but exempt from local authority control and

are decidedly unfriendly to the teachers’ unions.

Labour’s introduction of university fees in 1998 was a massive attack on students from working-class backgrounds. (Two years later the Scottish parliament reversed this in Scottish universities.) However an unprecedented number of students now attend university, in Britain and other advanced capitalist countries. University students in Britain incur huge levels of debt—estimated to average £25,000 but may be as high as £50,000 in London. And despite a vast expansion in the number of working-class students attending higher education, the class divide in education remains as wide as it was decades ago when the eleven-plus examination [for eleven-year-olds] determined that 80 per cent of the population was unfit for university.

To this day, social class is the single most important factor in determining educational achievement. The class divide persists because under capitalism the education system is tailored to favour the wealthy few. Research shows that students who live in socially deprived areas are less likely to take A-levels in subjects such as maths and science, while “children from the higher social classes were more likely to opt for subjects such as biology, further maths, English literature and languages” (independent.co.uk, 19 August 2009). In affluent areas such as London’s Kensington and Chelsea, upwards of 80 per cent of children will go to university, a rate which is five times higher than children from poorer regions. Although only seven per cent of all pupils are educated in the elite “public” (private) school system, this sector produces 75 per cent of judges, 70 per cent of finance directors and 55 per cent of solicitors (independent.co.uk, 22 July 2009).

The British ruling class sees little need to educate and train working-class people beyond what is needed for the City [financial center], which in the words of *Guardian* columnist Stewart Lansley “has sucked in the pick of Britain’s brightest graduates with some of the best young PhD mathematicians and physicists behind the fiendishly complex mathematical formula used to run arcane financial instruments” (guardian.co.uk, 27 August 2009).

As working people and students face the hammer blows of the capitalists, the trade union misleaders and their “socialist” lackeys look to Labour to merely mitigate the worst of the assault. This perspective has proven bankrupt over many years, including under old Labour governments in the 1960s and ’70s. To begin to address the fundamental problems faced by the multiethnic working class of this country requires a party armed with a programme for socialist revolution to destroy the capitalist state root and branch and replace it with a workers state that will lay the basis for building a socialist society. For that we need a revolutionary workers party—a party like Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolsheviks—which will fight for a workers government. The Spartacist League/Britain seeks to build such a party. Join us! ■

WHY THERE'S NO NEED TO SLASH SPENDING

£1,400,000,000,000

£310 billion

Socialist Worker

Reformism in action: British SWP poster advises rulers how to administer the capitalist state budget.

access to markets and resources through imperialist butchery abroad and war on working people and minorities at home.

Counterfire, an offshoot of the SWP, together with Workers Power and others are building several “anti-cuts” lash-ups. Despite much grief among themselves about the failure to unite into a single “anti-cuts opposition” the differences are over tactical and organisational questions, not over politics and programme. None of the competing groups has a programme for the overthrow of capitalism. Workers Power, parent of the youth group Revolution, expressed the hopes and dreams of all the Labourite left when they headlined

trade unionists and social movements in Greece and other European countries.”

The mass strike waves in Greece and France last year showed the tremendous social power of the organised working class: both countries were brought to a grinding halt by mass strikes in protest against government austerity. However, these struggles were undermined by the political bankruptcy of their reformist misleaders, who accept the need for capitalist austerity, while seeking to have a say in how and where cuts should be implemented. Like their counterparts in France and Greece, the British reformists are tailing the wretched trade union bureaucracy.

Counterfire invokes the spectre of France in May 1968, “the totemic student struggle, the mark against which all others become judged” (“Where Next for the Student Revolt?”, 23 December 2010). May ’68 was indeed an immense social struggle ignited by student protests that resulted in mass strikes, factory occupations and demonstrations and led to a prerevolutionary situation in France. The Counterfire article can’t bring itself to utter the words “socialist” or “revolution,” saying instead that “the change of a whole society” was posed in France, and that this “didn’t quite happen, for reasons that still provoke debate.” They don’t explain the reasons this “didn’t quite happen.” In fact, the workers and students were *sold out* by the reformist Commu-

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Wisconsin...

(continued from page 1)

payroll deductions for health care would be dramatically increased. Workers would be required to pay 50 percent of the contributions to the pension fund, resulting in a pay cut of 5 to 12 percent. Walker, a Republican of the reactionary Tea Party ilk, has threatened to start laying off 12,000 workers beginning this week if his bill does not pass.

"It's about the assault on labor, an assault on the working human being; to take and throw away the contract and say it's balancing the budget is bull crap," said a member of Wisconsin's American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). In short order, Scott Walker confirmed this observation. Believing, gullibly, that he was in a phone conversation with right-wing billionaire and Tea Party backer David Koch, Walker confessed to having considered planting troublemakers among the pro-union demonstrators while praising Ronald Reagan's 1981 smashing of the PATCO air traffic controllers strike and destruction of the union; Walker said that this was "our" PATCO "moment." Indeed, the impact of such legislation is demonstrated in Indiana, where all collective bargaining for public unions was banned six years ago. Since that time, as the governor of that state brags, union membership for state workers has nose-dived by **90 percent**.

There will either be class struggle or defeat. In his phone call with the ersatz David Koch, Governor Walker articulated

sick-outs—themselves a weak form of protest that sets individual teachers up for victimization.

It is necessary to defend each and every gain that the labor movement has won—from wages and benefits to pensions to the right for unions to exist. But that cannot be done by playing by the bosses' rules. Beginning with the very right to form unions, all the major gains that labor has wrested from the bosses in the past century were once themselves "illegal" by the norms of bourgeois "law and order." The class-struggle methods through which our rights were won—from massive picket lines to factory occupations to hot-cargoing struck goods—were also "illegal," and are today! Hard-fought strikes galvanize the rest of the labor movement and, when victorious, tear up the bosses' anti-strike laws and injunctions.

With similar restrictions and cuts against labor on the legislative agenda in many states (see article, page 1), the showdown in Wisconsin—the first state to legalize public sector unions, in the 1950s—has riveted the attention of workers nationally and internationally. In the U.S., private sector unions have mobilized in force alongside public sector workers around the Midwest. From New Jersey to Oklahoma and elsewhere, labor has rallied against similar anti-union legislation. In Columbus, Ohio, over 5,000 trade-union demonstrators filled Capitol Square.

