

U.S./NATO Troops Out Now!

Afghanistan: Women Under Imperialist Occupation



EPA

Left: Women line up for food on International Women's Day (March 8) in Baghlan, Afghanistan. Right: American Marines patrol streets in Helmand Province last March.



AFP

On March 6, two days before International Women's Day, Washington's Afghan puppet president Hamid Karzai announced that he had approved a new "code of conduct" issued by the Ulema Council of senior Muslim clerics. This edict legally confines women to their homes, barring them from going out without a male guardian or mingling with men in schools, offices or markets. It also officially condones wife-beating. "Men are fundamental and women are secondary," said the statement, which Karzai saluted as "the *sharia* law of all Muslims and all Afghans."

Throughout the past ten years of U.S. occupation, Afghanistan has been a living hell for women. To sell their predatory war in retribution for the September 11 attacks, the U.S. and its NATO allies pointed to the crimes against women under the then-ruling Taliban, pledging that an American-led takeover would bring liberation. After U.S. forces seized control of the country in 2002, George W. Bush proclaimed that "today, women are free." In reality, the U.S. rulers merely handed power to another wing of the anti-woman fundamentalist forces that they had backed against the Soviet Union and the leftist regime of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) from the late 1970s to the early '90s.

In Afghanistan today, women are forced to wear the suffocating head-to-toe *burqa* almost everywhere. The sight of women begging for money to feed their starving families is commonplace on the streets of Kabul, the capital city. To survive or pay off debts, families sell their daughters in marriage or to the many brothels serv-

icing U.S. troops and contractors. More than half of all girls are forced into marriage before the age of 16.

There is a saying in Afghanistan that a woman belongs either to her husband's house or to her grave. Half of the inmates at the Badam Bagh women's prison in Kabul have been imprisoned for years for refusing to marry or for fleeing abusive husbands. Returned runaways are often shot or stabbed by family members in "honor killings." Other women are jailed for being victims of rape or assault. For a

woman in Afghanistan, any sex outside marriage is considered a crime—including when she is raped. The rapist, meanwhile, almost always goes unpunished.

Barely a quarter of Afghan girls go to school. Religious fanatics attack those who do, including by spraying acid in their faces, as happened at a school in Kandahar in 2008. The following year, the education ministry reported that nearly 500 schools, mostly schools for girls, had been destroyed, damaged or forced to close. Between March and October 2010, at least

126 students and teachers were killed. The literacy rate for women is 12 percent, while their average life expectancy is 44, some 24 years below the world average. To escape their unbearable lives, many women turn to suicide. Even according to official Afghan statistics, some 2,300 women and girls kill themselves every year—more than six each day. The most common method is self-immolation with cooking oil.

The atrocities endured by Afghan women
continued on page 10

We Said: Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!



Paris Match



Sher Shah

Left: 1979 Soviet military intervention opened road to emancipation of Afghan women. Right: Young Afghan women in civilian brigade took up arms against CIA-backed *mujahedin* during Soviet military presence.



Protest State Vendetta Against Longview ILWU and Its Allies!

In our article “Lessons of the Battle of Longview” (WV No. 996, 17 February), we addressed the fight by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 21 against an all-out union-busting attack by the giant multinational grain conglomerate EGT in Longview, Washington. Backed by forces ranging from the local police to the federal courts and the armed might of the U.S. Coast Guard, EGT’s aim was to drive ILWU Local 21 out of jobs at the port the union has worked for 80 years. The union held the line against this union-busting offensive. But the struggle is far from over. ILWU members and their supporters continue to be subjected to a relentless campaign of persecution by the courts, cops and Cowlitz County District Attorney’s office. The union itself is facing more than \$300,000 in fines leveled at the behest of the National Labor Relations Board.

In the course of their battle against EGT, ILWU members and their allies engaged in the kind of militant labor struggle not seen in this country in years. In retaliation, leaders and members of ILWU Local 21 were met by a campaign of police violence, detentions and surveillance. More than 200 arrests were made, including several on felony counts. These workers

are being dragged through the courts with many being pressured to plead guilty to misdemeanors or face more serious felony charges.

Even now, after a settlement has been reached between the ILWU and EGT, Cowlitz County prosecutor Susan Baur, working hand in glove with the county sheriff’s department and local police, continues to escalate the anti-union vendetta. New charges, including felonies, are being manufactured over events that occurred many months ago. This vindictive prosecution is a shot at all of labor, aimed at creating a chilling effect on trade unionists who were inspired by the power ILWU members brought to bear during their fight against EGT’s union-busting in Longview.

These longshoremen and their supporters fought with courage and determination. Now we must fight for them! The Partisan Defense Committee, a non-sectarian, class-struggle legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League, has written a protest letter to the Cowlitz County prosecutor demanding that all charges be dropped immediately. We urge unions, both nationally and internationally, as well as all opponents of the bosses’ war against the unions, to do the same.

Letters demanding that all charges be dropped and fines and other penalties rescinded should be sent to:

Susan Baur
Cowlitz County Prosecuting Attorney
Hall of Justice, Room 105
312 SW 1st Avenue
Kelso, WA 98626
Fax: (360) 414-9121

Copies should be sent to:

Governor Christine Gregoire
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002
Fax: (360) 753-4110

Washington State Attorney General
Rob McKenna
1125 Washington Street SE
P.O. Box 40100
Olympia, WA 98504-0100
Fax: (360) 664-0228

Additional copies should be sent to:

President Dan Coffman,
Executive Board and
Members of ILWU Local 21
617 14th Avenue
Longview, WA 98632
Fax: (360) 423-0642
E-mail: ilwu21@iinet.com

President Robert McEllrath, IEB
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ILWU International
1188 Franklin Street, 4th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94109-6800
Fax: (415) 775-1302
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Partisan Defense Committee
P.O. Box 99, Canal Street Station
New York, NY 10013-0099
Fax: (212) 406-2210
E-mail: partisandefense@earthlink.net

Tugboat Unions Stood By ILWU

In our last article on the labor battle in Longview (WV No. 996, 17 February), we reported that the Inland Boatmen’s Union (IBU) was “the one notable and honorable exception” to the failure of union leaders to pledge concrete acts of solidarity with International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 21 in its battle with the EGT grain consortium. The IBU had refused to man the tugs required to take the first grain ship in and out of the Columbia River port of Longview, Washington, where the newly opened EGT grain terminal is located.

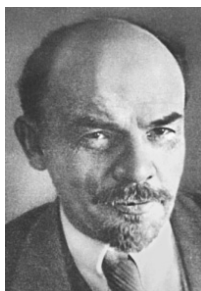
After longshore workers approved a contract settlement with EGT, a *Workers Vanguard* sales team visiting Washington and Oregon port cities learned from a Seattle ILWU official that the Masters, Mates and Pilots (MMP) union organizes tug and barge workers on the Columbia River. WV subsequently confirmed that both the MMP and the IBU man tugs on the river and refused in advance to tow the EGT ship when it called at the grain terminal. The MMP deserves credit for this elementary act of labor solidarity. ■



TROTSKY

Bourgeois Hypocrisy on Women’s Equality

When the U.S. launched its occupation of Afghanistan in 2001, feminists joined government spokesmen in covering this imperialist depredation with cynical platitudes concerning Afghan women who are horribly oppressed by Islamic fundamentalist forces. Those forces were themselves recipients of U.S. money and arms in the 1980s. Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin punctured such bourgeois hypocrisy in an article marking the



LENIN

advances made toward women’s emancipation in the two years following the October Revolution of 1917.

In words bourgeois democracy promises equality and freedom, but in practice *not a single* bourgeois republic, even the more advanced, has granted women (half the human race) and men complete equality in the eyes of the law, or delivered women from dependence on and the oppression of the male.

Bourgeois democracy is the democracy of pompous phrases, solemn words, lavish promises and high-sounding slogans about *freedom and equality*, but in practice all this cloaks the lack of freedom and the inequality of women, the lack of freedom and the inequality for the working and exploited people.

Soviet or socialist democracy sweeps away these pompous but false words and declares ruthless war on the hypocrisy of “democrats,” landowners, capitalists and farmers with bursting bins who are piling up wealth by selling surplus grain to the starving workers at profiteering prices.

Down with this foul lie! There is no “equality,” nor can there be, of oppressed and oppressor, exploited and exploiter. There is no real “freedom,” nor can there be, so long as women are handicapped by men’s legal privileges, so long as there is no freedom for the worker from the yoke of capital, no freedom for the labouring peasant from the yoke of the capitalist, landowner and merchant.

—V. I. Lenin, “Soviet Power and the Status of Women,” November 1919

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Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!

Berkeley: Latino Unionists Fired in Desktop Raid



Michelle Vitetta

More than 400 people, including unionists and Occupy activists, joined a February 17 march in Berkeley in support of over 200 unionized Latino workers who were fired following a “desktop raid” computer check of social security numbers by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.). The majority of these workers, members of Glass, Molders, Pottery, Plastics and Allied Workers (GMP) Local 164B, had worked at the West Berkeley plant of Pacific Steel Casting for anywhere from 5 to 20 years. With the cloud of possible deportation hanging over their heads, these workers are barred from applying for other jobs and collecting unemployment benefits, while their health insurance benefits have been cut off.

Jesus Navarro, who had worked at Pacific Steel for 14 years, had been at the top of the list for a kidney transplant at the University of California San Francisco (UCSF) medical center when he was fired. But he found himself denied this lifesaving operation, even though a donor was available and he had kept his health insurance by paying \$1,100 a month. UCSF argued that it wouldn’t foot the bill if this “illegal” immigrant was denied government assistance for post-surgery care or lost his health insurance. This literal death sentence was only reversed in the face of a massive outcry, including a protest petition signed by 140,000 people.

In a statement to the Berkeley protest, the Pacific Steel bosses hypocritically declared their support for “a peaceful expression of frustration with the policies and actions of the federal government.” They went on to “strenuously object to criticism that the company was in any way complicit” in the firings. The workers say otherwise. Speaking at the rally, one of the fired workers, Ana Castaño, told protesters that the company began hiring new workers early last year amid contract negotiations with the union. The I.C.E. audit of the social security numbers of the workforce, which was aimed at driving out undocumented workers, began in February 2011. A month later, the union went on strike for three days over health care benefits and wages, forcing Pacific Steel to acquiesce to most of their demands. But in October, the company began firing workers—most of them active participants in the strike—in groups of 20 at a time.

Despite the evident complicity of Pacific Steel in getting rid of these workers, Ignacio De La Fuente, the International Vice-

President of their union, declared that “the company had no choice” in the firings, arguing that the Obama administration was ramping up such raids because “it’s a presidential election year.” More than 1.2 million people have been deported under the Obama administration, the highest number in more than 50 years. De La Fuente is himself a Democratic Party Oakland City Council member, and one notorious for his support to the racist Oakland cops who run amok in the ghettos and barrios. He has led the charge in City Council meetings for greater police repression of Occupy Oakland after earlier accusing them of engaging in “domestic terrorism,” even as some Occupy activists have taken up the cause of the Pacific Steel workers.

Not surprisingly, De La Fuente has not gone to bat for the immigrant members of his own union. Other than filing a complaint with the National Labor Relations Board, the GMP leadership has barely lifted a finger in defense of the fired workers. At first, the union tops insultingly offered to provide them with “rice, beans and tortillas” (and even that was never fulfilled). Not one GMP official was present at the recent Berkeley protest or a December rally in defense of the workers.

De La Fuente is the literal embodiment of the labor bureaucracy’s subordination of the unions to the Democratic Party, which no less than the Republicans represents the interests of the capitalist class enemy. The 200 Latino immigrants thrown out of their jobs by Obama’s I.C.E. police are part of the growing army of working people whose lives have been destroyed by the labor misleaders’ alliance with the Democrats.

Hoping to win back disillusioned Latino voters, Obama is now promising to “ease the transition” to citizenship for undocumented immigrants and their families. But while the Republicans scream that this is a “backdoor amnesty,” the truth is that the Obama administration has outdone the Bush Republican regime not only in deportations but also in busting up immigrant families with U.S.-born children. Between 1998 and 2007, only 8 percent of those deported were parents of U.S. citizens; in the first half of 2011 they totaled 22 percent. The Democratic Party president has also vastly expanded Bush’s “Secure Communities” program, a federal dragnet whose purpose is to round up immigrants as suspected “criminals” for detention and



Oakland Local

Left: GMP union members at Pacific Steel Casting striking for benefits and higher pay, 22 March 2011. Above: February 17 march in support of steel workers fired in anti-immigrant sweep.

possible deportation. Under this program, even Latinos who are U.S. citizens have been kept in jail for the most minor offenses, with many held for days before they are allowed to contact anyone. Immigration detention centers are a living hell, with widespread reports of abuse, beatings and rapes, leading many to sign deportation papers just to get out.

