

For the Right of Gay Marriage...and Divorce!

Gay Rights and the Capitalist Electoral Circus



Left: March 15 rally against North Carolina's ban on same-sex marriage, Raleigh. Right: Obama addressing National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C., sponsored by Christian fundamentalist group "the Family," February 2009.

Defend the Separation of Church and State!

On May 9, Barack Obama announced on ABC News that he has "evolved" to the position that "same-sex couples should be able to get married." Within hours of his tepid endorsement of what should be a basic democratic right, contributions to the Obama/Biden re-election campaign jumped by millions of dollars. Meanwhile, Obama got on the phone to black preachers in order to forestall any possible blowback from this key constituency, for whom gay marriage is controversial. It was calculated politicking against Obama's Republican opponent, Mitt Romney, who recently addressed the commencement at the fundamentalist Liberty University in Virginia in a bid for support from the Tea Party and evangelicals who aren't quite sure that Mormons are Christians.

Thus do the two parties juggle in the capitalist electoral circus, where workers, immigrants, the poor and the oppressed are left to clean up the animal droppings. The difference between the two parties amounts to the fact that the Republicans openly dish out racist, sexist, anti-labor poison while the Democrats adopt a more benign image for working people and the oppressed—and end up doing the same thing in office.

The cover of *Newsweek* (21 May) showed Obama crowned with a rainbow halo and the headline, "The First

Gay President." But the president knew that his carefully uttered statement on ABC would have no immediate effect on the legal status of gay marriage. He made clear that his views were "personal" and that he would leave it to the states to decide, a nod to the "states' rights" doctrine that has historically been wielded to strip black people of democratic rights, particularly in the South. Thirty states currently have bans on gay marriage written into their constitutions. This includes North Carolina, where voters passed a state constitutional amendment on May 8 stating that "marriage between one man and one woman is the only domestic legal union that shall be valid or recognized in this state," posing a potential challenge to civil unions between heterosexuals as well.

Obama's statement dwelt on "committed" and "monogamous" gay couples that he knows while praising their good parenting—in other words, the traditional "one man on one woman for life" applied with a lifestyle twist. So gay people, too, can struggle to shoehorn their personal lives into the institution of marriage, one of the means by which the ruling class exerts social control. And gay working people like others will keep struggling to find affordable, quality childcare, medical care and decent education for their kids, while trying to feed and house

their families on diminishing wages and benefits.

The Spartacist League supports full equal rights for gays, just as we support any gain in civil and democratic rights that the working class and the oppressed can wrest from the capitalist rulers and their state. This includes the right for gays to marry—a condition for receiving a range of necessary social benefits. Marriage rights or not, gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders will continue to face deadly bigotry in this homophobic society, where organized religion and the nuclear family are key institutions for the maintenance of the capitalist order. We also support the right of gays to enter the military without any "don't ask, don't tell" traps, which does not lessen by one iota our class opposition to the imperialist military and its wars and occupations.

Humorist Fran Lebowitz hit the target when she said in her HBO documentary that she was "stunned" that the two greatest desires of gay rights activists were marriage and serving in the military. She noted, "Usually the fight for freedom is the fight for *freedom*.... This is like the fight for slavery." We say: For the right to gay marriage—and divorce! Not one person, not one penny for the imperialist armed forces! We communists fight for a workers government, under which no one will be forced into a legal straitjacket

(they don't call it "wedlock" for nothing) to get medical benefits, visitation rights, child custody, citizenship rights or any of the other privileges this capitalist society grants to married couples.

Reformist Left: Democrats' Amen Corner

However cheap it came, the president's "evolution" on gay marriage was greeted with effusive praise in the expected liberal quarters. The *New York Times* raised comparisons with Lyndon Baines Johnson's signing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The National Organization for Women issued a statement "celebrating" Obama's views, while the gay and transgender rights organization AllOut.org sent him a thank you card, "Obama Stood Up for Love," with 75,000 signatures. Also unsurprising was the praise, coupled with some mild criticism, coming from the reformist left. The Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL) called Obama's comments a "sea-change" analogous to the "major historic moment" of his election as the first black president (*Liberation*, 12 May). The International Socialist Organization (ISO) chimed in that the statement "is, of course, historic," while chastising Obama for being a "latecomer" on "marriage equality" ("What Took Him So Long?" *Socialist Worker*, 14 May).

continued on page 10



Marxism and the Fight for Women's Liberation.....6

U.S. Muslim Imprisoned for Translating Free Tarek Mehanna!

Just as the American capitalist rulers have declared the “war against terrorism” to be eternal, the limits to which they will go in eviscerating civil liberties under that pretext know no bounds. In a frontal attack on the rights of speech supposedly protected in the First Amendment, Tarek Mehanna was convicted in December on bogus “material support to terrorism” charges primarily for translating jihadist documents. The 29-year-old U.S. citizen was sentenced on April 12 to 17½ years in prison. It is in the interest of the working class, all minorities, youth and opponents of imperialist war to denounce Mehanna’s conviction and demand his immediate release!

This was a chemically pure thought-crime prosecution. Mehanna committed no crime, carried out no act of “terrorism,” and even according to what has been the government’s expansive definition, did not provide any “material” support to terrorist activities. According to the indictment,

evidence that Mehanna furthered a “criminal conspiracy” was that he “created and/or translated, accepted credit for authoring and distributed text, videos, and other media to inspire others to engage in violent jihad,” “watched jihadi videos,” “discussed efforts to create like-minded youth” and spoke of “admiration and love for Usama bin Laden.” As Yale professor Andrew March pointed out in a 21 April *New York Times* op-ed piece “A Dangerous Mind?”: “Those acts were not used by the government to demonstrate the intent or mental state behind some other crime.... They *were* the crime.” One prosecutor gave the game away when he declared about the case: “It’s not illegal to watch something on the television. It is illegal, however, to watch something in order to cultivate your desire, your ideology.”

The government’s case rested on two wobbly legs. The first was making a trip abroad. In 2004 at the age of 21, Mehanna and a friend spent *one week* in Yemen

purportedly in an unsuccessful search for a jihadi training camp from which they would continue on to Iraq to wage war against the American occupiers. The other leg—the core of the prosecution—was translating Islamist documents he found online, centrally a 2003 text by a Saudi religious scholar titled “39 Ways to Serve and Participate in Jihad.” Georgetown University law professor David Cole wrote in the *New York Review of Books*’ NYRblog (19 April):

“Google ‘39 Ways to Serve and Participate in Jihad’ and you’ll get over 590,000 hits. You’ll find full-text English language translations of this Arabic document on the Internet Archive, an Internet library; on 4Shared Desktop, a file-sharing site; and on numerous Islamic sites. You will find it cited and discussed in a US Senate Committee staff report and Congressional testimony. Feel free to read it. Just don’t try to make your own translation from the original.”

The proscription of what constitutes “material support” to terrorism, first promulgated in the Clinton administration’s 1996 “anti-terror” law and then extended in the Bush administration’s USA-Patriot Act, is so broad and vague as to allow the Feds to make it whatever they want it to be. In the 2010 *Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project* case, the U.S. Supreme Court held that the benign acts of advising the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and Kurdistan Workers Party on their appeals to the UN, engaging in political advocacy on behalf of Tamils and Kurds and training LTTE members in lobbying for tsunami relief would constitute material support to terrorism. (See “Supreme Court Decision Shreds First Amendment Rights,” WV No. 961, 2 July 2010.)

In denying that such prohibitions would violate the First Amendment rights of the Humanitarian Law Project (HLP), the Court ludicrously “explained” that it was not prohibiting “independent advocacy,” i.e., HLP could say whatever it wanted on behalf of a group designated terrorist—just not in consultation with any of its members! Although Mehanna’s prosecution relied on the *Holder* precedent, he engaged in exactly the “independent advocacy” supposedly approved by that ruling. There were no consultations or communications with Al Qaeda or anyone else the government has deemed terrorists. If upheld on appeal, Mehanna’s conviction will cement a major precedent in the rollback of First Amendment rights, criminalizing just about any speech deemed offensive to this ruling class, the most rapacious in world history.

In his statement to the court before sentencing, Mehanna pointed out how earlier the government had unsuccessfully sought to entrap him into an FBI-initiated terrorist plot (a common ploy in the “war on terror” witchhunt of Muslims), then recruit him as an informant, only to reward his rejections with a terrorism prosecution. Mehanna described how his education as an American schoolchild led him to identify with the cause of the oppressed against their oppressors, citing anti-slavery fighters Harriet Tubman, Nat Turner and John Brown as well as “Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King and the civil rights struggle.”

Ultimately, Mehanna embraced a reactionary Islamic worldview. However, as he explained, he did not advocate the indiscriminate killing of Americans as retribution for the crimes of the imperialist rulers but rather the defense of those Muslims across the globe being crushed under the boots of the American marauders. Mehanna passionately recounted the devastation of the 1991 Gulf War, the UN starvation sanctions against Iraq, the “shock and awe” invasion of 2003 and brutal occupation that followed as well as the drone attacks in Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen today that routinely kill civilians. As he



Facebook

emphasized, “This trial was not about my position on Muslims killing American civilians. It was about my position on Americans killing Muslim civilians.... The government says that I was obsessed with violence, with ‘killing Americans.’ But, as a Muslim living in these times, I can think of a lie no more ironic.”

The post-September 11 “war against terrorism” may have been hatched by the Bush administration, but it has been Obama and his top cop Eric Holder who have fed it, cleaned its feathers and let it soar. More so than his predecessor, Obama has targeted leftists. Obama’s Justice Department quadrupled the sentence for 72-year-old leftist attorney Lynne Stewart, who was imprisoned for zealously defending her client, a blind Islamic cleric convicted for an alleged plot to blow up NYC landmarks in the early 1990s. The Obama government has also gone after the Freedom Road Socialist Organization on the basis of purported links to the secular-nationalist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Colombia’s FARC guerrillas. Last year, Obama signed into law the National Defense Authorization Act, sanctioning the indefinite military detention of any persons, including U.S. citizens, accused of supporting “terrorism.”

The “anti-terror” laws and well-publicized prosecutions like that of Mehanna serve a dual purpose: purveying the myth of “national unity” and enhancing the repressive machinery of the capitalist state. As the bourgeois rulers ratchet up the grinding exploitation of the proletariat and oversee the brutal oppression of ghettoized black and Latino masses, they portray these measures as necessary to protect the entire population. But there is no unity of interests between the exploited and their exploiters. When the contradictions of American capitalism ultimately propel the working class into struggle, dissolving the “national unity” glue, workers will be confronted with naked state repression bolstered by the “war on terror.” It is incumbent on working people to fight to defend democratic rights, the besieged Muslim population and all those caught up in the “anti-terror” witchhunt. We seek to build a revolutionary workers party, a tribune of all the people, dedicated to leading the working class in sweeping away capitalist class rule and replacing it with a workers government. ■



TROTSKY

Winning the Vast Majority Through Proletarian State Power

Polemicizing against the Social Democrats of the Second International, who preached that socialism could be introduced through winning a majority in bourgeois parliaments, Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin stressed that the proletariat would win the support of the vast majority of working people through smashing the bourgeois state and replacing it with a workers state that expropriates capitalist property. This teaching is of special relevance today in the U.S.,

Europe and throughout the capitalist world, where masses of the population are being ground down by the ongoing economic crisis.