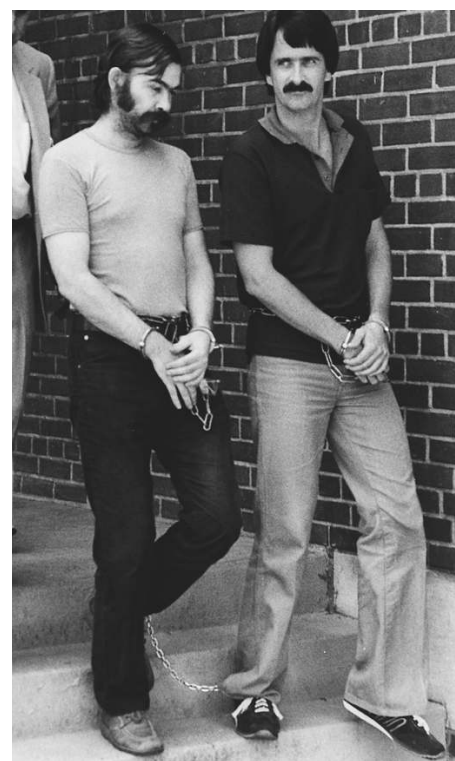
With the global economic crisis grinding down working people and the oppressed throughout the world, mobilizations against exploitation and oppression quickly resound. Many in Wisconsin have

The union tops—a component of the Democratic Party—are fully committed to the system of capitalist exploitation. In the private sector, these types have for decades agreed to the savage cutbacks of wages and benefits and the job-slashing attacks deemed by the bosses to be vital to the health of corporate America. This class collaboration has fueled the steep decline of the once-powerful industrial unions, which were built in the giant class battles of the 1930s. Now public sector unions face the same attacks along with the threat of a nationwide spate of "right to work" legislation to assure the withering of their union membership. In short, the union bureaucracy's subordination of the class struggle to the dictates of the bosses has set the stage for those forces on the right that seek the destruction of public sector unions.

The union tops are fond of portraying labor struggles as a fight to maintain the "middle class," thus obscuring the class divide in this country. In turn, the Tea Party types portray their struggle as a fight to maintain the middle class against encroachments of the labor movement. In reality, what is at issue is the inherent class conflict of workers against their capitalist exploiters.

Walker's bill exempts firefighters and cops from the cutbacks, supposedly in the interest of public safety. Firemen, who have joined the demonstrations at the Capitol, are workers whose job it is to save lives and prevent destruction. The cops and prison guards are not workers. They are the hired thugs of the capitalist rulers, front-line enforcers of the racist capitalist "justice" system. Marxists understand that far from being "neutral," the capitalist state is at bottom nothing more than an apparatus of violence—the cops, army, courts and prisons—for enforcing the bosses' class rule. This is no mystery to the bourgeois politician Walker, who has threatened to call out the National Guard to quell militant labor action. But the public sector unions like AFSCME have recruited cops and prison guards, deadly enemies of the working class, into the unions by the tens of thousands. Cops, prison guards out of the trade-union movement!

In channeling the workers' anger into the dead end of bourgeois pressure politics, the union bureaucrats are aided by a host of reformist "socialist" outfits. Groups like the International Socialist Organization (ISO), Socialist Alternative (SAI) and the Party for Socialism and Liberation have uncritically cheered the Madison protests while upholding the losing strategy of pressuring the Democrats to "fight the right" and "tax the rich" to balance the budget. In a February 19 statement on its Web site, SAI cravenly wrote, "We can't rely on the Democratic Party to maintain a principled stand unless they feel the fire of the movement spreading underneath them. After all, would the Senate Democrats have even taken their stand if the working people of Wisconsin



AP
PATCO air traffic controllers union leaders dragged off to jail during 1981 strike.

hadn't risen up in the first place?" For the ISO, the demonstrations have "transformed U.S. politics in a way that won't disappear, whatever happens with Walker's legislation." Or as Jesse Jackson put it in addressing a crowd at the state Capitol, "This is a Martin Luther King moment, this is a Gandhi moment." The continuing miseries of black Americans and of the Indian masses show that this is not the way forward.

Labor needs a fighting leadership that will break the chains that tie the unions to the capitalist Democrats—a class-struggle leadership that understands that the whole capitalist system of racism, war and exploitation must be thrown on the garbage heap of history. This is part of the struggle to build a revolutionary workers party that fights for a workers government and for a socialist egalitarian society in which those who labor will rule. Speaking of the victorious 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters strikes, which were key to establishing the Teamsters as an industrial union, Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon noted in *The History of American Trotskyism* (1944):

"Our people didn't believe in anybody or anything but the policy of the class struggle and the ability of the workers to prevail by their mass strength and solidarity. Consequently, they expected from the start that the union would have to fight for its right to exist; that the bosses would not yield any recognition to the union, would not yield any increase of wages or reduction of the scandalous hours without some pressure being brought to bear. Therefore they prepared everything from the point of view of class war. They knew that power, not diplomacy, would decide the issue. Bluffs don't work in fundamental things, only in incidental ones. In such things as the conflict of class interests one must be prepared to fight." ■



Sooner/Columbus Dispatch

Columbus, February 22: Protest at Statehouse against bill to outlaw collective bargaining for Ohio state workers.

a strategy of simply letting the protests play out. What is needed is hard class struggle to defeat this union-busting attack. The massive, hugely popular Madison protests show that there is widespread outrage over the savage cutbacks and that workers are ready to fight.

On February 21, the South Central Federation of Labor (SCFL), composed of delegates from 97 public and private sector union locals representing 45,000 workers in Madison and southern Wisconsin, unanimously passed a motion stating: "The SCFL endorses a general strike, possibly for the day Walker signs his 'budget repair bill'." In another motion, SCFL rejected any bargaining concessions on wages, benefits and union rights. At the same time, SCFL president Jim Cavanaugh was quick to explain that the group's support for a "general strike" was just advisory: "We're just a support organization, and the actual local unions would have to decide if they wanted to escalate things to the point of a strike." Recommendations will not do the trick. The Wisconsin labor movement needs to prepare for statewide strike action if this attempt to gut the unions is to be defeated.