The Obama administration cynically packages the “desktop raids,” like that at Pacific Steel, as going after “unscrupulous employers.” But, as an article by David Bacon titled “Increasing Reliance on Guest Worker Programs” (cipamericas.org, 14 January) pointed out, the raids are often aimed at unions and their supporters:

“The DHS [Department of Homeland Security] workplace enforcement wave is focusing, not on low-wage employers, but on high wage and often unionized ones. There is a long history of anti-union animus among immigration authorities. Agents have set up roadblocks before union elections in California fields, conducted raids during meatpacking organizing drives in North Carolina and Iowa, audited janitorial employers and airline food plants prior to union contract negotiations, and helped companies terminate close to a thousand apple packers when they tried to join the Teamsters Union in Washington state.... Deportations, firings and guest worker programs all make labor cheaper and union organizing harder.”

The capitalist rulers are getting away with such attacks thanks to the treachery of the labor tops. A statement building for the February 17 Berkeley rally noted that these workers “feel abandoned by their union.” And they have been. Such betrayals only further open the door for

the bosses to use undocumented immigrants as a club against the unions and to heighten the increasingly brutal exploitation of all of labor.

Defense of immigrants is of vital importance for the defense and revitalization of the unions. There will be no effective resistance to the immiseration of the working people without the unity in struggle of the multiracial labor movement and the black and Latino poor. Such unity was crucial to the successful 2008 union organizing of the massive Smithfield pork processing plant in Tar Heel, North Carolina, after a 15-year battle. What we need is a class-struggle fight against deportations and workplace raids and a drive to organize immigrant workers into the unions with full rights and protections. A fighting labor movement would inscribe on its banner the call for **full citizenship rights for all immigrants!**

Latino and other immigrant workers often bring militant traditions from their countries that can serve as a catalyst for class and other social struggles as well as providing a human bridge to workers internationally. Out of such struggles the basis can be laid for ousting the sellout labor misleaders and forging a new class-struggle leadership of the unions. Our aim as Marxists is to advance the solidarity and consciousness of the entire working class—black, white, Latino; native-born and foreign-born—in the struggle to build a workers party in opposition to all the parties of capitalist class rule. A revolutionary internationalist workers party is the necessary instrument to lead the working class in the fight for its own class rule. ■

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Labor Government Backs Anti-Union Attacks at Qantas

Australia

The following article, datelined December 20, is reprinted from *Australasian Spartacist* No. 215 (Summer 2011/12), newspaper of the Spartacist League of Australia. In the latest round of an ongoing assault against the unionized workforce at Qantas, the airline's management announced on February 16 that they intend to cut a further 500 engineering, maintenance and catering jobs, with the possibility of many more to come. These job cuts occur in the context of the continued ban on industrial action by two principal Qantas unions that was imposed by the federal Australian Labor Party (ALP) government's workplace relations tribunal. One of the three unions that had been involved in the dispute, the Australian Licensed Aircraft Engineers Association, cut a deal with Qantas in December.

Far from taking up the fight to defend jobs, the pilots union has ruled out "any stop-work action for long-haul pilots in 2012." For its part, the Transport Workers Union issued a February 23 statement declaring, "An Australian Icon such as the Flying Kangaroo deserves the best workforce to keep Australian skies safe. TWU will keep up the fight to retain quality Jobs in Australia. Only then Qantas can still call Australia home." Bowing to the bosses' state and peddling nationalist protectionism stand counterposed to the necessity for international class struggle against the profit-gouging airline bosses.

* * *

**Australasian
SPARTACIST** 

After months of bitter negotiations with the Australian Licensed Aircraft Engineers Association (ALAEA), Australian and International Pilots Association (AIPA) and the Transport Workers Union (TWU), at 5 p.m. on 29 October Qantas CEO Alan Joyce grounded the airline's entire domestic and international fleet while threatening a lockout if unions did not accede to management's push to slash at least 1,000 jobs and drive down labour costs. Not satisfied with an increase in pre-tax profits of more than \$550 million [US\$577 million] last financial year, and having just received a hefty \$2 million pay increase, Joyce carried out this union-busting act as a deliberate ploy to bring about the intervention of the federal ALP government and a ban on all industrial action at Qantas.

Qantas management's actions in shutting down the airline have been compared to media mogul Rupert Murdoch's attack on the British print unions in 1986, and the attack on the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) in 1998, when Patrick Stevedores boss, Chris Corrigan, sacked the unionised workforce and replaced them with scabs. Reminiscent of the tactics employed in the Patrick dispute, Qantas has been training an Australian-based strikebreaking force of baggage handlers and ground staff in Los Angeles and locally. In their insatiable thirst for ever-greater profits, the Qantas bosses' goal is to break this historically highly unionised workforce, if not smash the unions outright. And in Qantas chairman Leigh Clifford, they have their perfect anti-union crusader.

For years, the execrable Clifford directed Rio Tinto's campaign to destroy union power in the mining sector and impose individual contracts on workers. This included the 1997 battle at the New South Wales [NSW] Hunter Valley No. 1 Coalmine, which resulted in a defeat for

the mining and maritime unions, not least due to the treachery of the Laborite union tops (see "Hunter Valley Miners' Strike Knifed by Union Tops," *Australasian Spartacist* No. 161, Spring 1997). This defeat ultimately paved the way for the broader decimation of jobs and conditions in the mining industry and the assault on the MUA in 1998.

Far from the necessary hard fought class-struggle defence of jobs, including strikes and pickets to shut down Qantas, the pro-capitalist union tops have pushed nationalist protectionist poison while acceding to the federal Labor government's draconian anti-union laws all

ber 2011, the government applied for an emergency meeting of Fair Work Australia (FWA), the national workplace relations tribunal established to enforce the government's draconian anti-union laws. By early Monday morning FWA had done exactly what Qantas knew they would and banned all industrial action while directing both parties into a 21-day negotiating period. Obeisant to the government and the bosses' courts, Unions NSW [statewide labor federation] immediately cancelled a rally in support of Qantas workers called for later that day. The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) misleaders "welcomed" the termination of all industrial



Alan Pyke

Left: Qantas bosses Alan Joyce (standing) and Leigh Clifford grounded all Qantas flights in attempt to bust its unions. Below: Passengers stranded at Singapore airport.



AFP

along the line. In late June, ALAEA federal secretary, Steve Purvinas, offered to mobilise rostered-off ALAEA members as strikebreakers if the union carried out rolling stoppages! Purvinas explained, "we think it important that it is clear that the Australian national interest would be catered for with our campaign by making options available for Qantas to avoid disruptions" (www.aviationbusiness.com.au, 28 June 2011). This outrageous proposal for union scabherding was never put into practice, not least because the union tops called off stoppages planned for July.

Indeed, following the Qantas shutdown, the union misleaders boasted how little industrial action had been taken. In a 30 October 2011 statement, newly-elected federal ALP vice-president and TWU national secretary, Tony Sheldon, bragged that "TWU members have taken a total of eight hours industrial action throughout the course of this dispute over eight months of negotiations." A day later AIPA president, Barry Jackson, declared on the ABC *Lateline* program that pilots "were taking very low-range industrial action, wearing red ties and making positive PAs [public announcements]...." Such abject grovelling only serves to embolden the bosses to step up their attacks.

Labor's "Fair Work" Arbitration Death Grip

Within an hour of Joyce stranding some 70,000 passengers worldwide on 29 Octo-

ber 2011, the government applied for an emergency meeting of Fair Work Australia (FWA), the national workplace relations tribunal established to enforce the government's draconian anti-union laws. By early Monday morning FWA had done exactly what Qantas knew they would and banned all industrial action while directing both parties into a 21-day negotiating period. Obeisant to the government and the bosses' courts, Unions NSW [statewide labor federation] immediately cancelled a rally in support of Qantas workers called for later that day. The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) misleaders "welcomed" the termination of all industrial

action. With typical class-collaborationist and nationalist zeal, ACTU secretary Jeff Lawrence declared:

"Our immediate priority now is to work with management to get the planes back in the air, but then we will approach negotiations in a genuine spirit of conciliation and expect Qantas management to do the same."

"The key issue for negotiation is the future of Qantas jobs in Australia, and there must be a continuing role for the government during these talks to ensure job security."

—ACTU website, 31 October 2011

As expected, talks between the unions and management collapsed and the dispute was directed to compulsory arbitration, a graveyard for union struggles. The arbitration courts are no "independent umpire" but a part of the capitalist state apparatus, which straitjackets union struggles in almost every sphere. The meaning of the unions' acceptance of forced arbitration was captured by Murdoch's *Australian*, which gleefully trumpeted on 25 November 2011 that Qantas would now be "strike-free for four years." Down with compulsory arbitration! For a class-struggle fight to defend the unions against the ALP government and bosses' FWA union-busting!

The bourgeoisie have seized on the Qantas dispute to increase pressure on the minority ALP government to tighten its anti-union legislation and enforce earlier state intervention against unions in industrial disputes. Meanwhile bosses throughout the country aim to emulate

Qantas. As an article in the 30 October 2011 *Melbourne Age* pointed out, "For the many Australian companies that have been wanting to destroy unions for years, it will be an exciting ride."

In early November it was revealed that the Victorian Liberal/National Coalition government, currently in dispute with the Australian Nursing Federation (ANF) over wages and staff-patient ratios, were planning to lock out nurses "Qantas-style" if they took part in industrial action. In contrast to the Qantas unions, nurses twice defied FWA rulings and continued industrial action that closed hospital beds. After the third FWA ruling, the ANF tops capitulated to the anti-strike judgment and recommended instead a series of impotent lunchtime "community pickets" outside hospitals.

In a further escalation of the anti-union attacks, on 13 December 2011 stevedoring company POAGS locked out hundreds of wharfies at Fremantle and Bunbury in Western Australia and Port Kembla in New South Wales, in response to MUA bans and stoppages over wages and safety conditions. Chaired by union-buster Chris Corrigan, POAGS helicoptered in management scabs over the pickets of striking workers at Port Kembla, and has reportedly used management scabs at Bunbury and contracted out work at Fremantle to Patrick Stevedores, Corrigan's former company. Almost immediately upon being sworn in as Labor's new federal workplace relations minister, Bill Shorten intervened and brokered a deal for the MUA and POAGS to enter four weeks conciliation before FWA. Bowing to arbitration and FWA, the MUA tops immediately agreed to drop all industrial action. Once again, due to the union tops' treacherous reliance on the courts, the bosses got exactly what they wanted. Commenting that the company would be able to resume normal operations, POAGS managing director declared "We are very grateful for the intervention of the minister and Fair Work Australia..." (*Australian*, 15 December 2011).

What the capitalists can get away with depends on the outcome of class struggle. Last month workers at the Baiada Poultry plant in the Melbourne suburb of Laverton struck against the company's employment of casual labour for as little as \$8 an hour. The heavily immigrant workforce, organised by the National Union of Workers, shut down production with a militant picket line that repelled police and scab attempts to break it. This enabled the workers to win site rates for all. From Qantas to the waterfront, from the New South Wales public sector to Victorian nurses, workers are eager to fight back against the escalating anti-union attacks. The chief obstacle to bringing proletarian power to bear is the current misleadership of the unions. Committed to preserving capitalist rule, the union tops peddle nationalist poison and divert working-class struggles into parliamentary and legalistic channels. To repel the bosses' growing attacks it is necessary to mobilise independently of the capitalist state and intransigently take up the fight against capitalist oppression.

It is necessary to forge a leadership that will not bow to the bosses' anti-union laws and arbitration courts, which serve only to keep workers' struggles firmly within the bounds of what is acceptable to the capitalist ruling class. In stark contrast to the existing Laborite union misleaders, a class-struggle leadership would fight to win workers to the understanding that the capitalist state—consisting at its core of police, prisons, courts and military—exists to enforce the rule of the bourgeoisie who grow fat from the

WORKERS VANGUARD

profits generated by the exploitation of workers labour power. As Russian revolutionary leader V.I. Lenin spelled out in his 1917 pamphlet, *State and Revolution*, the state cannot be reformed or pressured into acting on behalf of workers and the oppressed. It must be *shattered* by workers revolution and replaced by a workers state that expropriates the capitalist class.