How can state power in the hands of the proletariat become the instrument of its class struggle for influence over the non-proletarian working people, of the struggle to draw them to its side, to win them over, to wrest them from the bourgeoisie?

First, the proletariat achieves this *not* by putting into operation the old apparatus of state power, but by *smashing* it to pieces, levelling it with the ground (in spite of the howls of frightened philistines and the threats of saboteurs), and building a *new* state apparatus....

Secondly, the proletariat can, and must, at once, or at all events very quickly, win from the bourgeoisie and from petty-bourgeois democrats “*their*” masses, i.e., the masses which follow them—win them *by satisfying their most urgent economic needs in a revolutionary way by expropriating the landowners and the bourgeoisie.*

The bourgeoisie *cannot* do that, no matter how “mighty” its state power may be. The proletariat *can* do that on the very next day after it has won state power, because for this it has both an apparatus (the Soviets) and economic means (the expropriation of the landowners and the bourgeoisie)....

The traitors, blockheads and pedants of the Second International could never understand such dialectics; the proletariat cannot achieve victory if it does not win the majority of the population to its side. But to limit that winning to polling a majority of votes in an election *under the rule of the bourgeoisie*, or to make it the condition for it, is crass stupidity, or else sheer deception of the workers. In order to win the majority of the population to its side the proletariat must, in the first place, overthrow the bourgeoisie and seize state power; secondly, it must introduce Soviet power and completely smash the old state apparatus, whereby it immediately undermines the rule, prestige and influence of the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeois compromisers over the non-proletarian working people. Thirdly, it must *entirely destroy* the influence of the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeois compromisers over the *majority* of the non-proletarian masses by satisfying *their* economic needs *in a revolutionary way at the expense of the exploiters.*

—V.I. Lenin, “The Constituent Assembly Elections and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat,” December 1919, *Collected Works*, Vol. 30

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CLASS-STRUGGLE DEFENSE NOTES

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v.
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SEE PAGE 2

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Vote No on EU Austerity Referendum!

Irish Rulers Push Attacks on Working People



Left: Dublin demonstration against new property tax, part of EU-dictated austerity, March 31. Right: Unemployed compete for scarce jobs at Dublin “Career Zoo” in February.



Lazarov/Photocall

Across Europe, working people are suffering under the weight of economic contraction, unemployment and recession as the bankers and bourgeois politicians impose ever deeper austerity measures. In Germany, the dominant imperialist power in the European Union (EU), the government has to date refused to consider any renegotiation of the crippling 2010-11 bailout packages for Greece, Ireland and Portugal. These bailouts were designed to bolster Europe’s main creditors: the banks of Germany, France and Britain. Capitalist parties that have administered this austerity have been punished at the ballot box, most recently in France and Greece.

Carrying out the dictates of international finance capital, the dominant EU powers are now strong-arming the weaker, more dependent countries into accepting a new “Fiscal Treaty” that would enshrine the conditions of the bailouts and *permanent* economic austerity in their constitutions. Ireland is the only country among the 25 government signatories that is not simply ratifying the treaty through its parliament but is required by its constitution to put it to a vote in a popular referendum, scheduled for May 31.

The EU centrally is a vehicle by which the combined capitalist powers further the exploitation of the European working classes, even as the dominant countries, led by Germany, subordinate the weaker ones to their diktats. The euro has served this purpose, helping the German bourgeoisie make huge profits. As we wrote in “Banks Starve Greek Working People” (WV No. 1002, 11 May): “Opposition to the EU is a necessary starting point for the working classes of all European countries, but it is not a solution in itself.”

Although the productive forces have long since outgrown the limits of national boundaries, capitalism is based on individual nation-states that inevitably come into conflict with each other in the drive for profits and new areas of exploitation. The capitalist nation-state is thus a fetter on the further development of the productive forces. For the working class and oppressed, the only way out is through socialist revolutions that expropriate the bourgeoisie and establish an internationally planned economy under workers rule.

We print below a May 9 report, edited for publication, by a comrade in Ireland.

* * *

Our last article on the country, “Ireland Ravaged by European Economic Crisis” (WV No. 970, 3 December 2010), was written when the Irish government had just negotiated an 85 billion euro [\$113 billion] bailout from the EU, to be paid back at exorbitant interest rates. We described the National Recovery Plan, the austerity program that was drawn up at the time, as the “harshest attack on the living standards of the working people in the Irish state’s history.” The attacks focused on public sector workers, people on welfare, those working minimum-wage jobs and students. These assaults are reminiscent of the last financial disaster in Ireland in the late 1970s and ’80s, but then the government had the option of devaluing the currency, which it did repeatedly. The euro takes that option off the table.

Of primary importance to the EU was saving the banks. It became very clear that the property price bubble in Ireland had been created by the massive extension of credit not just by Irish banks but also German, French and British banks. The bubble burst in a spectacular way, with property prices now down around 50 to 60 per cent. Panic ensued among European bankers, who knew that this wasn’t just a “bad day at the races” but that the amounts involved would cause banks to collapse and “contagion” to spread, especially to the stronger economies at the heart of the EU.

In February 2011, shortly after the National Recovery Plan was implemented, the country went to the polls in a general election. Fianna Fáil, the bourgeois party that has run the country for most of the time since the 1930s and that is historically linked to small farmers and much of the working class, was badly beaten in the elections. The turnout was very high, with people venting their anger at the party blamed for the financial disaster. Many of the small farmers turned to the Republicans of Sinn Féin, who are seen as a more radical version of Fianna Fáil. Sinn Féin did well, but not as well as they had hoped. Working-class areas voted in exceptionally high numbers of Labour Party TDs

[members of parliament]. Five seats were won by the United Left Alliance (ULA), an electoral lash-up of reformist groups. Among them are the Socialist Party (SP), affiliated with the Committee for a Workers’ International; People Before Profit, which is run by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), followers of the late Tony Cliff; and the Tipperary-based Workers and Unemployed Action Group.

The current government, which formed after those elections, is a coalition of the right-wing bourgeois Fine Gael party, which is traditionally supported by business and big farmers, and the Labour Party. Commenting on the usefulness of the Labour Party to the bourgeoisie, WV observed: “Promising ‘to give the people the leadership required to turn this country around, rebuild the economy and restore national morale,’ Labour is best placed of all the parties to try to convince the working class to knuckle down and accept austerity.” And that has been exactly its function, with the connivance of the union leadership.

The current government has made the previous one look tame. Unemployment is officially 14 per cent, up from about 4 per cent in 2008. Even then, only those receiving the paltry 12-month unemployment benefit are counted. Furthermore, nearly 1 per cent of the population emigrated last year alone. The “troika,” made up of the European Commission, the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), laid out the course to be taken. Acting in the interests of the Irish bourgeoisie as well as the European imperialists, the Fine Gael/Labour government got busy slashing unemployment benefits, welfare payments, single-mother allowances and child benefits and depriving thousands of free medical care.

The “troika” has also demanded the imposition of additional taxes, including a new property tax that was initially set at 100 euros per household regardless of wealth, to fund services and utilities in Ireland. It also insists that water, which had been a public service, be paid by each household separately. Fine Gael has been relishing the introduction of these taxes and charges that involve meaningless amounts to their wealthier base but are punitive to the working class and the poor.

A powerful expression of the anger in the country was the opposition to the introduction of the 100 euro property tax. In order for the government to collect the charge, it first needed to register all the households. Out of an estimated 1.8 million households, one million had refused to register by the deadline, despite talk of extreme fines. Meanwhile, the property tax is due to be raised enormously next year.

Fine Gael never misses an opportunity to embarrass Labour politicians, making them look like the lapdogs they are. Phil Hogan, the Fine Gael minister responsible for introducing these taxes, announced the installation of water meters in every house in Ireland during the Labour Party’s annual conference. Recent polls show that this strategy is working quite well for Fine Gael. It has only lost a few percentage points, while working-class disgust at Labour has translated into increased support to Sinn Féin, which is now polling at over 21 per cent, making it potentially the second largest party in the country.

The Austerity Treaty

Among the measures that the EU has cooked up to try and protect its euro is the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and

continued on page 11

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Lessons of Longview: An Exchange

The following letter was sent to the *Spartacist League* on March 28.

Thank you for your article, “Protest State Vendetta Against Longview ILWU & Its Allies.”

My husband, Jeff Washburn, President of the Cowlitz Wahkiakum Labor Council and President of the Longview/Kelso Bldg & Construction Trades, was the very first person arrested near the Tracks on Sept. 7th, 2011, the day of the train delay. Today we will go to another pre-trial hearing, if the prosecutor does not ask for another postponement today, we will go to trial on Friday.

He is one of the very few folks that have not been coerced into pleading guilty. He is not a longshoreman and had very good reason to be there. His attorney is Chad Sleight from Vancouver, WA. Although admittedly it would have been easier on our family to plead and get it over with months ago, this had been very time consuming and stressful for all of us. However, someone has to stand up for what is right, it might as well be us.

Jeff was instrumental in getting our State Representatives together and tasking them to push the Governor to meet with the parties. He started coordinating these meetings way ahead, it took them that long to find common meeting times. I firmly believe that had it not been for Jeff, the parties would never have met with the Governor. The strategy was not headed in that direction when he called for the Executive meetings with our state Reps. Yet here he is defending himself when he is actually the “hero”.

You will find it interesting that the Cowlitz County Prosecutor has issued a pre-trial notice that she has determined “this is not a constitutional right issue.” I don’t have the exact language in front of me, but it is something our lawyer has not seen before.

Regardless of the final outcome, this will be a possible landmark case at the local level. This case could determine how future demonstration activities are handled here in Cowlitz and prosecuted with our tax dollars.

Furthermore, we thought it worthwhile to note, that as of today, it appears that the construction at the Kalama Grain Terminal will proceed exactly as EGT, using out-of-town-workforce to build, the same contractor has already walked the job, TE Ibberson and affiliates.

It wasn’t until EGT was already built that the longshoremen actually got on board, long after the local construction industry had missed out on all the construction.

I have photos of all the license plates from out of the area that worked on the EGT job. Now it is starting to happen again, just in Kalama, WA and we have no reason to believe that the construction of the facility will be any different than EGT. The longshoremen might get the final work, but as far as the rest of us, most likely we will again be left out

in the cold. Meanwhile, the real story of resource exportation/exploitation in order to meet the rising asian food demand is the real story, and how these multinationals aim to do it the cheapest way possible is the other story.

For background reading:
http://tdn.com/news/local/million-expansion-on-the-horizon-for-port-of-kalama-grain/article_b64fb80c-634e-11e1-a2fd-0019bb2963f4.html

house Union (ILWU) and its supporters against the union-busting offensive by the giant EGT grain consortium and its allies—from the local and federal cops and courts to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) and, in the end, an armed Coast Guard flotilla.