But the Wisconsin public union tops have centered their whole strategy on pressuring the capitalist politicians to "compromise" by merely deleting the portions of Walker's bill that gut their collective bargaining rights. Blathering about the need to "share the sacrifice," these labor lieutenants of capital have pledged their *support* to all the wage and benefit give-backs Walker wants to wring from the unions. On February 21, the teachers union bureaucracy called off the school

identified their struggles with those of the working masses of Egypt, with some carrying signs denouncing Walker as a Mubarak-type dictator. In turn, messages of solidarity have been sent to Wisconsin from Egyptian workers and activists.

In Wisconsin, Democratic Party politicians have heavily promoted the protests to burnish their image as "friends of labor" in Midwest swing states. Fourteen Democratic state senators fled across the border to Illinois in a maneuver to deprive Walker of a quorum to ram the bill through the Republican-controlled state legislature. President Barack Obama has claimed to sympathize with public workers, asserting that it would be wrong "to vilify them or to suggest that somehow all these budget problems are due to public employees." That takes a lot of chutzpah from an imperialist Commander-in-Chief whose assaults on the United Auto Workers, relentless attacks on teachers unions, and two-year wage freeze on federal employees have set the stage for the current round of state and local attacks on public sector unions.

In distributing *Workers Vanguard* to the Madison protesters, our comrades have warned against any illusions in the Democrats. No less than the Republicans, the Democratic Party is a capitalist party and the class enemy of workers, black people, immigrants and the oppressed. While the Tea Party reactionaries want to smash the unions outright in order to extract the maximum concessions, the Democrats pretend to be "friends" of labor to better hoodwink the workers and maintain labor "peace," while extracting the same economic concessions.

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Public Workers...

(continued from page 1)

capitalist rulers around the world, as workers are being forced to pay for the global Great Recession. The British *Economist* (6 January), reveling in the carnage, reported:

“Many governments (for example in Ireland, Greece and Spain) are cutting public-sector pay. Others (for example in Japan and America) are freezing it. Greece is increasing the retirement age from 58 to 63 and making it possible to fire public servants. Britain is cutting government departments by as much as a quarter, and is reviewing pensions. “In the United States several rising Republican governors are keen to turn the short-term struggle over pay and benefits into a bigger battle about trade-union power. New Jersey’s Chris Christie and Minnesota’s Tim Pawlenty have both eagerly taken on the new ‘privileged class’ of public sector workers.”

In Europe, the capitalist offensive has been met with defensive, at times massive, class struggle. Most recently, amid a nationwide general strike on February 23, demonstrators protesting government austerity in Greece were attacked by riot cops firing tear gas projectiles. But as we wrote in “Ireland Ravaged by European Economic Crisis” (WV No. 970, 3

determined by the capitalist class. Those Democrats who survived the midterm “shellacking,” largely thanks to the efforts of the trade-union bureaucracy, are not to be outdone in “balancing the budget” out of the wages, pensions and other benefits of government workers as well as saving already threadbare social programs for the poor. New York Democratic governor Andrew Cuomo inaugurated his election with a one-year wage freeze on state workers, 900 layoffs and the promise of thousands to follow. In California, Jerry Brown celebrated his second time around in the governor’s office by announcing that over three billion dollars would be cut from welfare and health care benefits for the poor, as well as \$750 million from services for the disabled.

For its part, the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy couples its overwhelming fealty to the Democrats with preaching one-sided “shared sacrifice” and pushing “America First” protectionist poison. With their chauvinist appeals, these “labor lieutenants of capital” help line up working people behind U.S. imperialist interests. For America’s capitalist rulers, workers are fodder for profit at home while poor, minority and working-class youth are cannon fodder abroad. The struggles of working people and minorities against capitalist exploitation and oppression cannot be divorced from opposition to all U.S. imperialist depredations.

Busting the Unions, Starving the Poor

In racist capitalist America, the spectre of the hard-working taxpayer whose pockets are being picked to fund the “undeserving” has long been raised to shred social programs seen as benefitting black people, immigrants and the poor. Now the capitalist masters are wielding this stick against public workers unions. What’s at stake is not simply the survival of these unions, many of which are made up predominantly of blacks and other minorities and women. On the line are the very lives of working people, the poor, the sick and the aged who depend on such paltry social services as this capitalist government continues to provide. There is no more vivid a snapshot of the potential impending catastrophe than Detroit.

The former Motor City, where hundreds of thousands of unionized black auto workers once had the semblance of a decent job, is now a vast urban wasteland. By some estimates, black male unemployment is nearly 65 percent. Detroit’s population has sunk from 1.8 million to 850,000, with 40 percent of the city written off as “unoccupied” by the city’s political masters. A year ago, an article in the *Washington Post* (3 January 2010) described conditions: “The decline of the auto industry and the nation’s economic slide have left many residents here trapped, without work, in houses they can’t sell, in neighborhoods where they fear for their safety, in schools that offer their children a hard road out.”

While black industrial workers were the first to be written off by the bourgeoisie as a “surplus population”—their labor no longer needed to produce profits and their very lives considered dispensable—such ruin now increasingly stalks the nation. Almost 14 million people are officially unemployed, and that discounts those millions trying to scrape by with part-time jobs and the millions more who have been cast into permanent joblessness.

This crisis is the product of the workings of the anarchic system of capitalism, based on production for profit derived out of the exploitation of the working class. The obscenely wealthy capitalists appropriate the results of the workers’ labor (i.e., profit) as their own, while working people are left to wonder if they will have a job tomorrow. This phenomenon was noted at the birth of industrial capitalism by Karl Marx, who described its devastating effect nearly 150 years ago in *Capital*: “Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental



Athens, 23 February: Greek workers march during one-day general strike against public sector wage cuts and other austerity measures.

degradation at the opposite pole.”

Many workers today feel that the best they can do is to try to hold on to their jobs. But the same conditions that grind down the working class, that demoralize and set them one against the other in a fight to survive, can and will also propel the proletariat forward to unity in battle together with its allies against the capitalist class enemy. This was seen in the midst of the Great Depression in the 1930s, when, at a brief upturn in the economy, workers began to wage bitter class battles to organize industrial unions, sacrificing, if necessary, their jobs, their freedom and their very lives.