The ALP-loyal union bureaucracy works hand in glove with their Labor parliamentary brethren. The ALP is a *bourgeois workers party*. While it has a pro-capitalist leadership and program, it is based on and organically tied to the trade unions. When in power the ALP rules for the capitalists. It was entrusted by the bourgeoisie to run Australia during both imperialist world wars last century. In 1949 Labor prime minister Ben Chifley sent troops into the mines to break the coal strike. Following in Chifley’s footsteps, in 1989 the Hawke Labor government embarked on a scabherding operation by using the military against the pilots’ union. In political struggle against the Laborite union tops, who time and again sell out workers’ interests for the bosses’ profits, the SL/A fights to win the working-class base of the ALP away from its pro-capitalist leadership in the struggle to build a multiracial revolutionary workers party.

For Class Struggle Against Union-Busting “Outsourcing”!

As part of its attempts to drive down labour costs and extract various concessions from its unionised workforce, over the last decade Qantas has been establishing new airline subsidiaries where workers are paid less and have worse conditions than at Qantas. Such is the case at Jetstar, Qantas’ low-fare domestic carrier, and at international subsidiaries including Jetstar Asia and Jetstar Pacific, based in Singapore and Vietnam respectively, and at Jetconnect, which carries passengers between New Zealand and Australia. Hoping to gain greater access to the booming intra-Asian passenger traffic, Qantas has also declared its intention to establish a low-cost premium subsidiary airline operation out of Singapore, or a code-share alliance with Malaysian Airlines operating out of Kuala Lumpur.

In Australia, Qantas is increasingly using cheap contract labour to work overtime. This is a wedge against the pay and conditions of the already lowly-paid per-

attempts to manipulate hiring as a tool to divide the working class along racial, national and religious lines, or as a means of screening out pro-union militants. It is crucial to the unity and integrity of the working class that unionised permanent full-time workers champion the rights of those forced into contract and casual employment—disproportionately women, immigrants and the most oppressed layers of the class. Such a struggle would not only reverse the decline in union membership but draw into the unions new and powerful sources of fighting strength. Recruiting new layers of immigrant workers would provide a bridge to proletarian struggles overseas, not least in the international airline industry.

It is also vital that Qantas workers, organised in multiple unions, overcome craftist divisions and fight for “One out! All out!” backed by mass pickets that no one dares cross. Against the Qantas bosses’ attempts at scabherding, the airline unions must mobilise jointly and fight in defence of casual workers and the unemployed, bringing them onto picket lines and into the unions. This is how the vitally necessary industrial unions will be forged. In Australia there should be an industrial union of airline workers—from cleaners to pilots—who are organised and fight together in the one union.

Capitalist Attacks on Workers Jettison Safety

There are few industries in which the relationship between working conditions, passenger service and safety is as direct as it is in air transport. The savage competition inherent to capitalism drives airline companies to compromise on comfort and safety in order to boost their bottom line. Passengers are crowded into planes while the workers handling their luggage, the flight attendants serving them and the maintenance workers and pilots are overworked and driven to exhaustion. As Qantas has ramped up its attacks against the unions it has been beset by a series of frightening and potentially deadly incidents.

In July 2008, a Qantas Boeing 747 carrying almost 350 passengers was forced to make an emergency landing in Manila after an oxygen tank exploded on board and ripped a gaping hole in the fuselage the “size of a mini-van.” In October of the same year, the flight computer sys-



AP
30 September 2011: Philippine Airlines (PAL) ground crew workers rally near Manila airport. Placard reads: “Protect the workers! Stop sacking of PAL workers!”

alerts the airline when there is a problem. One might ask who checks the electronic systems? It is in the direct and immediate interests of passengers and airline workers that unions fight for union safety committees with the power to shut down unsafe aircraft and airlines.

Responding to Qantas’ push to “off-shore” maintenance tasks, ALAEA’s Steve Purvinas declared, “We know that the dramatic increase in the number of safety incidents involving Qantas jets coincides with an increase in the amount of work that is no longer carried out in-house.” The capitalists will exploit cheaper sources of labour, under worse conditions, when and wherever they can get it. However rather than aiding in the organisation of engineers in other countries and helping them enforce union-run training and safety regulations, the union bureaucrats here have lined up to promote Qantas as a “national icon.” Thus they appeal to parliament to strengthen the 1992 Qantas Sale Act to compel both Qantas and its subsidiaries to retain their “main operational base” in Australia.

This parliamentarist belly-crawling and “Australia-first” protectionism was summed up by one ALAEA spokesman who declared more than a week before the Qantas shutdown, “If the Prime Minister were to look at intervening they should look at the Qantas sale act and should be making sure the Qantas board do the right thing and protect Australian jobs” (*Herald Sun*, 20 October 2011). More recently, in the gross traditions of “White Australia,” TWUer Tony Sheldon despicably railed against the “Asianisation” of Qantas. Such xenophobic, chauvinist poison, which lines workers up behind their own exploiters, is an obstacle to organising the multiracial proletariat in defence of jobs and conditions. It divides the international working class and is thus utterly suicidal in an industry that is international in scope.

On 19 December 2011 it was reported that ALAEA had agreed to a deal with Qantas management that gives engineers a piddling three percent pay rise over the next three years—effectively a reduction in real wages—while allowing the airline to cut costs and weaken conditions. “Hand-in-hand” with Qantas management on the agreement, the union tops claim the deal will “secure the jobs of our members on shore” and retain the practice of licensed engineers inspecting every aircraft before take off. In reality, however, this deal opens the way for the introduction of lower paid and less qualified A-licence workers to perform basic maintenance tasks, which at present must be done by licensed engineers. The union also abandoned its claim for the construction of a hangar to service Qantas’ fleet of A380s. It is little wonder that an ebullient Alan Joyce declared the agreement “does not contain any of the restrictive demands

that would have handed control of parts of the airline to the union,” and renewed calls for adopting new practices, i.e., lower maintenance, for modern aircraft.

Airline workers have enormous social power—the world economy could not function without them. But instead of airline unions wielding that power by standing united at home and mobilising for international class solidarity abroad, internationally they have been picked off one by one by ruthless national-based carriers. On 1 October 2011, 2,600 Filipino workers organised by the Philippine Airlines Employees Association (PALEA) were locked out and sacked by Philippine Airlines (PAL) after they protested the airline’s attempt to slash wages, destroy job security and bust the union through “outsourcing” jobs. If PAL gets its way more than 60 percent of the PALEA unionists will be thrown out of work.

Against the drive of airline bosses to force workers into a “race to the bottom” in order to keep their jobs, airline workers must strive to find allies among unionised labour overseas, including among those workers in struggle at foreign carriers. As the PALEA declared in an October statement of solidarity with Qantas workers:

“...only industrial action can force employers to heed the demands of workers....

“PALEA is not alone. And Qantas workers are not alone. Our supporters in the Philippines say ‘We are all PALEANS.’ To you, we say ‘We are all Qantas workers.’”

While there have been numerous protests in solidarity with Qantas workers by International Transport Workers Federation affiliates across the globe, and a delegation from Doro-Chiba (Japan Railway workers) picketed the Philippine Embassy in Tokyo in solidarity with PALEA workers, such actions need to be turned into a campaign of labour struggles. For Qantas and PAL workers, victory may well depend on international working-class solidarity actions to prevent these union-busting airlines from moving their aircraft, thus affecting profit margins. Marxists declare: the workers have no country. Workers of the world unite!

For a Revolutionary Internationalist Workers Party!

The contradiction between the inherently international character of the airline industry and how it is operated by nationally-based rival carriers provides a crystalline example of the generalised anarchy of capitalist production for profit. With the crazed capitalist rulers the world over seeking to bust unions and destroy workers livelihoods in order to pay for their global economic crisis, class struggle is the only road to defending workers against this assault. To prepare for the battles ahead, there needs to be a political fight to replace the union bureaucrats with a leadership committed to mobilising the proletariat’s power independently of the capitalist state and politicians, in the interests of all the exploited and oppressed. This fight is part of forging a multiracial revolutionary workers party capable of leading struggles to not only improve present conditions but to do away with the entire system of capitalist wage slavery.

In Australia, the ALP remains the main obstacle on the road to workers power. As we stated in 1989 when the Hawke government mobilised the military as scabs against the pilots’ union:

“From its parliamentary wing, which today administers the capitalist state, to its trade union leaders who police the working class for the bosses, it’s a party whose sole purpose is to save the capitalist system. Workers need their own, revolutionary party, built in struggle against the ALP through splitting its working class base from the scabherding pro-capitalist tops. Only such a revolutionary party can lead all the oppressed in the conquest of state power, expropriating the capitalists who have looted the country and run its plants into the ground, and through planned socialist reconstruction build a society with justice, decency and freedom for all: a workers republic of Australia as part of a socialist Asia.”

—“All Out to Shut Down the Airports!” (*ASP Supplement*, 8 September 1989)■



AFF
Manila, July 2008: Qantas pilot inspects damage after oxygen tank exploded in mid-flight. Airline attacks on unions compromise safety.

manent staff organised by the TWU, which represents baggage handlers and ramp services staff, including caterers. Recognising that their jobs, wages and conditions are increasingly on the line, AIPA pilots and TWU workers have correctly demanded those employed by Qantas subsidiaries, and those contracted by labour-hire companies to do ground service work, must get the same wages as the currently unionised workers.

A class-struggle leadership of the unions would fight to organise the unorganised into the unions, with full union rates, conditions and responsibilities. In doing so it would stand opposed to the parasitic labour-hire companies and fight for trade-union control of hiring and training. This is the only way to undercut the bosses’

tem on a Qantas A330-300 Airbus carrying more than 300 passengers went haywire and the plane “dropped like a brick” plunging toward the earth. More than 100 people were injured, 14 seriously. Reportedly, pilots have taken to calling Qantas’ new A380 Airbuses, “scarebuses.” A little more than a year ago, an engine on a Qantas A380 Airbus exploded on a flight out of Singapore, forcing Qantas to ground its entire fleet of these superjumbo jets. Then, last April, an A380 suffered two tyre blow-outs on landing in Sydney, due to a problem with its brakes. During the dispute Qantas has opposed ALAEA’s demand for maintenance checks on new aircraft between arrival and departure, declaring these unnecessary because new planes have an electronic system that

Honor Malcolm X, Militant Voice of Black Struggle

Manning Marable's *Malcolm X*: A Liberal's "Reinvention"

Part One of this article appeared in WV No. 997 (2 March).

Malcolm X was greatly influenced by the colonial revolutions that followed World War II, particularly in Africa and Asia. He and other militants were also deeply affected by the Cuban Revolution, which expropriated the capitalists in the face of American imperialist hostility in 1960 and opened the road to massive social advances benefiting working people and the poor. It was not lost on people like Malcolm X that the Cuban regime uprooted the island's own version of Jim Crow segregation.

Malcolm and many other black activists and leftists grasped that the fight against black oppression in the U.S. was linked to the struggle against U.S. violence and warfare abroad. Malcolm denounced the

PART TWO

U.S. as "the chief imperialist nation of the world" and "the leader of a pack of white imperialist nations" (quoted in Carlos Moore, *Pichón: A Memoir: Race and Revolution in Castro's Cuba* [2008]). He was astute in his denunciation of the assassination of Congolese independence leader Patrice Lumumba in a plot organized by the CIA, which later installed the murdering despot Moïse Tshombe as prime minister.

Malcolm believed that the dark-skinned colonial peoples of the world had liberated themselves or were about to liberate themselves from Western imperialism. He felt that the states of Asia and Africa were becoming powerful enemies of Washington and naively expected them to use what power they had on behalf of the American black population. This view was consistent with seeing the U.S. black struggle as a colonial liberation struggle within the imperialist metropolis.

Social revolutions had occurred in China, North Korea, North Vietnam and Cuba, expropriating the local bourgeois ruling classes and liberating these countries from imperialist bondage. Based on

A Review by J. L. Gormoff

peasant insurgencies, with the working class removed as a factor, those revolutions resulted in bureaucratically deformed workers states under the rule of nationalist Stalinist regimes. But in a far larger number of former colonial countries, independence struggles resulted in the rule of indigenous bourgeois classes.

to untrammelled imperialist plunder was removed, reinforcing the intense poverty and dependence of neocolonial Third World societies.