On March 30, Washburn’s husband Jeff was convicted of obstructing/delaying a train last September 7, slapped with a \$243 fine and sentenced to 20 hours

picket and shut down production are not and have never been rights codified in the Constitution. This is for the simple reason that they are an attack on the only actual guaranteed rights in this society—the property rights of the capitalist owners, which are the foundation for the profits they extract through the exploitation of labor. Everything that the workers have won has been through hard-fought class battles *against* the employers, their state and all of its political parties and other agencies. And these gains can only be defended through such struggle.

It is a bitter, if hardly unusual, irony that Susan Baur, the Cowlitz County prosecuting attorney who is criminalizing those who fought to defend the ILWU, was supported in her bid for office by the local ILWU and other area unions as the Democratic Party “lesser evil” candidate. While the Republicans revel in bashing the unions, black people, immigrants and the poor, the Democrats lie and do the same thing under the cover of being the friends of labor. It is an old shell game, one that has served to subordinate the working class to a party which no less than the Republicans represents the interests of its class enemy. This was more than amply demonstrated in the battle against EGT, whose union-busting efforts were backed by Barack Obama’s NLRB and later the mobilization of the military forces of the Coast Guard to escort the first ship to be loaded from the EGT terminal.

While the state’s Democratic governor Christine Gregoire intervened to broker a deal between the ILWU and EGT, there should be no illusion that the motivation was the interests of labor. On the contrary. In the lead-up to the presidential election, the Democrats could ill afford a conflict unleashing the military might of the Coast Guard against the ILWU, other unions and Occupy forces who were mobilizing in protest. Such a confrontation could have endangered the Democrats’ support from organized labor, whose top officials provide both significant manpower and money to get out the vote.

In the end, the ILWU was able to hold the line against EGT’s union-busting offensive, preserving jobs the union has held for 80 years and maintaining its coast-wide organization. But the contract is concessionary, making further inroads against hard-won union gains. These include seriously undermining the union hiring hall by giving EGT veto power over who will be allowed to work its ships, excluding ILWU clerks from work at the terminal and vastly expanding management prerogatives, including allowing the bosses to do longshore work. These concessions will not be lost on the other big grain companies when their contract with the ILWU is renegotiated this fall. And it is not just the ILWU they have been gunning for.

Washburn’s letter is right that the battle in Longview should have begun with labor action to defend union jobs when the EGT terminal was being constructed. But such a fight was never engaged at that time either by the construction trades unions or the ILWU. Instead, the call went out to “Employ Local Workers for Local Jobs,” a slogan on placards at ILWU protests. In fact, EGT did just that, bringing in local area workers from the Operating Engineers Local 701 as *scabs* against the ILWU. Indeed, EGT’s union-busting offensive provided plenty of “community jobs,” not for the workers but for the union-busting agents of the capitalist state, from the county sheriff to the cops and prosecuting attorney’s office! That they are funded by tax dollars merely demonstrates that this money is not “ours” but rather provides a general fund for the state to do its business. And that business is to defend the property and profits of the capitalist owners.

Now, as Washburn points out, other



Markon/Daily News

Above: Some 300 ILWUers and supporters block train delivering grain to EGT terminal at Port of Longview, 7 September 2011. Below: Kelly Muller, ILWU Local 21 executive board member, being pepper-sprayed and thrown to the ground by cops, September 21.

Wagner/Daily News



<http://savelocaljobs.org/egts-new-source-of-wheat>

<http://savelocaljobs.org/gambling-at-the-taxpayers-expense>

<http://savelocaljobs.org/santorum-hit-list-includes-dust-bowl-prevention>

Feel free to contact me directly.

Just the savelocaljobs blogger...
T. Washburn

WV replies:

We thank Washburn for her letter. It raises several central and ongoing issues coming out of the class battle that pitted the International Longshore and Ware-

house of community service. The day that Jeff Washburn—then president of the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Counties Central Labor Council—was arrested, a picket of some 300 ILWUers and other unionists, among them ILWU International president Robert McEllrath, was brutally attacked by cops wielding clubs, tear gas and guns loaded with rubber bullets. In the early morning hours of September 8, longshoremen from throughout the Pacific Northwest poured into Longview.

EGT, its security thugs and the local cops were given a taste of the power that lies in the workers’ collectivity, solidarity and, above all, their capacity to stop production and the flow of goods, which chokes off profits. This is what makes ILWU members and their union allies criminals in the eyes of the courts, cops and prosecuting attorney. Their anti-union vendetta serves to illuminate the purpose of the state in capitalist society. Far from some “neutral” body representing the interests of all classes, it is the instrument for the suppression of the working class in defense of the interests of its exploiters.

In the context of the increasingly glaring social inequality of this society, constitutional rights like freedom of speech and assembly are, indeed, being relentlessly undermined in order to strengthen the repressive powers of the state, centrally to put down working-class and other social unrest. However, the rights of the workers to organize, to strike, to

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grain companies in the Pacific Northwest that are refitting and expanding their operations are following in EGT’s footsteps in keeping out unionized construction workers. What is urgently posed is mobilizing labor to fight for *union jobs*, including organizing the unorganized regardless of where they are from and bringing them into the unions with full union pay, benefits and working conditions. But the fight for union jobs is once again being derailed in the name of defending “local jobs.”

At the Port of Vancouver, Washington, immigrant workers brought in to pour cement for a new United Grain silo are subject to slave-labor conditions. Outside the terminal, protesters have carried signs reading, “Our Ports, Our Jobs” and “Tax Breaks to Import Low Wage Workers.” This plays right into the hand of the bosses, who use racial and ethnic hostilities to keep the workers divided and weak. Instead, labor must link the defense of union jobs to the fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. Such a struggle can lay the foundation for workers to stand shoulder to shoulder against the employers, not only to preserve the existing unions but also to replenish the diminishing ranks of organized labor with new fighters.

The fact that the ports are not privately owned does not mean that they belong to the “public.” They are run by local government agencies whose purpose is to serve the interests of the grain, shipping and other companies that lease the land for their operations. Contrary to the myth

of a united “community” fighting against a giant multinational corporation, the battle of Longview demonstrated the irreconcilable class divide between labor and capital. The town was torn exactly along this fundamental fault line. As American Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon explained in the aftermath of the hard-fought, 99-day maritime workers strike of 1936-37, which consolidated the power of the West Coast longshore union:

“A conflict between workers and employers is not a mere misunderstanding between two elements who have a common general interest. On the contrary it springs from an irreconcilable conflict of interest: it is an expression of a ruthless class struggle wherein power alone decides the issue.
“Viewed in this light, a dispute between workers and employers cannot be settled fairly by the government; the government is an instrument of one of the parties to the dispute—in this case the capitalists. The class conflict cannot be handed over to the ‘public’ to decide: the ‘public’ is itself divided into classes with different interests and different sympathies regulated primarily by these interests. The polemics of Karl Marx against the conservative labor leaders of his day answered all these questions. All the experience of the labor movement since that time, including the recent west coast strike, speaks for the position of Marx and against all conceptions which overlook the class struggle.”
—“After the Maritime Strike,”
(February 1937), reprinted in
Notebook of an Agitator (1958)

Writ large, the call to preserve local jobs echoes the cry for “American jobs for American workers.” The AFL-CIO bureaucrats have long promoted this

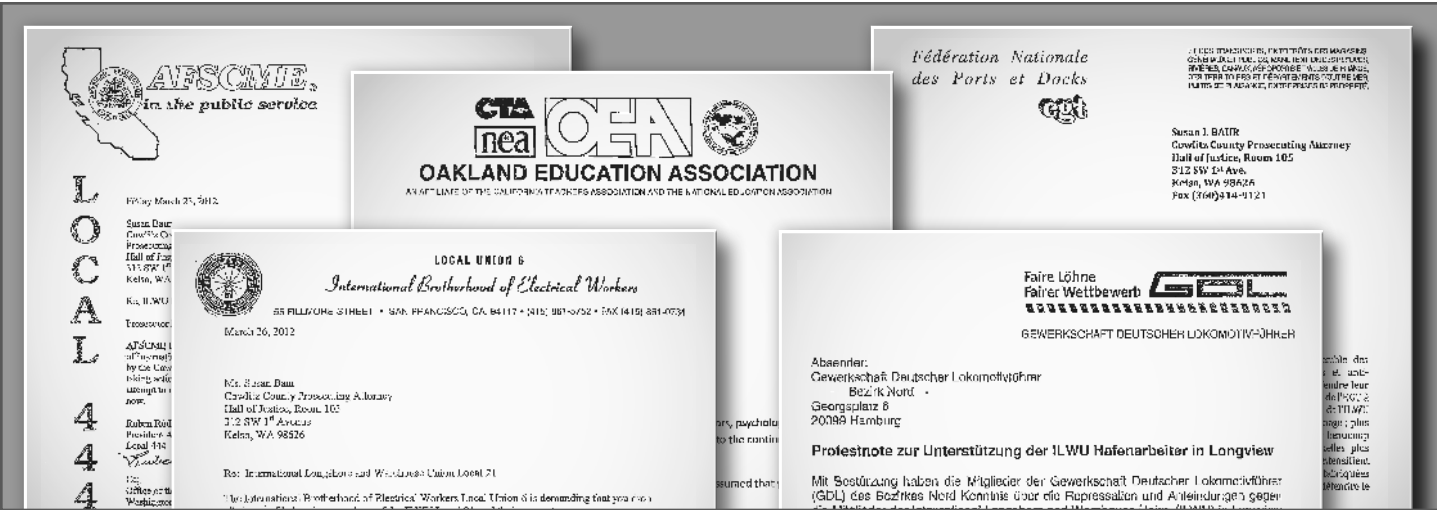
demand as the way to defend union jobs against “cheap labor.” The result has been precisely the opposite. One need only look at the unions that have been destroyed, the strikes busted, the growing mass of unorganized workers and army of unemployed desperate for any kind of work at any wages. In the name of defending “American jobs,” the union misleaders have subordinated the workers’ interests to the profitability of American capitalism, profits which are secured through the increasingly brutal exploitation of labor at home and abroad. This class collaboration has not only pitted American workers against their class brothers and sisters internationally but has also vastly increased the supply of “cheap labor” in this country. Thus, the protests at the port of Vancouver in Washington state are targeting not only immigrant workers but also “out-of-state” U.S. workers being brought in for construction.

Washburn’s letter points to the expanding resource export developments in the region. These include constructing new coal terminals as well as revamping grain-shipping facilities in order to cash in on the growing market for trade with Asia. U.S. agribusiness, the world’s leading grain exporter, seeks to monopolize and control the market to keep prices as high as possible. Far from meeting the food demands of the populations of these countries, the U.S. grain giants condemn millions of working people and poor around the globe to starvation. Food exports are also wielded as weapons to ensure the subjugation of less-developed countries

to U.S. imperialism. (See “Imperialism Starves World’s Poor,” WV Nos. 919 and 920, 29 August and 12 September 2008).
At the same time, in the midst of the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression, the growing export industry in the Pacific Northwest can serve as a lever for the workers in waging a real fight for union jobs. As the early battles in Longview showed, the power is there to shut down construction, production and shipping at these facilities, but only if the workers rely on their own independent strength. That means putting aside illusions in the “community” and Democratic Party representatives and mobilizing as a class in struggle against the class enemy. Above all, labor must understand that its fight is international—the workers of the world are allies in the class struggle.