The social power of public workers is not that of industrial workers, who can directly stop the wheels of production and thus of profit from turning. But public unions include transportation, utility and other workers who provide the means and services by which the economy runs—the infrastructure vital for a modern industrial economy. For example, transit workers in metropolitan centers like New York, the San Francisco Bay Area and Chicago can cripple these financial and corporate centers.

While the bourgeois media whips up a propaganda barrage about “public outrage” against public workers unions, the truth is that if these workers waged some hard class struggle they would have plenty of allies among the unemployed, black people, immigrants and all those who have been thrown under the bus by the capitalist rulers. “Public opinion” is, in the end, determined by the ebbs and flows of the class struggle. As Bolshevik leader V. I. Lenin stressed: “Whereas the liberals (and the liquidators) tell the workers: ‘You are strong when you have the sympathy of “society”,’ the Marxist tells the workers something different, namely: ‘You have the sympathy of “society” when you are strong’.”

What stands in the way of the labor movement engaging in militant class struggle is the union bureaucracy. Peddling the lie that the workers have common interests with the capitalist exploiters and their state, they have allowed the industrial unions to be hacked to pieces and are lying down in the face of the war against public unions, if not actively col-

laborating in it. Even when forced to offer some resistance to the assaults of capitalist politicians like Wisconsin’s governor Walker, the bureaucrats subordinate the workers to the capitalist Democratic Party, and most of them are willing to concede to virtually all the government’s economic demands to cut wages and benefits.

The Labor Lieutenants of the Capitalist Class

The leaders of the public unions pledge their allegiance to “balancing the budget” of the capitalist government, the executive committee of the capitalist class. AFSCME leader McEntee has promised that “Public Employees stand ready to help state and local governments get through the economic storm.” Joining this chorus, a spokesman for the biggest New York State government workers union, the Civil Service Employees Association, responded to Governor Cuomo’s wage freeze by stating: “It sounds like he’s trying to set a tone that we need to all do our part. We don’t have a problem with doing our part” (*New York Times*, 3 January).

The role of the trade-union bureaucracy was captured by Leon Trotsky, who together with V. I. Lenin was co-leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution: “The labor bureaucrats do their level best in words and deeds to demonstrate to the ‘democratic’ state how reliable and indispensable they are in peacetime and especially in time of war.” When the “good times” were rolling on Wall Street, the public union misleaders assisted state and local governments in holding the line on increased wages and other benefits with the promise of greater pension fund contributions—a form of deferred wages. These funds in turn became a honeypot for high-rolling bankers and hedge fund managers, in league with state pension plan managers, for some of their riskiest investments, like credit default swaps and complex mortgage securities. When these imploded, pension funds were burned. State governments, many of which underfunded pension payments, are now screaming that they are being robbed by public workers, whose average pension is about \$20,000 a year. Anyone who looks can

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Line for Washington, D.C., jobs fair, May 2010. Some 6.2 million people are classified as long-term unemployed, taking a record average of 37 weeks to find work.

December 2010), “the effectiveness of the workers’ struggles has been hampered by the political bankruptcy of the workers’ reformist leadership, who accept the inevitability of capitalist austerity while seeking to soften the blows.”

In the U.S., tens of thousands of teachers and other public workers have mobilized in sick-outs and protest actions in response to a union-busting bill pushed by Wisconsin Republican governor Scott Walker, which would amount to a frontal assault on public unions’ very right to exist (see article, page 1). With Republican lawmakers mounting similar plans in Ohio, Tennessee, Indiana and elsewhere, Gerald McEntee, the president of AFSCME, which shelled out nearly \$90 million for Democratic Party candidates in the November elections, complained, “I see this as payback for the role we played in the 2010 elections.”

It is indeed “payback”—for the trade-union misleaders’ class collaboration, which has sapped the fighting power of organized labor by chaining it to the parties of the capitalist class enemy. No less than the Republicans, the policies of the purported “friend of labor” Democrats are

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Public Workers...

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see whose hand is in whose pocket.

The capitalist masters have virtually obliterated defined-benefit pensions in industry, which obligated corporations to make fixed retirement payments for private sector unions. Now they are trying to enlist these workers in the war against “greedy” public workers. An op-ed piece in the *Wall Street Journal* (4 January) titled “Labor’s Coming Class War” declared:

“The notion that Wall Street and Main Street are fundamentally at odds with one another remains a popular orthodoxy. So much so that we may be missing the first stirrings of a true American class war: between workers in government unions and their union counterparts in the private sector.”

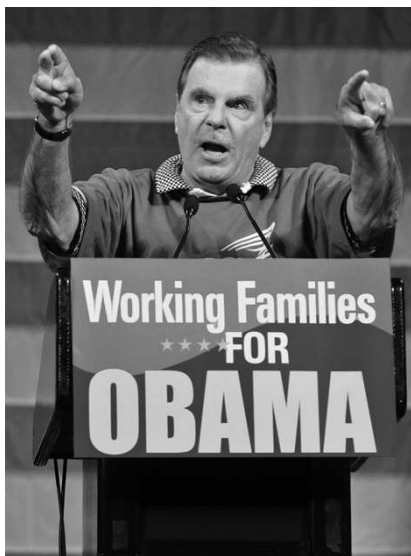
For evidence, this voice of finance capital points to Steve Sweeney, an organizer for the Ironworkers union, more than 40 percent of whose members are out of work. Sweeney is credited with “pushing for reform of state-employee pay and benefits” in his other capacity as the Democratic Party president of the New Jersey State Senate. The article goes on to gloat that New York governor Cuomo “may have found a surprising ally” in Gary LaBarbera—president of the 100,000-strong Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York.

Joining business and real estate magnates in the “Committee to Save New York,” which is raising millions to bankroll Cuomo’s war against government unions, LaBarbera argued: “This is not about bashing public-sector unions. But without a fiscally sound environment, we will not be able to attract new businesses to the city” (*New York Times*, 9 December 2010). This is but a raw expression of the labor bureaucracy’s class-collaborationist policies, which tie the fate of the workers to the fortunes of the capitalist class and its state.