In a speech in Cairo to the Organization of African Unity, Malcolm naively implored this collection of bloodthirsty militarists, venal nationalist demagogues



Bettmann

Malcolm X speaking at New York City rally, June 1963.

As Marxists, we champion struggles for national liberation against direct imperialist rule. But we recognize that under the rule of bourgeois nationalist regimes, those societies remain dependent on the handful of capitalist-imperialist states of North America, Europe and Japan. As clients of the Soviet degenerated workers state, nationalist regimes such as Colonel Nasser's in Egypt were able to act with a certain independence from the imperialists while remaining subordinated to the capitalist world market. With the counter-revolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92, the main impediment

and tribal chiefs to step up, lamenting: "What makes our African brothers hesitate to bring the United States government before the United Nations?" An interesting chapter in Manning Marable's *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* makes clear, based on letters by Malcolm to family members during his 1964 trip to Africa, that the cordial relations he experienced with representatives of the ruling elites were wide-ranging. Marable documents Malcolm's mutually appreciative encounters with Prince Faisal of the reactionary Saudi monarchy, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, a Nigerian cabinet minister, the Muslim Brotherhood in Lebanon, and the parliament of Ghana, among others.

The strength of Malcolm X was that he saw and spoke the truth about American social reality. He saw through liberal politicians (white and black) and indicted U.S. government hypocrisy as no one else did, although he was also not above engaging in occasional anti-Semitism. But when he looked at Africa through the prism of race, not class, he did not see the same hypocrisy of their ruling elites when they professed concern for the welfare of the people.

There are powerful concentrations of the proletariat in many parts of the neocolonial world. It is those working classes that, under the leadership of Leninist vanguard parties, can unite all the impoverished toilers in a fight to sweep away the local bourgeois rulers and liberate their countries from imperialist subordination as part of the struggle for world socialist revolution.

Marable Falsifies Malcolm X: The Democratic Party

At bottom, Manning Marable's *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* does indeed reinvent Malcolm X, falsely portraying him as moving toward mainstream liberalism during the tumultuous civil rights struggles of the 1960s. This serves to justify Marable's conviction that there were no options other than pro-Democratic

Party pressure politics on the one side and passivity or sectarian abstentionism on the other. In Marable's eyes, once Malcolm X broke from the do-nothing policy of the Nation of Islam (NOI), allegiance to "working within the system" was sure to follow. He forecloses any possibility of revolutionary struggle against the racist capitalist order, both during the civil rights movement and now.

Let's look at two concrete examples of how Marable's politics distort Malcolm's record. One is Marable's presentation of the presidential election of 1964. The other is his comparison of two of Malcolm's most famous speeches, "Message to the Grass Roots" and "The Ballot or the Bullet."

According to Marable, Malcolm supported Arizona Republican Senator Barry Goldwater in his race against Democratic president Lyndon B. Johnson. Goldwater was an extremely right-wing, anti-Communist libertarian who had voted against the Civil Rights Act. He devised what was known as the Republican's "Southern Strategy," appealing to white Democratic voters in the South on the basis of opposition to the civil rights movement. Goldwater lost in a landslide, but Republicans went on to use this strategy with great success starting with Richard Nixon in the next presidential election.

The civil rights leadership pushed blacks to vote for Johnson. Martin Luther King Jr. called Goldwater "the most dangerous man in America" (*Playboy*, January 1965), and Bayard Rustin wrote that Mississippi Senator James Eastland, a notorious racist, and Goldwater were "the main enemies" (*Commentary*, February 1965). A record 94 percent of black voters cast their ballots for the Democrat Johnson.

As for Malcolm X, Marable asserts: "Nearly alone among prominent black leaders, he continued to support Barry Goldwater as the better candidate to address blacks' interests." Marable's only evidence is the claim that Alex Haley, who co-authored *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, "cited an article by Malcolm, 'Why I Am for Goldwater.'" While there is no *class difference* between a Republican and a Democrat, it would still be surprising if Malcolm X had supported an arch-reactionary for president—*except that it is not true*.

When one goes to the source of the supposed article in support of Goldwater—in Malcolm's papers at the Schomburg Center in Harlem—one finds no article by Malcolm. In fact, *Haley* was pitching to his literary agent something he imagined that Malcolm might write (Alex Haley to Paul Reynolds, 21 June 1964, Malcolm X Collection, reel 3). What Malcolm did write was an article in the *Saturday Evening Post* (12 September 1964) in which he made clear his opposition to both candidates:

"I feel that as far as the American black man is concerned, [Johnson and Goldwater] are both just about the same. It's just a question of Johnson, the fox, or Goldwater, the wolf.... Since these are the choices, the black man in America, I think, only needs to pick which one he chooses to be eaten by, because they both will eat him."

He added:

"I wouldn't put myself in the position of voting for either one, or of recommending to any black man to do so. I'm just talking about if America's white voters *do* install Goldwater, the black people will at least know what they are dealing with."

With his slander of Malcolm's position on the elections, Marable echoes the *New*



Raúl Corrales



Carl Nesfield

Above: Cuban fighters defeated counterrevolutionary 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. Left: Malcolm X and Fidel Castro in Harlem, 1960.

York Times (8 September 1964), which ran a piece titled “Malcolm X Article Favors Goldwater.” What upset both the liberals at the *Times* and Marable was that Malcolm dared to point out *the real nature of the Democrats*. Malcolm X did not oppose Johnson in class terms, in other words, as a representative of the capitalist ruling class. But he understood that Johnson and the Democrats were enemies of black rights. And for Marable, if you don’t vote Democrat, you support the Republicans.

Marable Falsifies Malcolm X: Electoralism

Central to Marable’s book is the case he tries to make that Malcolm in his last years was moving toward garden-variety liberal politics and electoralism. This he does by, for example, contrasting “Message to the Grass Roots” (10 November 1963), which Malcolm delivered right before breaking from the Nation of Islam, and “The Ballot or the Bullet,” a speech he gave six months later. The way Marable tells it, “Message” was a militant call for revolution, and “Ballot” a call for black people to vote. Marable states that “Ballot” starts off with “an appeal for black unity despite ideological quarrels” and claims that “this sentiment directly contradicted the ‘Message to the Grassroots,’ which had ridiculed King and other civil rights activists.” In fact, rhetorical appeals to black unity combined with attacks on liberal leaders were integral to *both* speeches.

Marable deplores exactly what made Malcolm X such an important figure. He’s right to focus on “Grass Roots,” which nailed the role of King, A. Philip Randolph, James Farmer and others by name in co-opting the August 1963 March on Washington:

“This is what they did with the march on Washington. They joined it. They didn’t integrate it, they infiltrated it. They joined it, became a part of it, took it over. And as they took it over, it lost its militancy. It ceased to be angry...why, it even ceased to be a march. It became a picnic, a circus. Nothing but a circus, with clowns and all.... They controlled it so tight, they told those Negroes what time to hit town, how to come, where to stop, what signs to carry, what song to sing, what speech they could make, and what speech they couldn’t make; and then told them to get out of town by sundown. And every one of those Toms was out of town by sundown.”

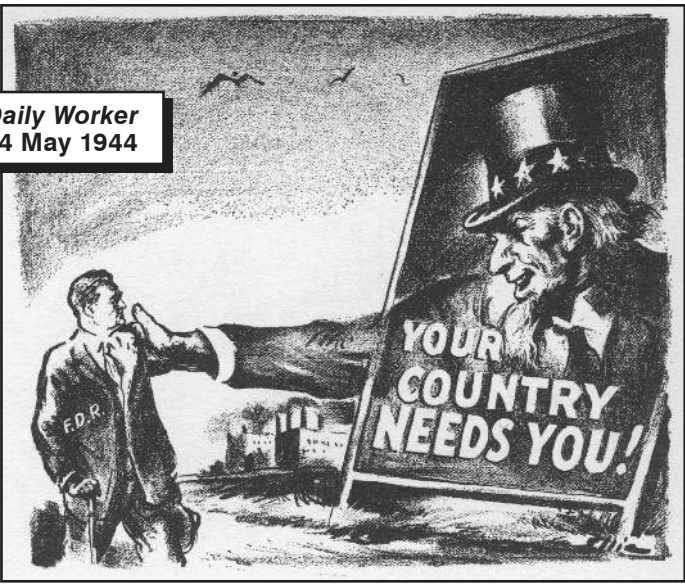
“Grass Roots” is also where Malcolm cogently pointed out that it was when the black population of Birmingham, Alabama, began to fight back against racist terror just three months before the D.C. march that President Kennedy sent in federal troops to restore order.

It is false to see a big political difference between “Grass Roots” and “Ballot.” According to Marable, in the second speech Malcolm made a turn, urging that “Black people must forget their differences and discuss the points on which they can agree.” But why is this so different from the position put forward in “Grass Roots”: “Instead of airing our differences in public, we have to realize we’re all the same family.... We need to stop airing our differences in front of the white man.” Malcolm X was, from our standpoint, a contradictory figure. But in this case the contradiction is Marable’s: Malcolm could urge a black “united front” at the same time as he made clear his opposition to the politics of the liberal black leaders—they were the ones betraying the black masses. After all, it was in “Ballot” that Malcolm declared: “I don’t see any American dream; I see an American nightmare.”



Communist Party youth Angelo Herndon (center) in NYC, 1934. As result of CP defense campaign, Herndon was freed after being imprisoned in Georgia for political activism.

Cartoon from Communist Party newspaper openly supports Franklin D. Roosevelt and U.S. imperialism during WWII.



Fred Ellis

For Marable, by the time of “Ballot,” supposedly “Malcolm had come to see the vote as a necessary tool if black Americans were to take control of the institutions in their communities.” Marable criticizes Malcolm for “glaring inconsistency in his logic,” because “Malcolm was encouraging African Americans to vote, even to throw their weight behind either major party; yet simultaneously he accused both major parties of racism, incapable of delivering fairness to blacks.”

In “Ballot,” Malcolm *does* highlight the importance of blacks’ votes in the North, but in terms counterposed to Marable’s liberal interpretation: “Your vote, your dumb vote, your ignorant vote, your wasted vote put in an administration in Washington, D.C., that has seen fit to pass every kind of legislation imaginable, saving you until the last, then filibustering on top of that.” Filibustering was how Dixiecrats like Senator Eastland tried to kill civil rights bills. Malcolm X grasped how the Democrats’ division of labor worked. Addressing the role of liberal Democrats, he said: “They blame the Dixiecrats. What is a Dixiecrat? A Democrat. A Dixiecrat is nothing but a Democrat in disguise.... When you keep the Democrats in power, you’re keeping the Dixiecrats in power.”

As Malcolm put it in a subsequent speech: “The Northern Dixiecrat puts all the blame on the Southern Dixiecrat. It’s a con game, a giant political con game” (“The Black Revolution,” 8 April 1964). This con game continues to be played out today, as the craven trade-union officialdom and black liberal politicians promote the “lesser evil” capitalist Democrats against the Republicans. While the Republicans make no pretense of being “friends” of labor, black people and immigrants, the Democrats lie about it and do the same things.

The Struggle for Revolutionary Leadership

There have been few historical conjunctures when a small Marxist propaganda group could, in a few years’ time, transform itself into a party leading a significant section of the proletariat and the oppressed. The South in the early 1960s offered such an opportunity. The mass movement of proletarians and students for black rights was seething and activists were learning painful lessons about the nature of the capitalist state, leading to impassioned debates over strategy and tactics and the politics underlying them. By 1964, the main body of young black militants, concentrated in the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), had broken with liberalism as they understood it but had not yet latched on to the

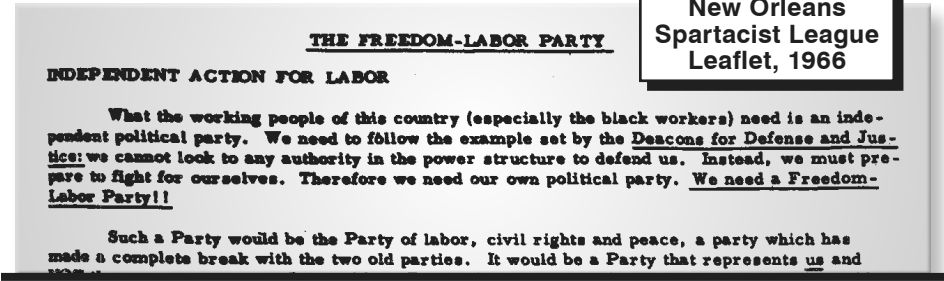
political dead end of black separatism. At the same time, these young fighters on the front lines of the struggle against white supremacy had acquired enormous moral and political authority among the black masses in the South, including members of the industrial proletariat.