Again we thank Washburn for her letter. It is important for the workers and their allies who fought with such courage and determination against EGT’s union-busting offensive to draw the lessons of this battle. Out of such hard-fought class struggle, a new leadership of the unions can be forged, one that fights not merely to defend and better the workers’ conditions but to abolish the tyranny of capitalist wage slavery. For this struggle, the workers need their own party, one that represents their class interests and that fights for the rights of all the oppressed. In a socialist America, the vast resources of this country will be used to provide for the needs of the many, not the profits of the few, and not just here but across the globe. ■

Solidarity with Longview ILWU and Its Supporters



Our article “Protest State Vendetta Against Longview ILWU and Its Allies!” (WV No. 998, 16 March) urged unions, both nationally and internationally, to protest the vindictive prosecution of some 100 members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), mainly from Local 21 in Longview, and their supporters. As the article noted, this anti-union vendetta “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 union-busting in Longview.” Union locals from California, New York and Wisconsin sent letters. International solidarity was expressed by unions in Canada, France and Germany. The Partisan Defense Committee—a class-struggle legal and social defense organization affiliated with the Spartacist League—and its fraternal organizations internationally issued an appeal for unions to send protest letters to Cowlitz County prosecuting attorney Susan Baur.

In its letter, the Northern Region of the German Locomotive Engineers recalled the fines and restrictions on the right to strike that had been imposed upon them in the heat of a contract battle in 2006-07. The Oakland Education Association, one of several unions from the San Francisco Bay Area that sent protest letters, wrote: “The motto of the ILWU is ‘An Injury to

One is an Injury to All.’ We concur with this viewpoint and are sending a donation to Local 21 to be used in the legal defense of their members and supporters.” In its letter, the New York chapter of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists demanded “an end to this persecution” and that all charges be dropped.

WV is publishing in this issue a letter from the wife of one of the persecuted unionists, who was president of the Cowlitz County Central Labor Council (see page 4). While that unionist, Jeff Washburn, was convicted, at least six others facing similar charges were acquitted in jury trials. Prosecutor Baur subsequently dropped a number of misdemeanor cases. But she threatened to file trumped-up felony charges against others—including Local 21 president Dan Coffman—in order to pressure them to plead guilty to misdemeanors that juries might have acquitted them of. The ILWU has rightly characterized this now-standard prosecutorial ploy as a “form of extortion.” Those opting to cop a plea have been sentenced to hundreds of dollars of fines and many hours of community service. Felony trials against at least two ILWUers are still pending, and Baur continues to threaten to file additional felony charges.

Two unionists, including ILWU Local 21 secretary-treasurer Byron Jacobs, have been sentenced to jail time. Jacobs was one of two courageous ILWUers who came to

the aid of Ladies Auxiliary members under attack by police during a protest against an EGT-bound train on September 21. The two union members were tackled and forced to the ground, where the cops shot pepper spray directly into their eyes. This brutal attack was caught on video and later posted on YouTube. Yet Jacobs was charged with three felony counts! Baur only agreed to drop these frame-up charges if Jacobs pled guilty to three misdemeanors. He was sentenced to 20 days of jail work release, \$500 in fines, one year’s probation and an “anger management” assessment. Local 21 member Ronald P. Stavas was sentenced to 22 days in jail after pleading guilty to felony attempted burglary and four misdemeanor charges. Dozens of ILWUers rallied at the Cowlitz County jail in solidarity with Stavas when he began serving his sentence on April 11.

The union-hating climate fueled by Baur and Cowlitz County sheriff Mark Nelson has encouraged additional attacks on Local 21. On April 9, the union hall was broken into, robbed and vandalized. Thousands of dollars of damage was done, and the words “scabs” and “ILWU fags” were scrawled on the wall with red spray paint. A significant amount of cash was stolen from the local’s safe, as well as blank checks, credit cards and other financial records. The union is offering a \$2,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and con-

viction of those responsible. Local 21 also had to replace a union billboard publicizing the ILWU’s long history in the area after it was defaced by graffiti.

Playing its role as the enforcer of anti-union laws, Barack Obama’s National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has pursued its own vendetta against the ILWU. It went to the federal courts and obtained a restraining order last September against the union for “aggressive picketing,” which resulted in some \$300,000 in fines. The Labor Board also issued a complaint against the union based on unfair labor practice charges filed by both EGT and the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) during the Longview battle. In the April issue of the union’s newspaper, the *Dispatcher*, the ILWU International announced a settlement with the NLRB on this complaint. The PMA is reportedly objecting to the settlement, the details of which are not yet publicly known. The *Dispatcher* estimates that it will take up to two years to resolve the ILWU International’s appeal of the fines levied by the federal courts. As such, the fines could well be hanging over the union’s head as it faces off with the PMA when the coastwide longshore contract expires in 2014.

In the face of the anti-union offensive against the militant labor struggles waged in Longview last July and September, the ILWU International leadership backed off. It retreated to filing a lawsuit in the capitalist courts that charged the city of Longview, Cowlitz County and their top officials, including Sheriff Nelson, with violating the union’s “respective officers and members’ rights under the Constitution and laws of the United States and Washington.” While it is in the interests of the working class to defend all democratic rights, which have been increasingly curtailed, the battle of Longview was not a question of defending such civil liberties as freedom of speech and assembly. It was one of mobilizing the power of labor against the EGT union-busters, who are backed by the forces of the state. The laws of the United States are designed to uphold the interests of the capitalist owners—and the state, namely the courts, cops and military, enforces them against workers in struggle.

If the working class is to effectively organize to fight in its class interests, it must wield its ability to stop production and shut off the flow of profits. There is a vital need to revive the traditions of effective labor solidarity, not just in words but in deeds. ■

Young Spartacus

Presentation by a Veteran Communist *Marxism and the Fight for Women's Liberation*

We are pleased to publish a Spartacus Youth Club class given by comrade Marianne Clemens in San Francisco, California, on 26 October 2011. It has been edited for publication and slightly expanded by Young Spartacus in collaboration with comrade Clemens.

We are the party of the Russian Revolution. October 1917 is unique in human history, and we study it intensively: it shows that the conditions for the true liberation of women only exist when the working class takes and consolidates state power under a proletarian, revolutionary, internationalist leadership. In this huge leap for humanity we also see that because women's oppression is so thoroughly bound up with the state and private property, there can be no all-sided liberation without the liberation of women.

The Bolsheviks didn't invent this part of the communist program. For the great utopian socialists of the early 19th century women's liberation was integral to socialism. Clara Zetkin, a veteran socialist and hugely influential among Russian socialists, saw the heroic role women played in the French Revolution of 1789-94 as the midwife of the socialist women's movement. This, the greatest of 17th and 18th century bourgeois revolutions, swept away the garbage of ancient, entrenched practices cementing women's oppression that went along with feudal property relations, bringing significant gains for women. But the utopian socialists also saw that women's complete liberation was only possible in a collectivized society, not in the *capitalist* social order based on private property (private ownership of the means of production—not your personal effects) that the bourgeois revolutions secured.

Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State

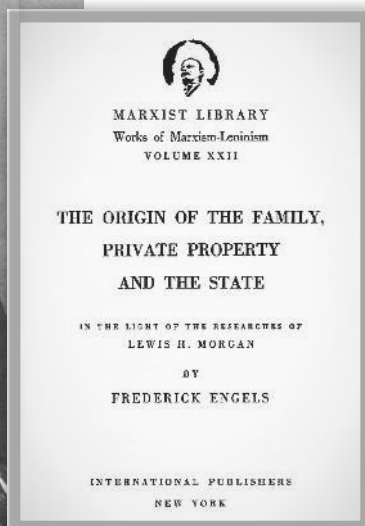
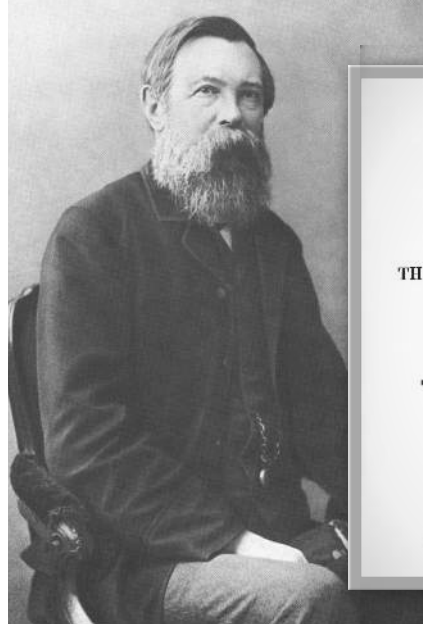
Women's oppression is rooted in the institution of the family. And as Trotsky wrote, you can't just abolish the family, you have to replace it. Friedrich Engels, Marx's lifelong friend and collaborator, was the first to put the woman question on a scientific basis and show how the family, private property and the state arose, linked in early civilization as basic institutions of *class* society.

Engels was not entirely free of the moralistic assumption that women (chaste things that we are) do not enjoy variety in sexual relations. Also, over 125 years later, we know much more about the prehistory of our species, including beyond Europe. But research has only confirmed Engels' analysis, including that the first oppression of classes coincides with the oppression of the feminine sex by the masculine, namely in monogamous marriage.

In the earliest human groups in the period termed the Paleolithic (old stone

age) in Europe, "primitive communist," matrilineal societies, there was no separation of rights and duties. There was no prohibition on whom you could play around with or have children with. The children were the children of all; all adult women were their mothers and all adult men were their fathers. This was the earliest form of the family, known as "group marriage." All that was hunted, gathered or grown belonged to all. Biology determined the division of labor: the women performed tasks that didn't interfere with bearing, carrying around and nursing the children. That didn't give them a subordinate social status: women were revered as

W.E. Debenham



Friedrich Engels in 1888. His seminal work, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, laid bare the material roots of women's oppression.



Central Museum of the Revolution, Moscow

Communist cadres of Zhenotdel, Soviet commission for work among women, teach literacy in Soviet Central Asia, 1924. Inset: An early Russian Civil War poster demands, "Women workers, take up your rifles!"

the bearers of the species. It is generally accepted today that women invented three technologies crucial to the spread and development of human society: spinning fibers and making string, later weaving; pottery making and horticulture.

Gradually tribes settle down on a common territory. The division of labor becomes more complicated—in the beginning scattering seeds and harvesting the food crop, and then plowing up the earth and planting seeds; manufacturing implements; domesticating and caring for animals.