In the face of a growing army of unemployed, the gutting of pensions, the lack of health care and the elimination of other social programs and benefits, the answer of the trade-union bureaucrats is to pit worker against worker in the struggle to survive. In fact, the “fiscally sound” calculations of the capitalist rulers don’t simply include savaging public unions and the poor. Taking aim at *all* unions, Republican politicians in the Indiana legislature earlier this month introduced a union-busting “right to work” bill modeled on similar laws in the South, where the unionization rate is the lowest in the country.

A Class-Struggle Program

It is in the crucible of heightening class conflict that a new workers leadership in the unions can be forged. This is not simply a question of militancy in defense of the existing unions. If the workers are to struggle not only in their own interests but in the interests of all the oppressed, there must be a hard political struggle to replace the present sellouts who sit on top of the unions. They must be replaced with workers’ leaders who are able to not only win battles on the picket lines but who are also uncompromising in their dedication to



Bill Burke

the liberation of humanity from the exploitation, all-sided misery and war that are inherent to a system based on production for profit rather than human need. Striving to forge such a *class-struggle* leadership of the unions is an integral part of the fight for a multiracial revolutionary workers party whose aim is no less than doing away with the entire system of capitalist wage slavery.

The very defense of the unions mandates a fight to organize the unorganized, from the mass of immigrant workers to the open shop South. To wage such a battle means fighting against the race-color caste oppression of black people, which is the bedrock of capitalist rule in this country. A class-struggle leadership of the unions would be rooted in the understanding that the fight for black freedom is inextricably tied to labor’s cause and would take up the defense of foreign-born workers, demanding an end to deportations and full citizenship rights for all immigrants. It would take up the fight for free, quality health care for all, for the extension of unemployment benefits until there are jobs and for all pensions to be guaranteed by the government.

During the Great Depression and on the eve of the Second World War, Leon Trotsky wrote the Transitional Program, laying out, in Trotsky’s words, “*transitional demands*, stemming from today’s conditions and from today’s consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat.” These demands are not only relevant but vital to the proletariat today.

Against the catastrophe of mass unemployment, which threatens the devastation of the working class, Trotsky called for a shorter workweek at no loss in pay to spread the available work and for a massive program of public works. A fight to rebuild the decaying infrastructure of America—the roads, dams, subway systems, schools and hospitals—would unite private and public unions together with the unemployed in a common struggle for jobs and the rehabilitation of decent services for the population. It would also mobilize the power of labor in the interests of the ghetto and barrio poor in the rotting inner cities, striking a blow against the racial and ethnic hostilities whipped up by the rulers to divide and weaken working people.

General Motors claimed that it could no longer afford to pay union pensions and health benefits for retirees and new hires. Based on this fraud, the auto barons got bailed out. The average wages and benefits of many of the surviving



Washington/NY Times

Left: AFSCME president Gerald McEntee stumps for Obama candidacy, 2008. Above: Teachers union head Randi Weingarten in 2002 with union-busting New York City mayor Bloomberg.

union membership are on a par with those of workers at non-union plants. Earlier, the airline, steel and industrial magnates also declared bankruptcy and were assisted by the courts in ripping up union contracts. Now a proposal is being mooted to allow state governments to declare bankruptcy so that they too can cancel their “debt obligations,” like the billions they owe in pensions. To expose such highway robbery by the corporations, the banks and the government, Trotsky argued that the workers demand that the capitalists open their books and “reveal to all members of society that unconscionable squandering of human labor which is the result of capitalist anarchy.”

Against the swindles of the finance capitalists who control the economy, Trotsky called for the expropriation of the banks: “Only the expropriation of the pri-

head off the organizing drive by union militants and “reds” and to set up a government mechanism to subordinate the unions to the capitalist state. As Trotsky wrote in his 1940 article, “Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay”:

“In the United States the trade union movement has passed through the most stormy history in recent years. The rise of the CIO is incontrovertible evidence of the revolutionary tendencies within the working masses. Indicative and noteworthy in the highest degree, however, is the fact that the new ‘leftist’ trade union organization was no sooner founded than it fell into the steel embrace of the imperialist state. The struggle among the tops between the old federation and the new is reducible in large measure to the struggle for the sympathy and support of Roosevelt and his cabinet.”

The very leaders of the new industrial union movement, including the Stalinist Communist Party, crippled it through their support to Roosevelt. The Communists and other militants were rewarded by being driven out of the unions in the red purges of the late 1940s and early 1950s, which solidified the power of the unvarnished pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy that has since driven these unions into the ground.

Well into the second half of the 20th century, union organization of government workers was uncommon if not outright prohibited. If the 1935 Wagner Act partly acknowledged and sought to regulate organizing rights and collective bargaining in private industry, it specifically exempted public employees from the right to join unions without reprisal. FDR himself wrote that the idea of strikes against the government “by those who



Minnesota Historical Society

Pickets confront scabherder during 1934 Trotskyist-led Minneapolis Teamsters strike.

vate banks and the concentration of the entire credit system in the hands of the state will provide the latter with necessary actual, i.e., material resources—and not merely paper and bureaucratic resources—for economic planning.” Trotsky was not talking here about the capitalist state, which exists to defend the rule and profits of the bourgeoisie. As he put it, “*the state-ization of the banks* will produce these favorable results only if the state power itself passes completely from the hands of the exploiters into the hands of the toilers”—i.e., a workers government.

No Illusions in the Capitalist State

The trade-union bureaucracy peddles the myth that the capitalist state is “neutral” and can be made to answer the needs of the working class if purported labor-friendly Democrats are put in office. They claim that the very organization of industrial unions was due to legislation enacted by the Democratic Party government of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, rather than the hard-fought struggles of the workers.

Specifically, the labor tops point to the 1935 Wagner Act, which they claim granted industrial workers the right to organize. The Wagner Act was passed in the aftermath of three victorious citywide strikes in 1934—all of them led by communists—that led to the founding of the CIO industrial unions. It was designed to

have sworn to support it, is unthinkable and intolerable.”