The reformist Communist Party (CP) had no appeal for radicalizing elements in this period. In the time of V.I. Lenin, the central leader of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, the Communist International had pressed American Communists to pay special attention to the fight against black oppression. The CP won some impressive



Highlander Center

Above: Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee workshop in Knoxville, Tennessee, 1962. Below: Call for Freedom-Labor Party was part of SL’s perspective to unite left wing of civil rights movement with labor militants in a revolutionary struggle against capitalism.



recruits from among black intellectuals and went on to build a base in the South in the late 1920s and ’30s. Despite its developing Stalinist degeneration, the CP was at that time still capable of some quite heroic struggles. To take one example, it organized Southern sharecroppers’ unions that sought to include poor whites as well as blacks. In Atlanta in 1932, in the depths of the Great Depression, the CP led a large, racially integrated march of unemployed workers that braved fierce repression and Klan terror in order to demand relief.

Such struggles were impossible without opposing the whole Southern power structure, including the Democratic Party. These efforts, and the black working people who had been mobilized by them, were abandoned when in the mid 1930s the CP became open supporters of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the name of the “people’s front.” The CP could not even bring itself to support the mild-mannered 1941 March on Washington movement led by A. Philip Randolph because nothing was to be allowed to mute its chauvinist support for U.S. imperialism’s war effort in World War II. For the same reason, the CP actively broke strikes and even suspended its Japanese American members during the wartime internment.

In sharp contrast, the American Trot-

skyst movement stood for working-class politics independent of the Democratic Party as well as the Republicans. Led by James P. Cannon, a founder of American Communism who was won to Trotskyism at the 1928 Sixth World Congress of the Communist International, the Trotskyists were expelled from the CP in 1928, forming the Communist League of America and, in 1938, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). As part of its revolutionary program, the SWP stood for racial integration and equal rights for the black population.

However, by the early 1960s, the SWP, weakened by the anti-Communist repression and intense conservatism of the post-WWII period, had begun to move rapidly to the right in response to perceived opportunities. This found grotesque expression when the SWP sent condolences to John F. Kennedy’s widow after his assassination. Our political tendency, now called the International Communist League, arose out of a factional struggle inside the SWP that was triggered partly over the question of black liberation. Our founding cadres, organized in the Revolutionary Tendency (RT), fought equally against the SWP’s opportunism over the Cuban Revolution, as the party uncritically supported the petty-bourgeois Fidel Castro leadership. Our comrades were expelled from the SWP in 1963-64 and went on to found the Spartacist League in 1966. By the fall of 1965, the SWP had crossed the class line into reformism with its overt

class collaborationism in the burgeoning protests against the Vietnam War, building platforms for liberal Democrats who were beginning to see the war as a losing proposition for U.S. imperialism.

Instead of fighting to win black militants such as those in SNCC to a revolutionary program, the SWP argued that black people needed their own party. This served as the rationale to tail, successively and sometimes simultaneously, pro-Democratic Party civil rights leaders as well as sundry black nationalists. In opposition to the SWP’s abstentionism, the RT argued in July 1963 that the party should send members to the South to participate in the struggle. In a document submitted as part of internal party discussion, the RT argued in opposition to a draft resolution of the SWP’s Political Committee (PC):

“Negroes who are activists in the movement, such as, for example, the full-time militants around SNCC, are every day formulating concepts of struggle for the movement. The meaning of the line of the PC draft is that we are not interested in recruiting these people to our white party because we have the revolutionary socialist program for the section of the working class of which we are the vanguard, and *they* (Negro militants) must lead *their own* struggle, although we would like to have fraternal relations with them. This is

continued on page 8

Malcolm X...

(continued from page 7)

the meaning of the PC draft. "To the concept of the white party must be counterposed the concept of the revolutionary party. For if we are only the former, then black workers are misplaced in the SWP."

—"For Black Trotskyism" (reprinted in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 5 [Revised], "What Strategy for Black Liberation? Trotskyism vs. Black Nationalism" [September 1978])

This document laid out our political orientation:

"Our point of departure comes in turn as the *conclusion* that the Negro question is so deeply built into the American capitalist class-structure—regionally and nationally—that only the *destruction* of existing class relations and the change in class dominance—the passing of power into the hands of the working class—will suffice to strike at the heart of racism and bring about a solution both real and durable."

Our strategic perspective was to recruit the left wing of the civil rights movement into a revolutionary party capable of leading vanguard layers of the black working class and petty-bourgeois youth in the South. The RT put forward a series of demands linking the struggles of workers and the black masses and addressing immediate needs such as organized self-defense and union organizing drives throughout the South. As volunteers were risking their lives to register black voters, we called for independent political organization so that voting could mean some-



Stephen Shames
Bobby Seale, Democratic Party candidate for Oakland mayor, 1973.

thing other than supporting Democrats. The RT and the early Spartacist League raised such transitional demands as the call for a Freedom Labor Party. These demands were aimed at uniting the ranks of the trade unions—the workers' basic organizations of self-defense against the exploiting class—with the militant masses in the civil rights movement behind a perspective of socialist revolution. This fusion could not come about through preachments of unity, but only by the union movement actively taking up the fight for the rights of the specially oppressed black population. The obstacle to uniting the working people in revolutionary struggle against the capitalist system was not only the liberal preachers. It was, principally, the sellout labor bureaucrats, who matched King & Co. in fidelity to the Democratic Party.

When Malcolm X came to political awareness, the main body of the union bureaucracy consisted of the open Cold War crusaders at the head of the AFL-CIO, who had been installed by the anti-red purges in the late 1940s and '50s. Another section of the labor tops, epitomized by the United Auto Workers' Walter Reuther, tried to strike a slicker pose

with vague social-democratic rhetoric. As Malcolm X noted, Reuther & Co. were closely tied to the pro-Democratic Party civil rights leaders and served as a prop of the Kennedy administration.

Both wings of the labor bureaucracy were explicitly hostile to labor militancy and to the militant wing of civil rights activism. Both wings were outspoken enemies of Communism and acted as agencies of U.S. imperialism abroad, supporting reactionary pro-American regimes and spearheading efforts to smash leftist-led unions. Their despicable political profile contributed hugely to the view of black and other New Left radicals that the unions themselves were a part of "the system" and enemies of liberation. Identifying the working class as a whole with the sellout leaders at the top is a fallacy that to this day contributes to anti-union prejudices, undermining any perspective of fighting inside the unions for a class-struggle leadership.

Unlike many others on the left, who patronizingly enthused over whatever was popular, the Spartacist League was forthright in advancing our Marxist views and criticisms. When the slogan of "black power" was put forward, we wrote that it "represents the repudiation of tokenism, liberal tutelage, reliance on the federal government, and the nonviolent philosophy of moral suasion. In this sense, therefore, black power is class power, and should be supported by all socialist forces" ("Black Power—Class Power," *Spartacist West* No. 8, September 1966; reprinted in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 5 [Revised]). But we also warned that the slogan "can be used by petty bourgeois black nationalist elements who want to slice the social cake along color rather than class lines and to promote reactionary color mysticism. More seriously, it can be degraded to mean mere support for black politicians operating within the system."

Indeed, within a few years, the larger wing of the Black Panthers' leadership had begun to openly look to the Democratic Party. In 1973 Panther leader Bobby Seale ran as a Democrat for mayor of Oakland, California. "Black Power" increasingly came to be defined as "black control of the black community," which meant more black businesses, the election of black mayors to preside over the misery of the big cities, and more black cops to participate in shooting down blacks.

Marable and "Trotskyism"

Marable takes as good coin the revisionist SWP's portrayal of "Trotskyism," promoting the party's opportunist tailism of whatever leaders black people seemed to want. Marable writes:

"For decades, the SWP had promoted revolutionary black nationalism. Leon Trotsky himself had believed that Negro Americans would be the vanguard for the inevitable socialist revolution in the United States. Malcolm's separation from the Nation of Islam and his endorsement of voter registration and mass protest by African Americans seemed to Trotskyists a move toward socialism."

Marable goes on to wrongly state in a footnote that Trotskyism "meant that the vanguard of the socialist revolution would not come from the industrial proletariat, but from the most oppressed sectors of the working class and peasantry," which in the U.S. meant black people.

Shortly after Malcolm died, longtime



Wide World
Above: Bill Epton (center) at banned march in Harlem, 1964, just before arrest. Below: Spartacist speaker (with bullhorn) addressed SL-initiated rally in NYC garment district to mobilize labor in defense of ghetto masses during 1964 Harlem cop riot.



SWP cadre George Breitman wrote *The Last Year of Malcolm X* (1967), which argued: "Malcolm was pro-socialist in the last year of his life, but not yet a Marxist." Breitman would go on to proclaim Malcolm an increasingly pro-socialist "revolutionary." For the SWP to call Malcolm X a socialist was in keeping with renouncing its former revolutionary socialist program and adapting to many non-proletarian forces that falsely appropriated the term "socialist," such as the Algerian Ben Bella government and Egypt under Nasser, both of which were bourgeois-nationalist regimes.

The SWP's use of Trotsky's authority in regard to the black struggle was also fraudulent. Trotsky's rare comments concerning American blacks were consistent with the mistaken understanding that they might constitute a nation and hence with raising a slogan of self-determination. But it is a travesty to suggest that Trotsky would ever have entertained the notion of organizing separate "revolutionary" parties by race. In discussions with the SWP leadership in 1939, Trotsky reminded the comrades that the roots of opportunism in the trade unions in the U.S. lay in their being based on the "aristocracy of labor"—privileged layers who sided with

the bourgeois class "to hold the Negroes and the unskilled workers down to a very low scale." Correctly identifying black workers as "the most dynamic milieu of the working class," he insisted: "We must say to the conscious elements of the Negroes that they are convoked by the historic development to become a vanguard of the working class.... If it happens that we in the SWP are not able to find the road to this stratum, then we are not worthy at all. The permanent revolution and all the rest would be only a lie."

The Spartacist League's political program, representing a revolutionary alternative to both the liberal-integrationist and black nationalist dead ends, powerfully spoke to felt needs, but our very small organization was not able to pose it forcefully before the mass of radicalizing black activists. The early SL made promising beginnings in exemplary mass work, illustrating our program through such actions as organizing defense of Bill Epton, a black Progressive Labor supporter who was prosecuted in the wake of the 1964 Harlem "riot"—in reality, a police riot against the people of Harlem. With the ghetto in police lockdown, we initiated the Harlem Solidarity Commit-

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tee, which organized a 1,000-strong rally in NYC’s garment district to mobilize working-class support for the besieged black people.

Ultimately, we were frozen out by black nationalist currents that claimed to reject liberal gradualism and tokenism. The opportunism of organizations such as the SWP let pass a promising opportunity to recruit substantial numbers of black radicals to a perspective of socialist revolution and to develop them as cadres and leaders of a Leninist vanguard party.

The black freedom struggle—and in fact the whole working class—paid heavily for black radicals’ inability to find the levers to polarize capitalist society along class lines, as the nationalists rejected any revolutionary potential for white workers. The isolation of the Black Panthers and others from the working class and the trade unions increased their vulnerability to the racist capitalist state as it extracted murderous vengeance. Through cop repression and the FBI’s infamous COINTELPRO operation, dozens of leaders and militants were shot down and many others framed up and thrown in jail. These attacks broke the back of the Panthers, whose fragmentation—assisted by agents provocateurs, forged documents and other police “dirty tricks”—led to most of their leading members moving sharply to the right.