When the plow is developed, e.g., in Sumer, productivity eventually rises mas-

sively over simple horticulture, creating a surplus. As surplus production rises, wealth and consequently social power accrue to the landowners—who strive to bequeath their wealth and power to their *biological* children. Women, biologically tied to childbearing and nursing, aren't available to work long hours plowing, and do not have the physical strength needed for the task. Thus, in this phase of social development, women come to be excluded from productive work (i.e., the production of the surplus). A ruling class was consolidated early on in Egypt and Mesopotamia. The Sumerian ruling class was the tribally based priesthood.

Mother right and the large matrilineal and matrilocal "gens" are supplanted. The patriarchal "monogamian family" becomes society's basic unit. Women lose the equal *rights* they had in primitive communist society. The man as master of the house subjugates woman and charges her with a host of *duties*, above all monogamy, in order to ensure the inheritance of wealth and power, and a lower social status is attached to women's biological role. This is the "*world-historic defeat of the female sex*" Engels talks about,

and the subject of the classical Greek myths: the clash of the customs and freedoms of the older society with the new—as human tragedy.

So that's the family and private property. This is also the point the state is born. Now, who was to become the ruling class and run the state wasn't decided by cunning or wickedness or brute force or male chauvinism, but by economics. Protecting and expanding a territory and the accumulated surplus takes military might—an *armed body of men* that defends the interests of the propertied. That is the core of the state. In the endless wars over territory that humanity is then subjected to, there is a reason to enslave the soldiers of the vanquished army instead of killing them: they can be pressed into producing the surplus. Labor is branded as base and worthy only of slaves.

Today all school kids get it pounded into their heads that ancient Greece is the fount of "pure" democracy. But that democracy was based on slavery and the subjugation of women. And it was only for the owners of slaves—the "paterfamilias." In *The Republic* Plato justifies deep social inequality: "souls" were made of gold (the slave owners, being closest to the gods), silver (the soldiers) or bronze and iron—who are forbidden to own property.

In the intervening thousands of years of class societies, the family has had many forms. But in a nutshell, that's why the family, private property and the state are organically linked—and are crucial to understand. And that's why the capitalist ruling class has always hysterically

defended all three. If they perceive the family to be under attack, they and their “leftist” water boys fly into a fearful rage.

October Revolution of 1917

Karl Marx’s most important original contribution to socialist theory was to show that the victorious workers revolution must smash the bourgeois state and create its own, a state of a new kind—the dictatorship of the proletariat. The October Revolution led by the Bolsheviks established a workers state power that laid the basis for socialist construction: they nationalized the means of production and distribution, established a monopoly of foreign trade and banking, and began organizing a collectivized planned economy. Some of their first measures decreed equal rights for women and men. They made marriage and divorce simple matters of civil registration. They abolished all laws criminalizing consensual sexual relations, including homosexuality. We fight for equal rights for gay women and men and against all forms of bigotry—which will disappear for good only with the family and its straitjacket values. The hard work came after the 1917 Revolution—the “material act” or *process* of women’s liberation—beginning to collectivize family housework and childcare.

A corps of impressive women in the Bolshevik Party was doing work among women well before World War I. Most already had many years of experience in the underground, in nihilist or social-revolutionary groups when they became Bolsheviks. Not a few had done some hard time. Most were highly educated, from privileged layers of society. Through years of political struggle against the opponents of the Communists, they became highly trained, steeled Marxists. An index of their high political level is that most either sympathized politically with Leon Trotsky and opposed the ham-fisted, nationalist bureaucracy that was consolidated around Stalin in 1923-24, or openly joined Trotsky’s Left Opposition in the next few years. The best, if they lived that long, shared the fate of the entire leadership of the October Revolution whom Stalin destroyed by 1940.

In 1917 the Russian working class was a tiny minority in a few urban centers, in a sea of peasant backwardness—less urbanized than India today. Women in the priest-ridden countryside were illiterate, superstitious, and were treated like beasts of burden. So winning over and mobilizing the masses of toiling women for the revolution was daunting. In 1919, the year the Communist International (Comintern) was founded, the Bolshevik Party created the Department of the Central Committee for Work Among Women, known as Zhenotdel. In 1920 the Comintern Executive formed the International Women’s Secretariat to coordinate the work and publish a journal in German and one in Russian. Zhenotdel party organizers were in charge of work in Soviet Russia and made great contributions to the work internationally.

Inessa Armand was one of the most talented among the layer of high-level women cadre who led the Bolsheviks’ early work among women. She was Zhenotdel’s first head until tragically she died of cholera in 1920. Armand introduced two extremely effective methods that became the Bolsheviks’ primary tools to win over to the side of the revolution and mobilize the doubly and triply oppressed female masses in the actual work of constructing and administering the new society on a socialist basis.

In delegate assemblies and non-party women’s conferences, Zhenotdel speakers asked the women to explain what they wanted and needed most. Then with party assistance, they went out and began building their own childcare centers, communal kitchens, laundries, literacy centers and schools. A couple of million women workers and poor peasants were mobilized in this work. They were the vanguard in these tasks, but they knew that



Bolshevik leader Inessa Armand with fellow exiles in Mezen, Russia, in 1908 prior to her escape later that year.

if Soviet Russia could survive, the entire working population would be drawn into this work more and more: it was the future infrastructure of society as a whole.

But 1920-21 was the high point of this work. Replacing the family requires truly massive resources. With famine and even cannibalism in the countryside, the cities decimated and in rubble after almost four years of civil war and the savage incursions of 14 capitalist armies, in mid 1921 scarce resources had to be diverted to get the factories running and feed the urban workforce. By late 1923 it had become clear that there would be no revolution in Germany, and thus, no aid from Europe. The Soviet Union had to retrench.

Making a virtue out of necessity, in 1924 Stalin put forward the anti-revolutionary dogma of “socialism in one country” (see Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*). Under Stalin the revolution degenerated bureaucratically, although the economic basis of the workers state remained. As Trotsky wrote, Stalin glued the broken shell of the family back together. Many gains for women were reversed—abortion was banned in 1936. The bureaucracy simply *declared* socialism, instead of telling the truth—that socialism requires huge resources and an international division of labor and thus is impossible under conditions of generalized want.

Despite the bureaucratic degeneration, the vision of future society that issued out of the Russian Revolution was so inspiring that the lively debate on collective forms of living continued into the 1930s. We defended the Soviet Union unconditionally from internal counterrevolution and imperialist attack, until the last. For 70 years the imperialists had sought a way to destroy the Soviet Union. Finally, Stalinist bureaucrat Boris Yeltsin, supported by his patrons in the U.S. government, presided over the counterrevolution that opened up one-sixth of the earth’s land surface to capitalist exploitation.

As we wrote in 1993: “Capitalist counter-revolution tramples on women.” A comrade who worked there described capitalist Russia as “the valley of the shadow of death”—promising a nightmare future. Public health care died with the Soviet Union. Life expectancy and the birth rate plummeted; alcoholism, drug addiction, malnutrition, debilitating diseases (including AIDS and Multidrug-Resistant Tuberculosis), homelessness, prostitution and mental retardation in children soared. Armies of hungry children live on the streets, as in the ruins of WWI and the Civil War.

DDR: East German Deformed Workers State

The Soviet degenerated workers state and the East and Central European workers states that were bureaucratically deformed from birth were “transitional” societies, stuck halfway between capitalism and socialism. For 24 years I was a member of

our German section, including during the 1989 budding proletarian political revolution in East Germany (DDR), where our international intervened with all forces we could muster. We called for workers and soldiers councils (soviets) that would defend the proletarian gains and return to the road of Lenin and Trotsky, for unconditional defense of the DDR against counter-revolution, and for a Red Republic of Workers Councils in all of Germany through proletarian political revolution in the East and socialist revolution in the West.

The DDR was founded in 1949 on the model of the degenerated USSR, “on the bayonets of the Red Army” after it had smashed the Hitler regime. It was a pretty drab place, but everybody was guaranteed

socialist?”—“For 10 years, nothing. Then sand would become scarce.” The economy was secretly bankrupt. To get hard currency they exported high-quality heavy equipment and machine tools, but they couldn’t make women’s underwear that fit, or condoms that didn’t leak or were more sensitive than safety gloves. But AIDS cases were practically unknown: Travel restrictions isolated the population. There was no drug scene—the currency wasn’t convertible. A DDR scientist we knew had invented their own ELISA test, and they tested every last liter of blood that was used.

The bureaucracy constantly lied to the population and spied on them for 40 years. Many workers were terribly cynical in the end, but many young workers and soldiers wanted real socialism—not what the bureaucrats told them it was.

When we had an internal class on the woman question and passed around graphics showing early Soviet plans for collective living centers (see “Architecture as a Tool of Social Transformation,” *Women and Revolution* No. 11, Spring 1976) our East German comrades were thunderstruck. One woman comrade said “Now I see how far we were from socialism!” She had always wondered why there were the huge long avenues of gigantic high-rise apartment projects for miles like the famous Stalin Boulevard, devoid of any social infrastructure, that atomized the working class. The DDR couldn’t afford to *replace* the family, so they lied. The population had *never heard* that real socialism by definition means redesigning society, with collectivized housework and child rearing!

Recently I was excited to find a 1975 Russian edition of Inessa Armand’s selected works. But at the beginning of one wonderful article the editors had actually deleted



East German women protest closing of day-care centers, 1990. Sign reads: “Not Every Mom Wants to Be Just a Housewife. That’s Why We Need to Keep Day Care.”

a job and a place to live. Women there probably had the highest social status in the world. Over 95 percent worked. They were crane operators, engineers, economists, judges, lawyers, doctors. Mothers got a full year off work with pay after the birth of each child, and their jobs were safe during that time. You got prenatal visits at home from medical personnel, and the ambulance was on call when it was time to go to the hospital. At the plant and factories, there were day-care centers, nurseries, canteens, laundries and libraries.

But there was still the “second shift” in the family—millions of mommies shopped, cleaned, fed and took care of everybody. Like Stalin, the Honecker regime in the DDR glorified the “socialist family” as the germ cell of the state in society. Discrimination against women outside the workplace was especially obvious in political life. There were almost no women in the upper echelons of the East German Stalinist party (Socialist Unity Party)—except Margot Honecker, the feared Minister of Education, and a few more.

It was a society of enormous contradictions. The workers told this joke: “What would happen if the Sahara went

two sentences that read: “Private, separate domestic economies have become *harmful anachronisms* which only hold up and make more difficult the carrying out of new forms of distribution. *They must be abolished*” (emphasis added). Obviously, no self-respecting Stalinist would admit that the tiny domestic economic unit was an anachronism.

Assault on Women’s Rights

Let’s talk about the U.S. today, where abortion rights have been whittled away for almost 40 years, hitting working and poor women hardest. The defense of women’s right to abortion is absolutely crucial. It’s about women’s equality, women’s independence. If working women do not have that right, they have no say in their own future and that of their families. But, crucially, it is very hard to participate in social struggle—as the rulers know.

The state and their attack dogs are viciously sworn to keeping women bound up in the family, because the family is vitally necessary to maintain the capitalist order. Ensuring inheritance, as in the past, only matters to the propertied class.

continued on page 8

Women's Liberation...