In 1962, John F. Kennedy issued Executive Order 10988, granting most public sector employees the right to collectively bargain. Kennedy’s order specifically prohibited strikes, as did Richard Nixon’s 1969 order modifying it. In 1970, over 200,000 postal workers went on a nationwide wildcat strike. Nixon called in the military, but quickly learned you can’t sort the mail with bayonets. The strike led to the formation of the American Postal Workers Union and the right to collective bargaining by postal workers. However, the ban on strikes remained and was strengthened by the 1978 Civil Service Reform Act (CSRA).

The misleaders of public workers unions present the formation of their unions, too, as the result of the largesse of the Democratic Party. The son of the author of the Wagner Act, former New York City mayor Robert F. Wagner, is credited with giving city workers the right to organize in 1958. In fact, their right to organize was won in a climate of rapidly increasing militancy, beginning with a 1955 sanitation strike led by AFSCME DC 37 against autocratic Parks Commissioner Robert Moses.

A hard-won and popular strike by welfare social workers in 1965 was followed by the victorious 1966 transit strike, in which Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100 leader Mike Quill tore up a court injunction ordering the strike to

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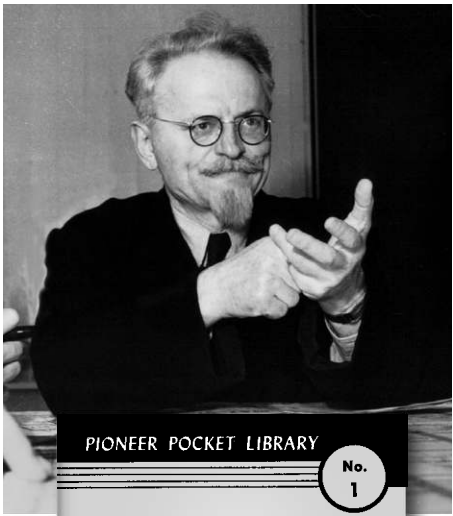
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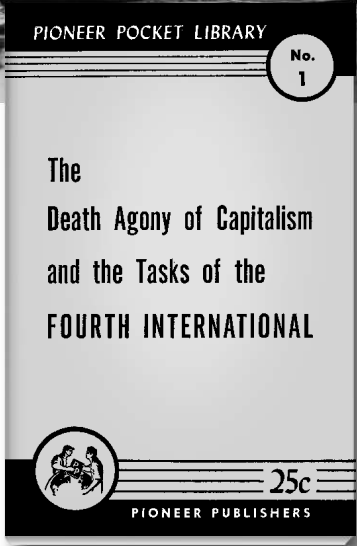
end, famously announcing on his way to jail, “The judge can drop dead in his black robes and we would not call off the strike.” That strike spelled the end of the 1947 Condon-Wadlin Act forbidding public worker strikes in New York State. Defiance by Quill and other bureaucrats notwithstanding, union officials generally *hide behind* the ubiquitous no-strike laws like the Taylor Law, which, with its massive fines and jail time for union leaders, replaced Condon-Wadlin in New York.

In 1981, as 13,000 PATCO air traffic controllers went on strike, Ronald Reagan dusted off plans hatched by his predecessor, Democrat Jimmy Carter, and fired the entire workforce, dragging their leaders off to jail in chains. His basis in law was the 1978 CSRA. Organized labor could have beaten back Reagan’s strikebreaking, but the union bureaucracy refused to mobilize labor’s power to shut down the airports. The smashing of PATCO became the model for the capitalists’ decades-long drive to gut the labor movement and intensify the rate of exploitation to prop up their flagging profitability. For the labor tops, the PATCO surrender became *their* model as well, ushering in decades of give-back contracts and two-tier wage systems with lower pay scales for newly hired younger workers.

It is a measure of the union bureaucracy’s fealty to the capitalist state that AFSCME and other public sector unions organize the very police forces whose purpose is the violent suppression of the workers’ struggle. The economic whip of unemployment and increasing destitution for the working class and oppressed has gone hand in hand with the vast expansion of police powers in the U.S., where the main growth industry has been prisons. Yet the sadistic jailers of the overwhelmingly black and Latino youth in America’s overflowing prisons are themselves often union members.



AP



In 1938 Transitional Program, Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky wrote, “If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish.”

These hired guns of the capitalist state have no place in the workers movement. Just look at this country’s prison guards, who are organized by AFSCME, SEIU, Teamsters and other unions. In California, they have been the moving force in

the racist “war on crime” and such reactionary laws as “three strikes, you’re out,” which have made the state of California a world leader in the number of people behind bars. But there is little bellyaching from the budget slashers over the billions that are poured into maintaining the prison hellholes. These are a critical part of the edifice of organized violence by which the capitalist state enforces its rule.

For a Workers Party That Fights for a Workers Government!

The 2005 New York City TWU strike, which garnered widespread public support, all but shut down this world financial center for some 60 hours. A key strike issue was defense of the union pension for new hires, which was under attack by the bosses long before the current recessionary “budget crisis.” The workers, who had walked out in defiance of the slave-labor Taylor Law, were stabbed in the back by the leaders of other New York City unions and the TWU International leadership and, in the end, sold out by their own union misleaders. This has had a corrosive effect on the workers, breeding cynicism. Nonetheless, notwithstanding the massive fines meted out against the union and its membership under the Taylor Law, the workers *kept* their pension—*because* they struck.

This helps to illustrate why billions have been spent over the past decades to wipe out even the semblance of organized labor. Even such a minimal, if supportable, law as the Employee Free Choice Act—which would allow workers to organize through a simple card check as against the prolonged “secret ballot” procedures that give employers additional time to mobilize to crush pro-union sentiment—ignited a well-funded

corporate barrage in opposition and is now all but dead. The reason is a simple calculation. Despite the sellouts of the labor tops, a unionized worker continues to make a median wage that is \$200 more a week than a non-union worker.

The unions are elementary defense organizations of the working class against unbridled exploitation. The question of turning them into fighting organizations for the working class, which will take up the fight for black freedom, for immigrant rights and for the defense of those whose very lives have been written off by the exploiters and their state, is a political one. As Trotsky wrote more than 70 years ago: “The trade unions of our time can either serve as secondary instruments of imperialist capitalism for the subordination and disciplining of workers and for obstructing the revolution, or, on the contrary, the trade unions can become the instruments of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat.”