Malcolm X and the Left Today

In a suitably scathing review of *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, black columnist Glen Ford takes on Marable’s assertion that Malcolm’s later activities “marked an

early, tentative concession to the idea that perhaps blacks could someday become empowered within the existing system” (“Dragging Malcolm X to Obamaland,” *Black Agenda Report*, 27 April 2011). Ford comments that “Marable and his circle” are “the left Black Obamaites, purported radicals who have a perpetual love affair with Power.” However, behind Ford’s *bons mots* is a bankrupt black nationalist outlook, which obliterates a *class* understanding of Obama’s role as chief executive of the racist U.S. capitalist order. In 2008, Ford himself supported the candidacy of Cynthia McKinney, a black former Democratic Congresswoman from Georgia who was running on the ticket of the Green Party, a small-fry capitalist party.

The reactions to Marable’s book by the ostensibly socialist left show how much they accept his basic framework of either liberal integration or black nationalism, in opposition to a revolutionary alternative. In *Liberation News* (11 June 2011), the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL) points out Marable’s distortion of Malcolm’s comments about electoralism. But for the PSL, the bottom line is that “there is nothing inconsistent about condemning the two major parties while suggesting that Black people vote strategically. A revolutionary makes use of all tactics that advance the struggle at a particular moment, provided that this does not foster illusions in the current system.”

This is the pretext that the PSL’s forebears in the Workers World Party (WWP) have used to backhandedly support black capitalist politicians in the name of “fighting the right.” In the 1980s, it was the

presidential campaigns of Jesse Jackson; today, the WWP hails New York City Councilman Charles Barron. Marxists fight for the class independence of the working class, for a *workers party that fights against all oppression and for black liberation through socialist revolution!*

For 20 or 30 years it has been common on the reformist left to reconcile Malcolm X to the politics of Martin Luther King. The reformists all share the perspective of pressuring the Democrats to do good things, either overtly or backhandedly. Virtually all of them cheered Obama’s election and will do their best to find ways to get back on the bandwagon in this election year. In the end, the reformists are reduced to quibbling over this or that in Marable’s book, which distorts Malcolm X’s political trajectory to serve a very contemporary purpose, including by absurdly depicting Malcolm X as becoming “race neutral.” Marable’s book takes for granted that the civil rights movement succeeded. In terms of the limited objectives of its pro-government leaders, it did. But it benefited mainly a thin layer of middle-class blacks, the traditional “talented tenth” in the professions augmented by a layer of government bureaucrats and a few elected officials.

What we see in America today is not the “post-racial” society invoked by Barack Obama but the failure of the liberal civil rights movement to fundamentally better the lives of this oppressed layer of American capitalist society. In the U.S. today, the prison system is one of the few growth industries, accompanying the deindustrialization of recent decades. Starting with Jesse Jackson himself, the black politicos

who Marable sees as proof of “empowerment” early on enrolled themselves as champions of the “war on drugs,” which has resulted in mass incarceration of black people as well as a growing number of Latinos and others. The current economic crisis has underlined the vulnerability of the black population, measured by such indices as the enormous gap in household net wealth between white and black families, as the Great Depression of the 1930s did in its day. It must be obvious to all that capitalism is not bringing prosperity to white working people either.

The simple truth is that there will be no end to black oppression, exploitation and imperialist war until the multiracial working class seizes power from the tiny handful that constitutes the capitalist class and reorganizes society on a socialist basis. As in the days when Malcolm X gave voice to the oppressed black masses, what needs to be done is to forge a revolutionary party that can provide the necessary leadership for the working class and the oppressed. In our obituary on Malcolm X in *Spartacist* No. 4, May-June 1965 (reprinted last issue), we noted the “agonizing gap in black leadership today,” a condition that has grown even more acute since that time. Our obituary concluded: “But such leadership will eventually be forthcoming. This is a statistical as well as a social certainty. This leadership, building on the experience of others such as Malcolm, and emancipated from his religiosity, will build a movement in which the black masses and their allies can lead the third great American revolution. Then Malcolm X will be remembered by black and white alike as a heroic and tragic figure in a dark period of our common history.” ■

Canada...

(continued from page 12)

League were able to sell more than 350 copies of our Marxist press, chiefly an issue of *Spartacist Canada* (No. 171, Winter 2011/2012) headlined “We Need a New Ruling Class—The Workers!” As a comrade reported: “It was fairly easy to puncture the nationalism on a superficial level, by pointing out that workers in the U.S. were suffering the same attacks as in Canada, often more severe given the weakness of the unions there, and that the only way to take on the capitalist offensive was through joint class struggle across the border. Such arguments often sorted out who would buy the paper, though the contradiction is captured by the fact that a lot of the same workers also held Canadian flags.”

As well as opening its new facility in Muncie, CAT is moving to set up a locomotive plant in Brazil and has a long-standing agreement with Montreal-based Bombardier to build locomotives at a plant in Mexico. The labour tops also direct their ire against workers in such underdeveloped countries, accusing them of “stealing jobs.” Thus on the eve of the Caterpillar lockout, CAW president Ken Lewenza railed to a reporter from the *London Free Press* (27 December 2011), “They want to kick the sh-- out of our members to fill their pockets.... I guess today is Muncie and next week will be Mexico.”

When the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was being negotiated in 1991, the Grupo Espartaquista de México, Spartacist League/U.S. and Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste of Canada—sections of the International

Communist League—issued a joint statement calling to “Stop U.S. ‘Free Trade’ Rape of Mexico.” We explained that U.S. imperialism wanted to “turn Mexico into a giant *maquiladora*, or free trade zone—‘free’ of unions, and ‘free’ for capital” (SC No. 85, Fall 1991 [WV No. 531, 5 July 1991]).

In contrast, the labour bureaucracy’s national-chauvinist tirades against NAFTA served to set U.S. and Canadian workers against their Mexican class brothers and sisters, as well as each other. Over the past two decades, NAFTA has meant increased profits and power for the U.S. rulers and their Canadian junior partners through the superexploitation of Mexican workers, while also bringing about the economic ruination of Mexican peasants.

Rebuild the Unions Through Class Struggle!

The labour bureaucrats have for the most part abandoned the class-struggle methods that built the North American industrial unions in the 1930s and ’40s. Instead they push reliance on capitalist governments, sapping the fighting strength of the unions and demoralizing the workers. Indiana is a case in point. The state was the site of many pitched labour battles that made it a stronghold of the UAW, Steelworkers and other unions. But it has seen a steep decline in union membership in recent decades. Even before the new anti-labour law, barely ten percent of the workforce was unionized, and workers there as elsewhere in the Rust Belt have seen a sharp drop in wages and benefits. Barely paying lip service to the need to organize the unorganized, the prostrate union officialdom has only further whetted the appe-



January 25: CAW unionists in Ingersoll, Ontario, block locomotive from Caterpillar plant in solidarity with locked-out Electro-Motive workers.

tites of those trying to bust the unions. Alongside the call to hot cargo Electro-Motive locomotives, a plant occupation backed up by mass pickets could have shown a road to victory in London. Holding CAT’s facilities to ransom through such militant action could have forced a settlement on the union’s terms, and would certainly have galvanized broader labour struggle. The CAW has organized such occupations in the past, notably at a GM plant in Oshawa during a 1996 strike. This time, however, the only large-scale union protest was the January 21 rally, an exercise in blowing off steam in a park eight kilometres from the plant.

The unions must be rebuilt as combative instruments of the working class. That requires a fight for a new leadership that breaks with national chauvinism in all its forms and upholds the program and the methods of class struggle. While

the Canadian labour tops promote the pro-capitalist NDP or even the Liberals, in the U.S. they tie workers to the imperialist order via support to the capitalist Democratic Party. Multiracial revolutionary workers parties must be forged on both sides of the border committed to the struggle to overthrow the class of exploiters. Only a workers government where those who labour rule can put an end to the irrational capitalist profit system that consigns so many to poverty and degradation, and rebuild society in the interests of the vast majority. ■

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Afghanistan...

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are not in the main the actions of rogue elements breaking the law. In 2004, the U.S. overseers brokered a constitution that enshrined Islamic *sharia* law. Despite the token presence of women in the constituent assembly and a claim that women have “equal rights,” the constitution states that “no law can be contrary to the beliefs and provisions of the sacred religion of Islam.” In 2006, Karzai’s cabinet reestablished the Department for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, which was notorious under the Taliban for its brutal imposition of *sharia*, including stoning to death women who defied its edicts.

Calling Afghanistan “the good war,” in 2009 the Obama administration reinforced the U.S. occupation with another 30,000 troops. The imperialist troops, full of racist contempt, continue to massacre untold numbers of civilians. American soldiers have murdered Afghans for sport, cut off their fingers as trophies and urinated on their dead bodies. Marine snipers have posed for photos with a flag bearing the Nazi SS insignia. Soldiers regularly stage night raids in which they go after suspected opponents of the Afghan regime at private homes and shoot dead whoever opens the door. The explosion of anger that followed the revelation that the U.S. military had burned copies of the Koran last month shows the depth of resentment that has built up among the Afghan peoples.

In the latest atrocity, a U.S. Army staff sergeant went door-to-door in a village in southern Afghanistan overnight on March 11, gunning down at least 16 civilians, including nine children. This outrage provoked an immediate condemnation from the Karzai government and vows for vengeance from the Taliban, further complicating the U.S. rulers’ efforts to extricate themselves from the Afghanistan quagmire.

After repeated instances of Afghan forces turning their guns on American soldiers, the Obama administration announced last month that it was moving up the timetable for ending U.S. troops’ “combat role” to some time next year and withdrawing them in 2014. The U.S. is looking to open negotiations with the Taliban, which continues to control large parts of the country, in order to somehow cobble together a “political solution” that would create a modicum of stability after U.S. troops are withdrawn. Karzai’s approval of the clerics’ woman-hating “code of conduct” is widely seen to be an overture to the Taliban on the part of his regime.

As Marxists, our starting point in opposing the U.S. occupation is proletarian class opposition to America’s capitalist rulers and their imperialist predations. In the lead-up to the 2001 invasion, we called for the military defense of Afghanistan against the U.S. and allied forces without giving any support to the Taliban reactionaries. In the face of the ongoing occupation, we emphasize that every blow struck against the blood-



DPA

Left: Afghan mujahedin shot schoolteachers for teaching young girls to read. Right: White House meeting between Ronald Reagan and reactionary mujahedin leaders, 1983.



UPI

soaked U.S. ruling class is a blow against the chief enemy of working people and the oppressed around the world. *All U.S./ NATO troops out of Afghanistan now!*

Afghanistan: Front Line of the Anti-Soviet War Drive

In their drive for world domination, the U.S. imperialists have never had any compunction about siding with the most retrograde social forces. It is impossible to comprehend the current plight of Afghan women without examining Washington’s role in backing the forces of Islamic reaction against the Soviet Union and its PDPA allies starting in 1978.

Many of the modernizing left nationalists who led the PDPA were educated and

lars in aid went to an array of Islamist groups based in Peshawar, Pakistan, and to that country’s ISI intelligence service. The CIA used the ISI and the Egyptian and Saudi intelligence services to create, train, finance and arm a network of 70,000 Islamists (including Osama bin Laden) from more than 50 countries to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan, giving a huge boost to Muslim fundamentalist movements the world over.

We wrote at the time of the Soviet intervention: “For revolutionary socialists there is nothing tricky, nothing ambiguous about the war in Afghanistan. The Soviet Army and its left-nationalist allies are fighting an anti-communist, anti-democratic mélange of landlords,

Planeta



Women and men work side by side at car and truck repair facility in Kabul, under Soviet-backed PDPA regime.

trained in the Soviet Union, which they rightly saw as a source of social progress. The Soviet Union was a workers state that embodied key social gains of the October 1917 Russian Revolution, centrally a planned economy and collectivized property, despite its subsequent degeneration under a nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy. Progressive-minded activists in Afghanistan in the 1970s looked at the example of Soviet Central Asia, just across the border, which was a modern society where women went unveiled, were educated and participated in public life and where everyone had access to free education and health care.

On coming to power in April 1978, the PDPA began to implement serious reforms favoring women and poor peasants, such as redistributing the land, lowering the bride price, educating women and freeing them from the *burqa*. In the context of this cruelly backward country, which had far more mullahs than industrial workers, such reforms had an explosive impact. They fueled a revolt by reactionary traditionalists who sought to maintain the old society, including its all-encompassing degradation of women. When the Muslim insurgency threatened the PDPA’s hold on power, the government made repeated requests for Soviet assistance, until the Soviets finally dispatched tens of thousands of troops to Afghanistan in December 1979.