(continued from page 7)

The ruling class needs the working-class family to reproduce the next generation of wage slaves and cannon fodder. But also, the family is hugely useful because it inculcates and reinforces bourgeois ideology and morals and, above all, obedience to authority.

We support every possible defense of the right to abortion, just as we defend every gain for working people, however partial. Leninists struggle to be *the tribune of the people*, able to react to every instance of tyranny and oppression, no matter what layer or class of the people it affects. That is the way we set forth our socialist convictions and our democratic demands publicly and make clear for everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat. Because it is in the historic interests of the proletariat as a whole, we call for **free abortion on demand** as part of free, quality health care for all, and **free, quality 24-hour childcare**.

In the early 19th century Charles Fourier wrote, "Social progress is brought about by the progress of women towards liberty." Yes! In regions of the Third World where women are excluded from the political economy, the economy is characteristically stagnant. Society is correspondingly backward. In the "advanced" U.S. anti-woman bigotry is especially handy in recurring periods of economic decline, when the capitalists throw women and minorities out of the workforce first and then blame them for being poor. To go after their hot and cold wars abroad, the imperialists always need to whip up fervor at home for "free enterprise," God and country, and "family values," the code word for trashing women's rights, as we have seen since the late 1970s.

From Feminism to Marxism

Now, since the "Occupy" movement has caught everybody's attention as the way to right society's wrongs, let me tell you a story about my student days. After growing up in Jim Crow East Texas, I got into left politics at Cornell University during the Vietnam War over two things: black liberation and women's liberation. The New Left pushed all this wretched literature that the most oppressed were the most revolutionary. Lenin and Marx? Oh, that's old hat! In the women's movement, it was "self-determination"—like your body or uterus is a little country that can declare its independence. We were spinning our wheels going nowhere.

The women's movement splintered between the straights and the gays;



East Berlin, 14 January 1990: Spartakist banners at 250,000-strong demonstration at Friedrichsfelde Cemetery to honor Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. Banner reads: "For a Red Germany of Workers Councils in a Socialist Europe!"

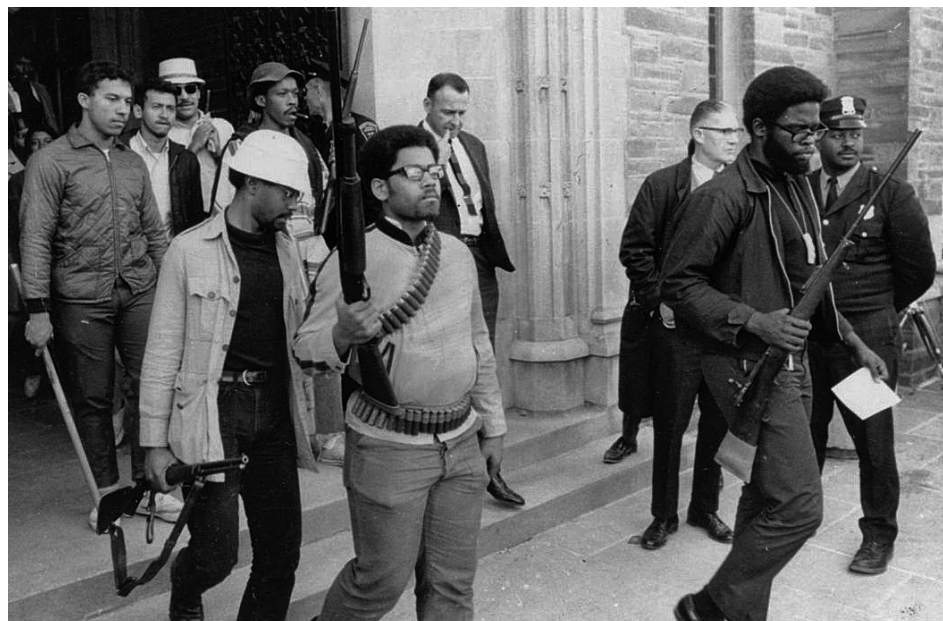
between those who took their nice Ivy League degrees and formed their own women's health or dental or legal clinics and the ones that were for forming a women's army. To fight whom, you ask? Well, we witnessed a gang of frat rats with baseball bats marching into a women's concert intending to clean it out. Luckily the concert was already over, but after that the women decided a women's army wasn't such a good idea. You need men and women to fight shoulder to shoulder against the bigots.

Meanwhile *everything* polarized along racial lines. In April 1969 the black students at Cornell occupied the student union building to protest the administration's racist policies and to demand a black studies center. After right-wing frat rats attacked (these guys were real activists), amid rumors of a second attack with guns, the black students armed themselves. SDS set up a protective cordon around the building; thousands of black and white students mobilized. It was tense, but ultimately everything stayed quiet. On the second day, the administration met the black students' demands. Still armed, they marched with great dignity out of the building and across the arts quad. The following year the new black studies center was torched by racist vigilantes.

The Black Panthers were really the best of that generation, as black militants were increasingly sinking into the dead end of black nationalism. Their strategy was to "pick up the gun" and "electrify" the ghetto masses into revolutionary action. The Feds reacted with COINTELPRO, blowing away 38 Panthers. The Panthers taught me that a revolution is necessary to achieve liberation. If you are dead or in prison you're not going to electrify any-

body. What was left—blacks, Latinos, Native people, whites, female and male, gays and straights—all went off by themselves to "liberate" their own "sector."

Except there was one serious group on campus. Through a friend, an anarchist of sorts, I had gotten to know a very nice couple who were around the Spartacist League. But we thought: *anybody* but the Sparts! The Spartacist guy and I used to have dreadful fights over the degeneration



20 April 1969: Armed students march out of Willard Straight Hall at Cornell University after 36-hour sit-in.

of the Soviet Union. He was Carl Lichtenstein, our very dear comrade who recently died unexpectedly. I thought I really had the number of those Russians, those patriarchal, male chauvinist pigs—why else could the revolution have degenerated? So I wasn't listening.

Another friend who had been in the Canadian section of Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat recommended I read Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* on the party. Oh, yes, and J.P. Nettl's biography of Rosa Luxemburg. Both excellent suggestions, but the trouble was, I couldn't understand a word. First I was depressed, but I got angry when I realized that all this "Marx and Lenin are old hat" was crap. It had kept me ignorant of some 150 years of working-class struggle!

In a somewhat chastened frame of mind, I moved to Boston, where I again met Carl and Alice, who by then were members of the SL. My first discussion with Carl was again about the Russian Revolution. To his surprise, I was ready to listen. What galled me most about my years at Cornell was that in that time a *whole generation* of young militants on the campuses and in the ghettos and barrios were *wasted* in the dead-end activism of all kinds I had seen over the past five years. I began to read, and to discuss what I read, and I began to understand that the key, missing from all those dead ends, was a party: The working class is the only

force in society that has the social power to change history, but to *win* it needs the leadership of a revolutionary party.

The first youth class I was invited to was on the woman question, like this one. The first thing on the reading list was Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, chapters 2 and 9. I couldn't put it down and read it cover to cover. The second thing was the Comintern's "Theses on Work among Women." When the comrades asked, I couldn't say I disagreed with anything in the Theses, because the down-to-earth realistic approach to liberation answered questions that I had never gotten answers to.

All the talk about "liberation" and "self-determination" and "empowerment" in capitalism—we heard it then and you hear it today from "leftist" organizations—is just hot air. It's not hard for them to defend the right to abortion, or rather, "the right to choose," which doesn't offend the Democrats. Their real perspective is to remain unobjectionable to petty-bourgeois public opinion. But one thing you are not likely to hear from such fake socialists is that the road to women's emancipation leads through a *real* workers revolution. Such outfits are obstacles on that path.

So becoming a Marxist means learning to study history and how to analyze every new situation that arises from the point of view of the historic interests of the working class. So you study. You follow events around the world. When we can, we build actions that show by exam-

ple what is needed on a large scale. For years, it seems like nothing happens, and then class battles break over our heads. Then, as in the DDR, *everything* happens in the space of hours and days. In 1989 we were all keenly aware that everything we had read and studied was for that moment. When the working class begins to move in the U.S., and it will, we will be there fighting for the program of communist revolution. We are fighting to build a multiracial vanguard party of the type that led the October Revolution to victory. And true to their vision, in a socialist future, women will be fully and equally integrated into society. Everyone will be able to develop to their full capacity. Society will be free of the barbaric garbage of the past—violence and bigotry against women, free of the reactionary straitjacket of the family and religion and capitalist state repression. If you want to fight for that future, join us. ■

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Quebec...

(continued from page 12)

in the 1990s, part of its sweeping attacks on workers and social programs under the program of “Déficit Zéro.” In any case, PQ leader Pauline Marois promises only a temporary tuition freeze if she becomes premier.

Students: Ally with the Working Class!

When Quebec shook off the yoke of the Westmount Anglo capitalists and their allies in the Catholic church in the 1960s, education was a key battleground. Trade-union struggles had long sought to make higher education attainable for francophone working-class youth. As Patrick Lagacé noted in a 4 May *Globe and Mail* article in support of the students: “50 years ago, Quebec was closer to a third-world country than a developed nation in terms of education markers.” Of those aged 25 in 1962, 54 percent had not completed Grade 6, and only 7 percent had attended university. A key aspect of the “Quiet Revolution,” the expansion and secularization of education was part of a drive by a modernizing francophone elite to cohere a distinct Québécois bourgeoisie and professional/technocratic stratum in order to be “masters in their own house.”

Today, despite Quebec’s continued national subordination within the Anglo-chauvinist Canadian state, Québécois companies like Bombardier, SNC-Lavalin and Quebecor are able to compete on a world scale with American and European multinationals. In the interest of greater profits, Liberal and PQ governments alike have waged ceaseless attacks on the working class and oppressed, including cuts to health care, education and other social programs.

The capitalists seek to invest in public education only what they can realize back in profit. Such profits are the product of labor, the surplus value that the bourgeoisie wrests from the workers through grinding exploitation. Thanks to its central role in social production, the working class has the unique social power to withhold its labor and bring the capitalist system to its knees. Students, a petty-bourgeois layer with no direct relation to production, lack such power. Student struggle can certainly spark broader social battles, as the current strike shows. But ultimately the only way forward is to ally with the working class.

In turn, it is in the interest of workers to actively support the combative students. This includes taking up the call for free, quality education for all and a living stipend for students. Against mounting debt servitude to the banks, we call to abolish the student debt. The cops now occupying a number of universities and colleges must be driven out. We call to abolish the administrations, the enforcers of capitalist rule on the campuses. For student/teacher/worker control of the Cégeps and universities!

The multisided attacks on workers and the poor can be stopped for good only through a broader political struggle centered on the social power of the working class. This must be infused with the understanding that the entire capitalist system must be swept away and replaced with an egalitarian socialist society geared to human needs, not private profit. Only workers revolution can rip the means of production from the hands of the bourgeois criminals who exploit the working class and its youth component. Victory in this struggle requires the forging of revolutionary vanguard parties of the working class—Trotskyist parties—throughout the world.