Two possible roads lie before the working class. There is the bureaucracy’s acceptance that the workers must “sacrifice” to preserve the profits and rule of American capitalism, which has led to disaster. Or there is the class-struggle road of mobilizing the power of the working class in the necessary battles against the capitalist masters. In the course of such struggle, under a leadership that arms the working class with an understanding of the nature of capitalist society, the workers will become imbued with the consciousness of their historic interests as a class fighting for itself and for all of the oppressed. Such consciousness requires a political expression. That means the fight to build a multiracial revolutionary workers party whose purpose is not only to defend the working class against the menace of its own devastation but to rid the planet of the source of that devastation, capitalism itself, and the state that preserves it. ■

Abortion...

(continued from page 12)

the poverty line. In all of West Philadelphia, the infant mortality rate resembles that of a Third World country: 15 per 1,000 live births. This is more than double the national rate, which is itself the *highest* rate of the 33 countries that the *New York Times* (26 February) described as having “advanced economies.” In West Philly, low birth weight is a major problem. For the women living there, abortion—normally a simple procedure that is safer than childbirth—is *not* always safe, *not* always legal and certainly *not* affordable. Many women have trouble getting the money together quickly, and young women especially are often pounded with guilt by repressive parents, violent boyfriends or hellfire preachers, so they end up having their abortions only at the last moment.

Religious scam artists ply their trade not only in the evangelical Christian bible belt. In Manhattan recently, a Texas-based

group called “Life Always” put up a billboard about a half-mile from a Planned Parenthood facility. As part of its national campaign targeting minority neighborhoods, the billboard showed the picture of a little black girl with the grotesque message: “The most dangerous place for African Americans is in the womb.” The billboard went up on February 22; two days later, it was taken down, having outraged much of the city, not least the black populace. Life Always’ pastor, Stephen Broden, ranted: “The survival of our country, our nation is tied to the woman’s womb! And if we are assaulting that womb, if we are attacking that womb, we are on a path to self-destruction!” Such is the repulsive pathology of these bigots, to whom women are destined to be barefoot, pregnant and in the kitchen forever.

Lord knows that Obama rarely passes up the opportunity to reaffirm his credentials as a true believer in the Christian faith. Covering for him, the reformist International Socialist Organization wrote an article on the West Philly case, “Like Roe Never Happened” (*Socialist Worker*, 25 January), that roundly denounced the right for its attacks on abortion rights but made not one mention of President Obama or the Democratic Party.

For Women’s Liberation Through International Socialist Revolution!

Tens of thousands of women across the world die each year from illegal abortions. Some researchers estimate that in Latin America and the Caribbean the primary cause of death for women between the ages of 15 and 39 is complications from illegal abortions. Poverty and backwardness, enforced around the globe by imperialist domination, mean that the infrastructure necessary to bring basic medical care, contraception and abortion to Third World women is simply not there. Nor will it ever be, short of the destruction of the capitalist system by victorious working-class revolution and the establishment of proletarian state rule. It is precisely the hold of religious obscurantism, anti-homosexual bigotry and the treatment of

women as simply the bearers of—and those responsible for rearing—the next generation that must be eradicated by laying the material basis for the full equality of the sexes.

The fight for women’s liberation is a necessary part of the struggle for the emancipation of all the exploited and oppressed masses throughout the world. The main source of women’s oppression is the institution of the family. As we noted in our article, “Fifty Years After the Pill: Still a Long Way to Go” (WV No. 968, 5 November 2010):

“The war on abortion rights has become a spearhead for social and political reaction because at its heart lies the question of legal and social equality for women. Providing women with some control over whether or not to have children, abortion is viewed as a threat to the institution of the family....

“The capitalist class seeks to buttress the family, which, along with organized religion and the state, form a triad that props up the exploitation of labor. To free women from their deeply entrenched special oppression will take a workers revolution to rip this system of exploitation out by the roots and replace it with a workers government to begin the construction of a socialist world.”

Referring to the early Soviet workers



Hutmacher/The Wichita Eagle

Dr. George Tiller, murdered by “right to life” terrorist in May 2009.

republic, Leon Trotsky, co-leader with V.I. Lenin of the 1917 October Revolution, wrote in *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936): “The revolutionary power gave women the right to abortion, which in conditions of want and family distress, whatever may be said upon this subject by the eunuchs and old maids of both sexes, is one of her most important civil, political and cultural rights.” It is this vision of socialist freedom that we continue to stand on today. ■



Spaulding/Louisville Courier-Journal

Anti-abortion bigots rally against Planned Parenthood in Louisville, Kentucky, February 14.

Women and Revolution

Journal of the Women’s Commission of the Spartacist League/U.S.

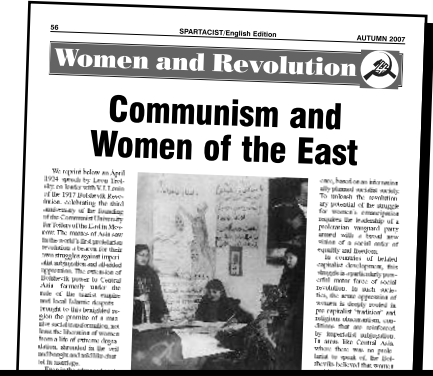
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WORKERS VANGUARD

Democrats, Republicans Attack Women's Rights

For Free, Safe Abortion on Demand!

For decades Democrats, liberals and feminists have offered up one concession after another that have whittled away abortion rights and emboldened the anti-abortion bigots, who have in turn launched a renewed legislative offensive. In state after state, Republican politicians have introduced bills aiming to eliminate abortion rights, while reactionary "right to life" outfits have launched a vicious campaign against Planned Parenthood to further limit access to abortion.

The attacks have not just come from crazed right-wing Republican politicians intent on reversing the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion. Not long after *Roe*, the Hyde Amendment, passed in 1976 under Democratic Party president Jimmy Carter, excluded abortion from federal health care services provided to low-income people. Obama's health care "reform" was in line with the Hyde Amendment, which eliminated abortion coverage from Medicaid. Many often vote for the Democratic Party largely on the basis that it would defend *Roe v. Wade* in the courts. But, as one concession after another has been made, including restricting late-term abortions, pro-Democratic outfits such as the National Organization for Women have limited their actions to "fight the right" electoral tactics even as abortion rights continue to be axed.