This was the only war in modern history fought centrally over women’s rights. From the start, the U.S. imperialists, determined to strike a blow against the Soviet Union, took the side of benighted reaction. Democratic president Jimmy Carter and his successor, Republican Ronald Reagan, backed the *mujahedin* holy warriors to the hilt in the biggest covert CIA operation in history. Billions of dol-

money lenders, tribal chiefs and mullahs committed to mass illiteracy.... The gut-level response of every radical leftist should be fullest solidarity with the Soviet Red Army” (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 29, Summer 1980). The threat of a CIA-backed Islamic takeover on the USSR’s southern flank posed directly the need for unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union. Moreover, the extended Soviet presence opened the possibility of social liberation for the Afghan masses, particularly women. We proclaimed: *Hail Red Army! Extend social gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples!*

In contrast, the bulk of the left internationally, with few exceptions, eagerly joined the imperialist chorus against the Soviet Union and whitewashed the *mujahedin*. The International Socialist Organization and its then ally in Britain, Tony Cliff’s Socialist Workers Party (SWP), stood foursquare with the imperialists. The 12 January 1980 issue of the SWP’s *Socialist Worker* blared, “Troops Out of Afghanistan!” In 1981, the then fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat of Ernest Mandel called for “stopping Soviet occupation in Afghanistan.” In howling with the imperialist wolves against the Soviet intervention, these groups made common cause with the worst enemies of the rights of women and all the oppressed.

Huge Gains for Afghan Women Under Soviet Presence

Freeing Afghan women from *purdah* (seclusion) and giving land to the peasants required ending the domination of the mullahs and tribal khans and overturning the country’s entire social structure. But the popular base of support for such moves within Afghanistan was very narrow. The country utterly lacked

a proletariat with any social weight. Its tiny manufacturing workforce of some 35,000 was dwarfed by the quarter million Islamic clerics. Those elements in the cities aspiring to progress were surrounded by a sea of nomadic herdsman and landless peasants beholden to the khans and the landlords. Thus, the presence of the Red Army, together with substantial Soviet aid, was essential to social progress.

Afghan women made unprecedented gains under the Soviet umbrella. While the 1964 constitution had declared women equal to men, equality largely remained on paper except for a few women in the upper strata of urban society. A thin layer of women had taken off the *burqa* and obtained education and employment outside the home, but even in Kabul, the main urban center, half of all women still wore the full veil in the late 1970s. Throughout the country, 98 percent of women were totally illiterate. In the 1980s, in contrast, there were vast opportunities for women to escape at least the strictest restraints of *purdah*. Many thousands became university students, workers, professionals and leftist activists.

Suraya Parlika, a founder of the PDPA-affiliated Democratic Women’s Organization, recounted some of these accomplishments in the 2007 documentary *Afghan Women: A History of Struggle*: “Women worked very hard to get their rights. They formed childcare centers in their workplaces to make it easier for women to work. Maternity leave was extended to three months from six weeks and they were still getting their salary.” The Afghan government also began mass literacy campaigns and provided free medical care.

By the late 1980s, women made up 40 percent of the country’s doctors (women doctors were in high demand, especially in rural areas, where women were still strictly secluded and barred from consulting male doctors). Sixty percent of the instructors at Kabul University and 65 percent of the student body were women. Family courts, in some cases presided over by female judges, had replaced the mullahs’ *sharia* courts. The number of working women increased 50-fold. By 1987, there were an estimated 245,000 women working in fields ranging from construction, printing and food processing to radio and TV journalism and especially teaching, where they made up 70 percent of the workforce.

In a 1994 PhD thesis, *Educated Afghan Women in Search of Their Identities*, the Afghan-born academic Sharifa Sharif reported on her 1987 interviews with 30 women workers in Kabul, undertaken as part of a survey for the United Nations Development Program. The sharp increase in women’s participation in economic life was partly due to the war, which had taken away many men and brought women from the countryside into Kabul. But it was also the result of greater legal rights, supportive government policies and economic development, including the construction of new homes, factories, schools and hospitals.

The transformation of these women from backward traditionalist areas into skilled workers gives a glimpse of what might have been achieved if Afghanistan had been able to continue its Soviet-

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Second International Conference of Communist Women, Moscow, 1921. Clara Zetkin and Alexandra Kollontai seated at center.

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WORKERS VANGUARD

assisted development. While initially encountering fierce resistance from their families, women workers were exposed to technology, education and literacy. They took pride in acquiring job skills and becoming *ustad* (expert masters) in their fields. Some were sent for training to the Soviet Union. At a construction site, Sharif interviewed a 23-year-old widow and mother of two children, who was one of three female crane operators, a job never before done by a woman in Afghanistan.

Many women took up arms against the *mujahedin* threat. Four of seven military commanders appointed in 1986 were women. By 1989, the regime reported having armed some 15,000 women. The same year, all female members of the PDPA received military training and arms. The arming of unveiled women with Kalashnikovs symbolized the social transformation then under way in Afghanistan. As early as 1984, Indian journalist Patricia Sethi reported encountering 15-year-old girls carrying rifles who were members of a civilian brigade in a village near Kabul: “They spoke fervently and passionately about their revolution and what it meant for young women in Afghanistan: it meant ‘an education, freedom from the veil, freedom from feudalists who want to keep us down,’ said Khalida. ‘We do not want to become the fourth wife of a 60-year-old man, existing solely for his whim and pleasure’” (*India Today*, 31 July 1984).

Soviet Withdrawal Betrayed Afghan Women

The Soviet military presence posed the possibility not only of defeating the U.S.-backed Islamists but also of incorporating Afghanistan into the Soviet system. In the 1920s, Soviet Central Asia looked remarkably like Afghanistan in the 1970s—a miserably backward and desolate place where women were bought and sold. Every step toward emancipation taken by the Soviet regime was met with fierce resistance from the khans, mullahs and their armed gangs of *basmachi* (the *mujahedin* of the time), including the wholesale murder of Communist agitators and women who rejected the veil.

The imposition of Soviet power under the umbrella of the Red Army created the conditions for dismantling centuries-old tribal/clerical domination and developing the region’s vast natural resources. Once the Soviet Army got the upper hand against the *basmachi* in 1922, Bolshevik women activists were sent in to work among the horribly oppressed women, who stood to benefit most from the extension of the gains of the October Revolution. Under Lenin’s guidance, they set out to gradually undermine the power and authority of the khans’ and mullahs’ institutions through legal and administrative measures, demonstrating that the Communists were the foremost fighters for the oppressed.

Beginning with the Stalinist political counterrevolution in 1923-24, the USSR underwent a qualitative bureaucratic degeneration in which the working class was deprived of political power. Even after this, however, the necessities of industrialization and economic planning continued to produce particularly huge benefits for Central Asia. As the USSR was transformed from a largely peasant country into an industrial power starting in the late 1920s and early ’30s, Soviet women were increasingly mobilized to work in industry. In Central Asia, women entered the industrial workforce in large numbers during World War II, when many Soviet factories were relocated to the region away from the front lines of the war.

Had the Soviet leadership been determined to see the war in Afghanistan through to victory, the country could have undergone similarly immense social progress through the construction of a modern infrastructure, the creation of a significant urban proletariat and the institution of economic planning. But the Stalinist bureaucrats in the Kremlin did not pursue this course. Instead, the regime of Mikhail Gorbachev withdrew the Red Army in 1988-89.

This was not because it faced military defeat; to the end, the Soviet Army had

the upper hand militarily. The Soviet withdrawal was a political decision by the Stalinist bureaucracy in Moscow carried out with the fatuous aim of appeasing U.S. imperialism. It was a betrayal of the Afghan masses, especially women, that helped pave the way for capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union itself in 1991-92.

The Stalinist bureaucracy was a contradictory caste whose nationalist outlook subordinated the interests of the world proletariat to the defense of its own privileged position as a parasitic layer resting on the collectivized economy. The 1979 Red Army intervention was a decent and progressive act, even if it was carried out by the corrupt and conservative regime of Leonid Brezhnev, that cut against the grain of the Stalinist dogma of “socialism in one country.” However, we warned from the outset that the bureaucracy might cut a deal at the expense of the Afghan peoples as part of its quest for “peaceful coexistence” with Washington. We fought for a proletarian political revolution to oust the treacherous Stalinist bureaucracy and return the Soviet Union to the Bolshevik internationalism of Lenin and Trotsky.

After the Soviet withdrawal, the Afghan government fought on valiantly for three years. The Partisan Defense Committee—a class-struggle legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League—wrote to the PDPA government in 1989 offering to organize an international brigade to help fight the forces of Islamic reaction. When that offer was turned down, the PDC, at the request of the Afghan government, launched an international fund drive to aid civilian victims of the *mujahedin* siege of the city of Jalalabad, raising over \$44,000. The Afghan forces were able to repel this attack.

When the *mujahedin* finally took Kabul in 1992, re-enslaving Afghan women, the



International Institute of Social History
Photo published in 1926 shows female judge in Tajikistan, part of Soviet Central Asia, presiding at trial where veiled woman accuses her husband of abuse.

population, emerged as the strongest of the *mujahedin* factions. Backed by Pakistan and supported by the U.S., it came to power in 1996. A year later, an American diplomat declared: “The Taliban will probably develop like the Saudis did. There will be Aramco, pipelines, an emir, no parliament and lots of Sharia law. We can live with that” (quoted in Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* [2000]). Only when the U.S. rulers realized that there would be no Aramco (or any other oil company) and no pipelines did they start talking about the Taliban’s barbaric treatment of women.

Many of the CIA-financed fundamentalists who fought the Soviets in Afghanistan in the 1980s turned against their former paymasters over the following decade. This was the case with the September 11, 2001 attacks carried out by Osama bin Laden’s Al Qaeda network, which led in turn to the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. After ousting the Taliban, the Bush administration installed a

The horrors produced by U.S. imperialism’s “holy war” against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, as well as its present occupation of the country, underline how the capitalist system is a barrier to social progress and a breeding ground for reaction. As in Afghanistan, U.S. occupation forces devastated Iraq during their occupation of that country, fueling sectarian massacres and throwing back the rights of women and other oppressed.

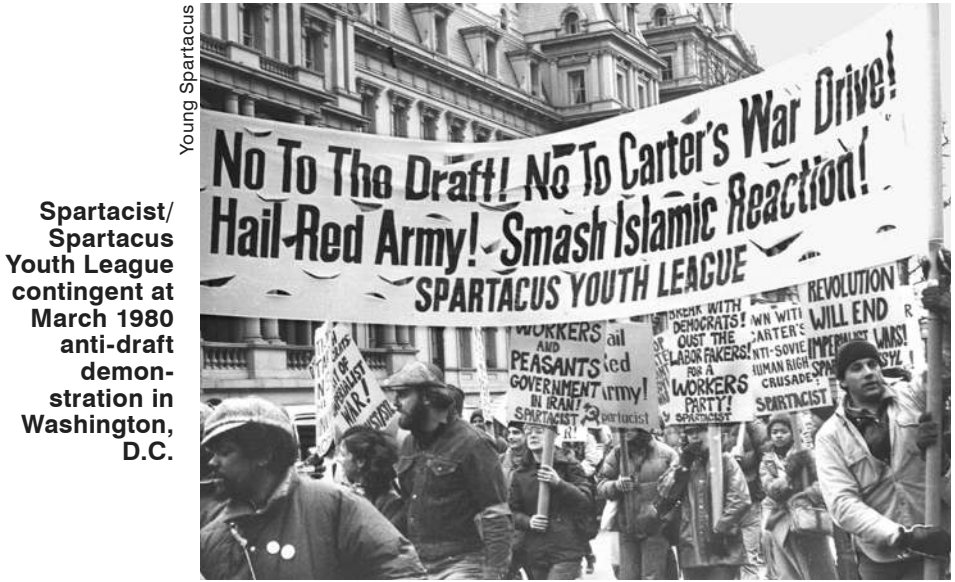
Through its “war on terror,” U.S. imperialism aims to impose its will on oppressed peoples around the world. The despotic bourgeoisies of the neocolonies subjugate and plunder their “own” people for their own profit and that of the imperialists to whom they are beholden. There is plenty of hatred among the masses for these parasites and their overlords, however the aspirations of the downtrodden have increasingly been channeled into religious reaction. Islamist forces continue to grow in influence throughout North Africa and the Near East, from Egypt to Gaza to Turkey and beyond.