Students, Labor and the Union Bureaucracy

Support for the student strike and hatred for the Charest government have been palpable throughout the conflict. To their credit, the bulk of unionized teach-



CSN-CEO

Protest amid 1972 Quebec general strike, which saw trade unionists take over radio stations, factories and whole towns.

ers and professors affected by the strike have refused to cross the students’ picket lines, despite court injunctions pressing them to do so. Yet the nationalist union bureaucracy, while claiming to support the students, has not lifted a finger to mobilize the workers in strike action against the attacks of the Charest government. Instead, the labor tops have worked to restore “social peace.” The abortive May 5 deal to end the student strike was brokered by former Bloc Québécois leader Gilles Duceppe and the leaders of the three main union federations, only to be rejected by students all over Quebec.

The union bureaucracy shackles Québécois workers to the capitalist system through their support to the bourgeois-nationalist PQ and Bloc. This is also true of the [student] leaders of the Fédération Étudiante Universitaire du Québec (FEUQ) and Fédération Étudiante Collegiale du Québec (FECQ), who are allied with the labor tops in the Alliance Sociale. The majority of striking students are part of CLASSE (Coalition Large de l’Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiante), the more left-wing, anarchist-influenced student union. In a late April call titled “Toward a Social Strike,” CLASSE noted:

“The striking students are aware of their inability by themselves to force the government to retreat from these various measures. Hence the necessity for the student movement to be joined by all social forces in our fight against Finance Minister Bachand’s cultural revolution. We are not appealing here for some superficial support, with a few union full-timers writing a news release repeating for the umpteenth time their support for the student struggle.... It is therefore a call for a social strike that we are issuing to the population as a whole!”

Uniting students in struggle with the social power of the working class is an absolute necessity. But CLASSE’s appeals for solidarity are not linked to a broader perspective of working-class struggle against capitalism. Like the FEUQ and FECQ, they end up looking for ways to refurbish the education system within the confines of the capitalist system. Thus the short-lived deal signed by all the student federations on May 5 sought to balance out the increase in tuition fees by finding “efficiencies” within individual universities and colleges. This amounts to agreeing to yet more austerity within the education system, and could very well turn against university and Cégep employees in the form of wage cuts and layoffs.

The solution lies outside the “regular” realm of student and trade-union politics, which are strictly confined to what is “practical” under capitalism. Against the sellout labor tops, it is necessary to fight for a class-struggle opposition in the unions dedicated to unleashing labor’s vast potential power on behalf of all the victims of the bourgeoisie’s profit system. Among other things, that means defend-

ing the rights of immigrants and ethnic/religious minorities—notably Muslims, who face a concerted racist offensive from nationalist and federalist politicians alike.

Québec Solidaire: Fifth Wheel of the PQ

The student struggle has illuminated, again, the reality of the national divide between English Canada and Quebec. For the first month or so, the English Canadian bourgeois media simply blacked out any news of the protests. Then as the cop violence against the students escalated, the media denounced the student strikers with not a small dose of sneering Anglo chauvinism. The Harper Conservatives, whose origins are in Western Canada, have essentially written off Quebec in their electoral calculations, and are implementing reactionary policies on crime, the military, the monarchy and the environment that appear to most Québécois to be coming from Mars. The various Anglo editorialists and commentators who had declared the Quebec national question (once again) “dead” are now eating their words.

Quebec is a distinct and increasingly separate society from that of the rest of Canada. Anglo chauvinism and the Québécois nationalism that it fosters have long served to divide the working class along national lines, reinforcing the illusion that workers have common interests with their “own” respective bosses. As proletarian internationalists, we Marxists advocate Quebec independence. This is the way to cut the Gordian knot and remove the national question from the political agenda; it would help make clear to the workers in both nations that they have no allies among their own capitalists, thus removing a major obstacle to united working-class struggle against the capitalist system.

The PQ’s goal is to build an independent capitalist Quebec in the interest of

the Québécois bourgeoisie. Its many austerity attacks while in power have alienated a layer of workers and radical youth who seek an alternative. One product of this has been the petty-bourgeois populist Québec Solidaire (QS). While claiming solidarity with the student strike’s demands, when the struggles were peaking in late April QS leader Amir Khadir issued an “appeal for calm.” The same QS statement coupled criticism of police violence with an attack on so-called “vandalism” by “rioters” among the student protesters (see quebecsolidaire.net, 26 April).

QS’s program offers nothing beyond cosmetic reforms of the capitalist system to make it more “social,” not unlike the PQ’s original “project of society” of the late 1960s and the 1970s. As if to make this clear, QS leaders have recently sought electoral non-aggression alliances with the capitalist PQ. None of this has stopped the bulk of the pseudo-Marxist left in Quebec from supporting QS, into which they have by and large liquidated. Both wings of the Communist Party, Gauche Socialiste, La Riposte, Alternative Socialiste (AS) and more—these reformists all fraudulently present QS as some kind of step toward socialism.

This is laid out with particular clarity in a leaflet distributed at this year’s May Day marches by AS, a group affiliated with Peter Taaffe’s Committee for a Workers International. After cynically noting that “QS is neither a class party nor a socialist party,” AS claims: “Nonetheless, QS has opened a breach in the dominant discourse and contributes to making more and more people realize that the source of our problems is capitalism.” Taking parliamentary cretinism to new heights, they conclude:

“The possible outcomes of the current general strike of the student movement show that it needs a political intermediary in parliament to implement its projects and keep alive the flame of protest after it peters out on the street. Free education won’t be implemented on René-Lévesque Boulevard. In the next elections, striking students won’t have 36 different solutions. Only Québec Solidaire will defend their positions.”

—“Pour un parti de masse des travailleur-euse-s!”

The idea that “the flame of protest” will burn in the National Assembly’s Blue Chamber is laughable. But behind AS’s unintended humor is the reformist political program shared by all the left groups buried in QS. To wit: Quebec is “our state” and said state can serve the interests of workers, youth and the oppressed, if only the right “social” policies are implemented. This is a lie.

A number of the groups who champion QS also saluted the NDP [social-democratic New Democratic Party] “orange wave” that swept Quebec in last year’s federal election. A case in point is La Riposte, which declared that the NDP’s rise was a rejection of “the stale Federalist vs. Nationalist debate” and “a real opportunity for class politics to come

continued on page 10

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Quebec...

(continued from page 9)

to the fore and for the NDP to become the political conduit for the fight back against the Harper austerity” (marxist.ca, 3 May 2011).

So what was the NDP’s role in the student strike, the most significant social struggle in Quebec in many years? Thomas Mulcair’s NDP members of parliament have been told to keep quiet lest they “alienate” possible “centrist” voters. However, Mulcair—a former Charest cabinet minister, and before that a lawyer for the Anglo-chauvinist Alliance Quebec—did speak out...to denounce Quebec students’ “violence” (*La Presse*, 29 April)! Always a right-wing social-democratic party, the NDP is increasingly moving to cut its links to labor in English Canada. The New Democrats are deeply hostile to Quebec’s national rights and, when the national question again becomes a burning issue (which is only a matter of time), these contradictions will blow the party apart in Quebec. Marxists fight against any illusions that the NDP represents a “progressive” alternative for workers and youth.

The Repressive Apparatus of the Capitalist State

The staggering level of repression against student strikers points to a basic Marxist truth about the nature of the capitalist state. The cops have used massive amounts of tear gas, stun grenades and rubber bullets on students, usually after declaring protests “illegal.” At the May 4 Victoriaville protest against the Quebec Liberal Party convention, one student lost an eye and another suffered life-threatening head injuries following a particularly vicious cop assault. Police violence on the streets is supplemented by a CSIS secret police witchhunt targeting anarchist activists and various left groups including the Maoist Parti Communiste Révolutionnaire (PCR). A new federal bill making it a crime for demonstrators to wear masks carries possible prison terms of up to ten years.

Never a “neutral arbiter,” the core purpose of the capitalist state is to defend



Facebook

Student striker Francis Grenier was maimed by riot police stun grenade in Montreal, March 7.

the rule of capital. The state is an organ of repression against the working class and the oppressed; under the executive power of the government, it consists of the cops, judges, prisons and army. As Lenin, leader of the only victorious workers revolution in history—the 1917 Russian Revolution—pointed out, it is “a machine for the oppression of one class by another” (*The State*, 1919). Under the Liberals and PQ, this is unambiguously the case, but it is equally so when the state is run by parties that fraudulently claim to have some sympathy with the working people. When in power, as in Ontario and British Columbia in the 1990s, the NDP always rules for the bosses. And so would QS if it ever got the opportunity.

La Riposte and Alternative Socialiste push the outrageous lie that cops are “workers in uniform,” i.e., potential allies of working-class struggle. The last three months of struggle and police repression should put to rest any such illusions. These deeply reformist outfits are both offshoots of the Labour Party-loyal Militant group in Britain (which issued layoff notices to some 30,000 city workers when it ran Liverpool city council in the 1980s!).

Against the violence-baiting of student protesters by the NDP and QS, we call to defend all the activists ensnared by the state’s dragnet and demand that all charges be dropped. The media has been particularly rabid about “vandalism” by protesters who have targeted offices of university administrators as well as sym-

bols of corporate power. From the standpoint of the working class, such actions are not crimes—unlike the intense police brutality endured by the striking students and the still greater barbarism of the capitalist system as a whole. However, the “direct action” perspective pushed by various anarchists offers only a sideshow of ineffectual rage. Successful social struggle must seek to mobilize the power of the working class, and this is necessarily linked to the fight for proletarian revolutionary leadership.

Some anarchists and Maoists denounce the organized labor movement as “bought off” and reactionary. The Maoist PCR, for example, declares that the unions in Quebec “have become a tool in the hands of capitalists to control and subdue the working class,” adding: “It is not only a matter of changing the union’s orientation that would change its nature” (“Programme du Parti Communiste Révolutionnaire”). This eliminates any distinction between the working-class base of the unions and the pro-capitalist bureaucracy, a parasitic caste that rests atop the labor movement and receives some of the crumbs off the bosses’ table. Having renounced the unions, the basic defense organizations of the working class, the PCR lays out its own class-collaborationist perspective, claiming that “the path to revolution in Canada” lies through “protracted people’s war.” This is flatly counterposed to the *proletarian* core of Marxism (in addition to being ludicrous).

And then there are the political bandits of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and its World Socialist Web Site. An April 16 statement on the student strike by this outfit states, in bold characters no less: “*It is necessary to reject an orientation to the trade unions.*” It adds: “Here as elsewhere in the world, the role of the unions is to subjugate the workers to the profit system and the capitalist state.” An “edited version” of the same statement issued in English two days later is even more explicit, calling to assist the workers “in breaking free of the pro-capitalist trade unions.” While the SEP sometimes dons a fraudulent Trotskyist mask, its aim of seeing the unions destroyed converges with the interests of the capitalist bosses.

So too does its position on the national question, where it echoes the chauvinist Anglo Canadian ruling class in opposing Quebec’s right to self-determination.