Already, at least 38 states have "fetal homicide" laws. In Utah, women can be charged with criminal homicide for obtaining an illegal abortion or inducing a miscarriage, including through "reckless" behavior. The law was prompted by the tragic case of a desperate 17-year-old who paid a man to beat her in the hopes of inducing a miscarriage. Anti-abortion bigots are now looking to replicate a Nebraska law that virtually bans all abortions at 20 weeks after conception. Across the country, bills are being introduced to force women seeking abortions to view ultrasounds of the fetus—as is already the law in Oklahoma—and to ban any abortion coverage by private insurance companies. In Georgia, a Republican state legislator has introduced a bill that would make abortion the legal equivalent of murder and force the criminal investigation of women who suffer mis-

carriages. In South Dakota and Nebraska bills were introduced to allow the use of "justifiable homicide" as a defense for the murder of abortion providers.

Through violence, intimidation and bipartisan legal assaults, the legal right to abortion in the U.S. is severely constricted. If you live in one of the many areas where no providers exist, you have little "choice," unless you have the time and money to travel. Some 87 percent of U.S. counties and 31 percent of metropolitan areas have no abortion services. The panoply of anti-abortion laws and restrictions on birth control particularly targets young, working-class and poor women. The wealthy will always get their medical care, including abortions, whether legal or not.

Seeking to further curtail access to abortion, anti-woman bigots are now targeting Planned Parenthood, which provides essential medical services of all kinds especially to young, working-class and minority women; one in five women will use Planned Parenthood sometime in her life. Scandal-mongering videotapes made by "Live Action," a reactionary anti-abortion outfit, portrayed a man and

woman posing as a pimp and young prostitute seeking health services including abortion, showing them receiving advice from Planned Parenthood workers in various locations. Stirring up the sex panic ever roiling the surface of American politics, the videos set off a wave of Puritanical vapors and hand-wringing, as intended, including among supposed defenders of women's rights.

Planned Parenthood's response to this sting operation was cringing. Amy Woodruff, manager of their Perth Amboy, New Jersey, clinic, did her job, giving commonsense advice to the people in the video. This included reassurances of confidentiality, how to evade legal complications and useful health tips (like only "waist up" sexual activity for two weeks after an abortion). But amid the furor, Planned Parenthood fired her, setting a dangerous precedent for others who may need such advice in the future. There is now at least one bill before Congress calling to bar government funding to Planned Parenthood. For our part, we agree with the gossip Web site Gawker's February 4 headline: "Even Teen Hookers Need Abortions." We call for the abolition of all laws against "crimes without victims," which include drug use and prostitution. We oppose "squeal rules" and all other restrictions on abortion directed at minors.

The anti-Planned Parenthood scam recalls the operation launched by right-wing yahoos against the liberal community organizing group ACORN, whose main "crime" was to register poor people and minorities to vote. Despite its close ties to the Democratic Party, Democrats joined with Republicans in voting to defund it, leading to its dissolution.

At its most extreme, bloody and reactionary, the anti-abortion campaign has meant the murder of abortion providers, such as Dr. George Tiller in 2009. Dr. Tiller's clinic in Wichita, Kansas, now closed, was one of only three in the entire country that provided late-term abortions. Between 1993 and 1998 anti-abortion terrorists murdered seven people for provid-

ing abortions: Dr. David Gunn in Pensacola, Florida, in 1993; Dr. John Britton, along with a clinic escort, in Pensacola a year later; Lee Ann Nichols and Shannon Lowney at a clinic in Brookline, Massachusetts, in 1994; a security guard in a 1998 Birmingham, Alabama, firebombing that also severely wounded a nurse; and Dr. Barnett Slepian in Buffalo, New York, killed by a sniper outside his home in 1998.

The organized labor movement has every interest in fighting for the rights of women. Such a struggle must be waged independently of all capitalist parties as part of the fight for free, quality health care for all, as well as for free, 24-hour childcare, which would address the deep class and racial oppression of poor and minority women. **For free abortion on demand!**

War on Women, War on Workers

It is no accident that anti-woman attacks have escalated at the same time that the ruling class has undertaken a vicious union-busting offensive, seeking to get rid of nearly every "overhead" associated with the most minimal social safety net. Not only abortion rights, but also funding for medical research, family planning and reproductive health care services for women are being slashed to the bone. This includes the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, which serves 9.6 million low-income women, new mothers and infants each month. Likewise, there are proposals to slash grants for prenatal health care to low-income women—cuts proposed in various degrees by *both* capitalist parties. The late, great comedian George Carlin, who famously quipped that "not every ejaculation deserves a name," caught the hypocrisy of abortion opponents: "They will do anything for the unborn. But once you're born, you're on your own."

In such a climate, the recent scandal over a West Philadelphia clinic throws a light on the wretched "services," such as they exist, that many poor people get. Two women died and many more were mutilated in botched abortion procedures by one Dr. Kermit Gosnell and his ill-trained staff, according to a January Philadelphia grand jury report. Officials had ignored medical complaints about the clinic since at least 1993, and it hadn't been inspected by health officials for 16 years. Filthy and dangerous, the clinic was, according to the grand jury report, responsible for many injuries to women, including infections and perforated bowels and uteruses.

The state, of course, has gone after Gosnell for performing late-term abortions—abortion after 24 weeks is a crime in Pennsylvania. He is being charged with eight counts of murder, seven of them for aborting late-term fetuses, which should be no crime. **It is the anti-woman laws and desperate conditions that force poor, black and immigrant women into such squalid back-alley operations.** In the Mantua neighborhood of West Philadelphia, where Gosnell's operation was located, over 16,000 people live below

continued on page 11



Boston, February 26: Abortion-rights activists protest bill to eliminate federal funding for Planned Parenthood and other attacks on women's rights.



Spartacist League joined 2,000 others in defending local abortion clinics in Washington, D.C., against attack by Operation Rescue, January 1992.