The only way forward is the struggle for an internationalist revolutionary leadership dedicated to the fight for workers revolutions in both the neocolonies and the heartlands of world imperialism. While this may seem a distant prospect in this very reactionary political period, the bitter truth is that no other road can put an end to ethnic and national oppression, the oppression of women and the exploitation of working people.

The domestic complement of the murderous occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan is an escalating war on the U.S. working class, black people and immigrants. While a handful of wealthy capitalists accrue massive profits, the rest of the population is faced with increasing assaults on its living standards or utter poverty. Moreover, anti-woman religious fundamentalism is also rampant on the home front, as bourgeois politics is saturated with God and the right to abortion and even contraception is under siege.

The purpose of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), of which the Spartacist League is the U.S. section, is to forge revolutionary Marxist parties modeled after Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolshevik Party that led the October Revolution. Only the working class has the social power and objective interest to sweep away the deeply irrational and inhumane capitalist system through socialist revolution, replacing it with a planned economy in which production is based on the human needs of all, rather than profits for the few.

Particularly in the neocolonial world, where women’s oppression is so acute, women workers will be in the front ranks of such parties. The overthrow of the imperialist-dominated world order will lay a material basis to free women from age-old family servitude and reorganize society in the interest of all. The social functions of the family—housework, child rearing, preparation of food, etc.—will be replaced by collectivized institutions. When the bloody rule of capital is swept away by the workers of the world, the veil, the bride price, *purdah*, “honor killings” and the social degradation of women in all its forms will become but bitter memories of a barbaric past. ■



Spartacist/
Spartacus
Youth League
contingent at
March 1980
anti-draft
demonstration in
Washington,
D.C.

various tribally-based militias carried out a vengeful war of mass murder, torture and rape of rival ethnic populations, which left at least 50,000 people dead in Kabul alone. This led to four years of horror under the rule of various warring fundamentalist factions which brought the city to the point of famine and total devastation.

A recent *New York Times* article (“In Afghanistan, a Soviet Past Lies in Ruins,” 11 February) captured some of the destruction wrought by these U.S.-backed cutthroats. The article notes that in the Soviet House of Science and Culture during the 1980s, “Soviets and Afghans gathered for lectures, films and the propagation of modernizing ideas that for a while refashioned Kabul, including a time when women could work outside the home in Western clothing.” It continued:

“But during the civil war of 1992-96, the House of Science and Culture was occupied by one faction and wrecked as another lobbed shells down from a nearby hill. Today, the auditoriums are littered with rubble; cold air comes in through rocket holes; and once-bold Soviet murals of men and women, Afghans and Russians, are hidden in the squalid darkness near cartoon images depicting a Taliban fighter instructing children to become suicide bombers.”

Eventually the Taliban, recruiting from the historically dominant Pashtun ethnic

regime based largely on the same *mujahedin* warlords who devastated the country from 1992-96.

The Impact of Counterrevolution in the USSR

The counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union has fed the bonfires of social reaction on a global scale. In many countries, women’s rights and social progress in general have been thrown back by generations. For working people in the ex-Soviet Union and the former deformed workers states of East and Central Europe, the return of capitalism has been a calamity measured in unemployment, homelessness, collapsing life expectancy and intercommunal violence.

In ex-Soviet Central Asia, while the effects of more than seven decades of socialized economic development did not permit a quick and easy victory for the Islamic fundamentalists, millions of women have found themselves again trapped under veils and classified as second-class citizens. Fewer and fewer girls attend secondary schools. In much of the region, women can no longer initiate a divorce. The resurgence of nationalism has led to interethnic strife, as in Tajikistan in 1992-97 and more recently in Kyrgyzstan. The region remains a powder keg, where ethnic clashes continue to rage.

WORKERS VANGUARD

Fight Union Busting Through United International Class Struggle!

Canada: Caterpillar Bosses Relocate Plant to “Right to Work” Indiana

The following article is reprinted from Spartacist Canada No. 172 (Spring 2012), newspaper of the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste, Canadian section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

SPARTACIST CANADA

Caterpillar’s move to lock out the 465 members of Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) Local 27 at its London, Ontario, Electro-Motive plant on New Year’s Day marked a further escalation in the capitalists’ war on labour. The company, notorious for union-busting in the U.S. Midwest in the 1990s, demanded that the CAW swallow a pay cut of nearly 55 percent—from \$35 to \$16.50 an hour—along with the elimination of the pension plan. CAT is meanwhile rolling in profits, some \$4.9 billion last year alone.

Rejecting these outrageous demands, the CAW set up round-the-clock pickets and called on the labour movement to hot cargo (boycott) any locomotives sent out of the plant. Flying pickets from CAW Locals 27 and 88, which organizes workers at the nearby CAMI auto plant in Ingersoll, managed to block one locomotive, keeping it under guard on a rail siding for nearly a week. On January 21, 10,000 workers descended on London for a mass protest, testament to the widespread anger at the base of the unions.

But Caterpillar dealt its final blow two weeks later by announcing the permanent closure of the factory. Production is to be shifted to a retooled, non-union plant in Muncie, Indiana, where workers will be paid \$12.50 to \$14.50 an hour. The announcement came two days after the Indiana state legislature adopted an anti-union law that bans the closed shop.

Caterpillar’s steamrolling of the CAW is a big defeat for the labour movement that will reverberate far beyond the London area. Some 450,000 manufacturing jobs have been destroyed in Canada since 2006. Southwestern Ontario, long the country’s industrial heartland, increasingly resembles the adjacent U.S. Rust Belt with its abandoned, hollowed-out



London, Ontario: Auto workers and supporters picket outside Electro-Motive plant, January 2.

factories. Unemployment in cities like London and Windsor is around 10 percent. Many workers who still have jobs have been forced to take huge cuts in pay and benefits. This race to the bottom was kicked off by the CAW leadership’s surrender of \$19 to \$22 an hour in givebacks to General Motors and Chrysler three years ago as part of the auto company bailouts engineered by the U.S. and Canadian governments.

CAT’s union-busting is one of a spate of lockouts by corporations seeking to wrest ever bigger concessions from the unions, or to eliminate them altogether. Members of United Steelworkers (USW) Local 1005 in Hamilton were locked out for nearly a year, finally surrendering last October to U.S. Steel’s demand to gut the pension plan. The same day the Electro-Motive lockout began, Rio Tinto Alcan locked out 800 USW workers at an aluminum smelter in Alma, Quebec, demanding the right to vastly increase the subcontracting of jobs at half the normal pay rate.

In the U.S., 1,300 workers at American Crystal Sugar, the country’s largest sugar

beet producer, have been locked-out since August. A three-month lockout of 1,050 USW unionists at Cooper Tire in Ohio ended in late February when workers voted to accept a contract that includes major givebacks. Victory to the Rio Tinto Alcan and American Crystal workers! Defend the unions!

Nationalism Undermines the Unions

There are crucial lessons to be drawn from the Caterpillar defeat. Central among them is the understanding that there can be no “partnership” between labour and the capitalists, whose sole aim is to line their pockets through savage exploitation of the workers. The nationalism and class collaboration promoted by the union bureaucracy and its allies in the social-democratic NDP [New Democratic Party] have only poisoned and derailed labour’s struggle. They foster deadly illusions that Canadian capitalists are, or can be, the workers’ allies, while scapegoating workers elsewhere, in this case in the U.S., for job losses at home. The assaults of the U.S. and Canadian capitalists can only be fought through united international class struggle!

Like much of North American industry, locomotive production has long been thoroughly integrated across the Canada-U.S. border. Another Caterpillar-owned locomotive facility in suburban Chicago is organized by the United Auto Workers (UAW), as are nearly 10,000 other CAT workers in various U.S. cities. But rather than appeal to American workers for a common fight against a common enemy, the CAW bureaucrats claimed that Canadian-nationalist protectionism is the answer and called on the Tory government in Ottawa to tighten restrictions on foreign ownership.

In fact, the London Electro-Motive factory has always been foreign owned, first by GM, then by a hedge fund and since 2010 by Caterpillar. Employment in the London plant greatly expanded two decades ago when GM closed much of its Illinois locomotive facility—which once

employed 13,000 skilled workers—in the wake of the 1988 U.S.-Canada free-trade deal. Back then, the cost of labour in Canada was much lower than in the U.S., mainly due to a weak Canadian dollar and cheaper health care costs. The CAW misleaders sought to use this to their advantage, pleading for GM and other U.S. companies to expand their facilities north of the border.

The bureaucratically-engineered split of the CAW from the UAW in 1984-85 was based on just such pernicious nationalism. As we wrote at the time:

“Once the most powerful union in North America, the UAW has been criminally weakened and undermined by the misleaders on both sides of the border. Decimated by plant closures and massive layoffs, the ranks of the union have had their pockets picked by these labor traitors in givebacks of billions of dollars and entire programs won in past struggles. Now the bureaucrats divide the union along the artificial border between Canada and the U.S....”
—“Bureaucrats Split UAW,”
SC No. 63, April 1985

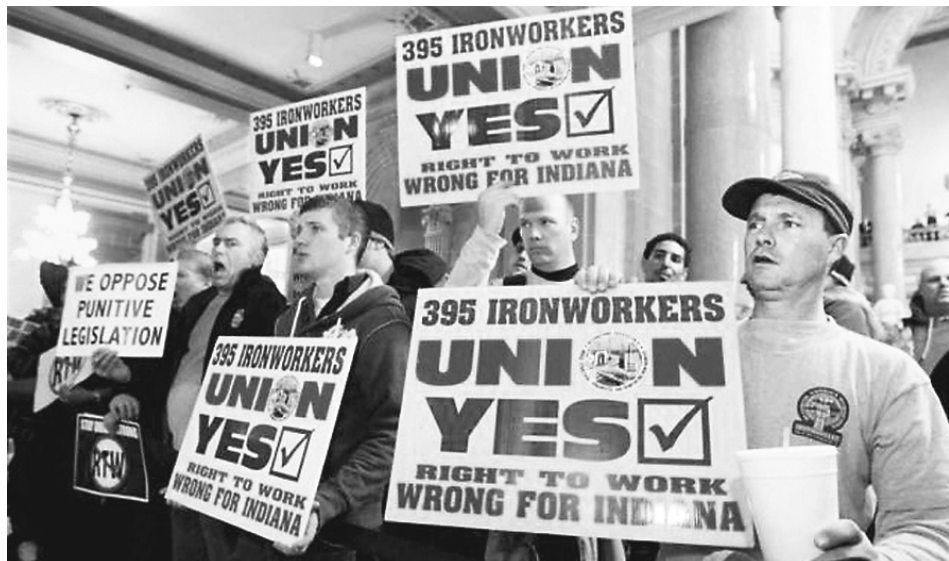
Playing on such divisions, the capitalists have successfully whipsawed the workers against each other along national lines, driving down wages and working conditions everywhere. Today, with the Canadian dollar at par and American unions even weaker than those in this country after decades of bureaucratic sellouts, companies like CAT and GM are moving investment back to the U.S., which is seen as a bastion of low pay and paltry benefits. When the workers are divided, only the bosses win.

The nationalism of the CAW leaders was in full evidence at the January 21 rally, which featured hundreds of Canadian flags held alongside CAW union flags; organizers were handing out both as the workers arrived. NDP placards demanded “Canadian jobs first,” and interim NDP leader Nycole Turmel and various CAW and other union bureaucrats pushed the same theme from the speakers platform. A delegation of United Electric locomotive unionists at a General Electric locomotive plant made the trip from Pennsylvania, but there was no visible presence at all from the UAW, even though London is only about two hours drive from Detroit. The UAW tops didn’t so much as post a token “solidarity” message for CAW Local 27 on their union website.

Also welcomed to the platform was London mayor Joe Fontana, who recently mobilized the cops to evict Occupy London protesters. Fontana was formerly labour minister in the federal Liberal government of Paul Martin. It was the sweeping attacks on social programs by the Chrétien/Martin Liberals in the 1990s and early 2000s that paved the way for today’s slash-and-burn Tory regime. For their part, the New Democrats enforce capitalist rule against the workers whenever they get the chance, including today in Manitoba and Nova Scotia where they run provincial governments.

Despite the dominant nationalism, there was openness to an internationalist class perspective among the workers in London. Supporters of the Trotskyist

continued on page 9



January 2011: Protest at Indiana Statehouse against “right to work” legislation, which was passed last month.