The destruction of the trade unions would inevitably mean lower wages, less benefits and more dangerous working conditions. They must be defended against the bosses’ attacks. At the same time, the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy must be ousted by a class-struggle leadership fighting against the politics of bourgeois nationalism. Only then can the unions be transformed into organizations fighting for working-class emancipation.

The Quebec working class, allied with the vibrant student youth, has the power to be a key component of a revived North American workers movement, which has been battered by decades of austerity and strikebreaking. In May 1972, the spontaneous Quebec general strike against the jailing of union leaders gave a taste of this power. But in the upshot, the aspirations of the Québécois workers were channeled into the framework of bourgeois nationalism as represented by the PQ. Unchaining the power of the proletariat requires a political break with such nationalism, including today its “left” variant in Québec Solidaire.

The only road to socialism lies through a workers revolution that smashes the capitalist state and replaces it with a workers state, the dictatorship of the proletariat. That means replacing bourgeois democracy—a “democracy” for the rich—with *workers* democracy. Only then will the road be open for the construction of an egalitarian communist society where both poverty and a repressive state are relics of the past.

The Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyiste fights for the forging of a binational, multiethnic and internationalist workers party dedicated to the struggle for such revolutions across Canada, throughout North America and beyond. This is integral to our perspective of reforging the Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution. We urge those militant students who, coming out of the bitter struggles of the past several months, seek the road to a broader program for social liberation to examine the program of authentic Trotskyism. ■

Gay Rights...

(continued from page 1)

The reformists decry Obama’s deference to states’ rights as well as his flip-flops on gay marriage, which Obama supported in 1996 during his first campaign for the Illinois state senate, only to reverse course when he went on to run for the U.S. Senate. In the 2008 elections, his opposition to gay marriage was perhaps the most effective tool in the passage of California’s Proposition 8, which enshrined marriage as being between heterosexuals only. “Robocalls” were placed to people’s cellphones with recordings of Obama declaring: “I believe marriage is a union between a man and a woman. Now, for me as a Christian, it is also a sacred union.” This was hardly a first for the Democrats. Bill Clinton signed the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act that pronounced, “The word ‘marriage’ means only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife.”

But the complaints of the ISO, PSL & Co. about the Democrats’ waffling on gay rights are in the service of their main selling point: that it was pressure exerted by gay and lesbian activists that got Obama to do right, and now it’s time to keep the pressure on. Thus, the PSL opines that Obama’s announcement was “a victory for the marriage equality movement,” one that “will help fuel more resistance against the entrenched reactionaries who seek to push the LGBT movement back.” Similarly, the ISO opines that “activists may be right in hoping the statement will make it harder for Democrats to back away from future

action in defense of equality.”

Like the editorialists at the *New York Times*, the reformist “socialists,” who were gaga over Obama’s election four years ago, worry that his record as U.S. imperialist Commander-in-Chief has alienated the working people, blacks, immigrants and youth who bought the lie that his administration would bring some relief from the attacks of the Bush gang. Fat chance! As the world capitalist economic crisis grinds on, working people have been made to pay through home foreclosures, massive and long-term unemployment and the shredding of pensions and other benefits. While unions have taken it on the chin, the White House has steadily increased attacks on fundamental civil liberties at home while refocusing U.S. imperialism’s murderous operations abroad, from Afghanistan and Pakistan to Yemen and Libya.

Whether it’s defense of abortion rights and gay rights or the struggle against racist terror, the reformists, whose political activity is entirely defined by the framework of bourgeois society, peddle the notion that the Democratic Party is the vehicle through which the exploited and the oppressed can satisfy their demands. This lie, which is sold by the trade-union bureaucracy to its working-class base, is fundamental to keeping working people politically chained to the decaying capitalist system, having led countless struggles against oppression and war to the graveyard. In contrast, our activity is directed to forging a class-struggle workers party, the necessary instrument to lead the proletariat in the overthrow of the wretched capitalist order. Key to this perspective is breaking the working class, blacks and others

on the receiving end of the rulers’ attacks from all illusions in the Democratic Party, the “lesser evil” face of U.S. imperialism.

In the Beginning Was Jimmy Carter

As November approaches, the public is due for yet more nauseating doses of the contest for the title “holier than thou,” now a staple in U.S. elections. Today, it’s unthinkable that a U.S. president would repeat Ulysses S. Grant’s 1876 statement: “Leave the matter of religion to the family altar, the church and private schools entirely supported by private contributions. Keep the church and state forever separate.” This pronouncement, which was commonplace at the time, was uttered barely a decade after the defeat of the slaveholding South in the American Civil War, the U.S. bourgeoisie’s last progressive war. It is a mark of the degeneracy of U.S. capitalist class rule in this epoch of imperialist decay that a fundamental tenet of the Bill of Rights—the strict separation of church and state—has all but withered away.

Stoking the fires of religious and social reaction, Mitt Romney echoes the loony religious right’s claim that Obama wants to make the U.S. into “a less Christian nation.” Obama has himself pandered to the forces of religious reaction, from overruling the FDA’s approval of the “morning after” birth control pill for teens to agreeing to exclude women workers of Catholic institutions from mandatory contraceptive health insurance coverage (see “Obama Panders to Religious Reaction,” *WV* No. 997, 2 March).

In fact, the mobilization for Christian “family values” has long been a biparti-

san effort. It was Democratic president Jimmy Carter who hyped the values of Christian fundamentalism, as a weapon to roll back the gains of the civil rights and other struggles of the 1950s and ’60s. To the extent that some democratic rights have been extended to gays, it has primarily been as a by-product of those struggles, including the fight against the dirty imperialist war in Vietnam. Carter’s crusade was part of a major bourgeois ideological assault aimed at overcoming the “Vietnam syndrome” and instilling an unquestioning acceptance of capitalism, God and family, including the desirability of dying for one’s country. Since that time, God has been the close personal friend of every American president, Republican or Democratic, while abortion rights, affirmative action in education and other gains have been under constant assault as part of a generalized onslaught against labor and the oppressed.

The push for “family values” has prominently served as a battering ram in this effort. A case in point was the “Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act” signed by Democrat Bill Clinton the same year he approved the Defense of Marriage Act. Part of his ending “welfare as we know it,” the Personal Responsibility act consigned millions of impoverished women to the scrap heap. It authorized government control over the personal and sexual lives of welfare recipients by enabling states to use their Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds to promote marriage and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies. Now, as the *New York Times* (7 April) reported, the cash welfare rolls have barely budged despite four years of

Ireland...

(continued from page 3)

Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union. Economists call it the “Fiscal Treaty,” the government here calls it the “Stability Treaty,” while those opposed, quite rightly, call it the “Austerity Treaty.” First on the chopping block will be the working class in the periphery EU states, with the working class of the imperialist countries like Germany and France next in line.

Ireland is the only country in the EU where this treaty is to be put to a referendum, since in Ireland changes to the constitution require a popular mandate. In the event of a “Yes” vote, it will become unconstitutional for the Irish state to run a deficit over a preset level. As such, it is unsurprising that the government is not all that confident of getting the “Yes” vote demanded by EU leaders, who are not happy about the treaty being put to a referendum. Currently, all discussion on the upcoming referendum is overshadowed by the election results in France and Greece, and the German reaction to them. In Ireland, there is a strong sense of just how far down the food chain the country is when it comes to putting pressure on the EU.

In early April, an IMF spokesman suggested that the Irish government should consider some degree of “debt restructuring” and measures to ease the burden on mortgage holders. Within a few days, the European Central Bank sent in Joerg Asmussen, an ECB official and member of the German Social Democrats, to make it very clear that the ECB disagreed. According to the *Irish Times* (13 April), Asmussen gave a speech in which “he told the audience that Ireland’s economic woes are mostly of its own making.” Asmussen warned: “Any desire to offload this debt could have dire consequences.”

And in case anybody was in doubt about whose money they are talking about, the German Christian Democrats sent over their economic policy spokesman, Joachim Pfeiffer, the same day to make the same points, if in a little more touchy-feely manner. Pfeiffer praised Ireland as a “model student.” What he wants to see is: the reduction in public debt, the restoration of competitiveness and the stabilisation of financial markets. What this means in practice is slashing public sector



MacDonall/Irish Times

Dublin, January 17: Fake-socialist parliamentarians Richard Boyd Barrett of the SWP (left) and Clare Daly of the SP (second from right) after meeting with EU, ECB and IMF officials to advise on austerity.

wages, working conditions and pensions, increasing the use of temporary contracts and paying back all the money while not raising taxes on businesses—or burning the banks.

Not to be outdone in the threats department, the Irish government has been painting a catastrophic picture should the Irish people vote “No.” Supposedly, Ireland will be cut off from world financial markets, public sector wages will go unpaid, foreign companies will up and leave, etc. The Fine Gael Minister for Finance, Michael Noonan, has promised an extraordinary budget that would increase taxes on everything should the “No” vote prevail. Of course, a “Yes” vote, which would tie Ireland to the financial restraints of the treaty, will mean all that and much more. Martyn Turner, the cartoonist at the *Irish Times*, captured it quite nicely: “If we vote yes...we won’t be allowed to borrow any money. If we vote no...nobody will lend us any money.”

Capitalist Austerity and the Working Class

A recent opinion poll in the *Irish Times* (19 April) shows slightly more support for a “Yes” vote (30 per cent) than “No” (23 per cent), with a whopping 39 per cent still undecided. There is quite a strong class differentiation in these polls, with working-class areas very much opposed to the “Austerity Treaty.” Much of big business is campaigning for a “Yes,” with posters from the Irish Business and Employers

Confederation all over the place.

Fear plays a big part among those polling “Yes,” particularly among the urban petty bourgeoisie and small farmers. Images are conjured up in the press of Ireland returning to the dark days of the 1950s and ’60s. Farmers fear losing all subsidies from the EU, and they don’t fancy competing on the open market with India and China.

Under pressure from their base, four of the larger unions in Ireland have come out counselling their members to vote “No.” Disgracefully, but not surprisingly, Jack O’Connor, the leader of Ireland’s largest union, the Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU), has said it will recommend a “Yes” vote on the condition that a stimulus plan is also put in place.

Despite the anger among workers, there has been very little in the way of class struggle. Prior to the February 2011 general elections, the trade unions mobilised huge demonstrations, including a march in Dublin of 180,000. Since then, demonstrations have been small, as union leaders have helped to maintain social peace. One example is Vita Cortex, a foam mattress manufacturer that shut down its operation in Cork. Workers occupied the factory and refused to let the bosses remove equipment. SIPTU leaders limited the struggle to getting the workers their statutory redundancy [severance] payments, while allowing the other Vita Cortex factories, including in Northern Ireland, to continue to operate as normal.

the worst economy in decades. The victims are primarily single mothers, who resort to selling their own blood and food stamps for cash or rummaging through garbage cans to feed their children. As always in this country founded on black chattel slavery, any attack on the poor hits black people hardest.

The four-decade-long assault on the gains made by blacks, women and others underscores that democratic rights are indivisible. The Spartacist League has stood out in opposing state repression of the most oppressed and marginalized, from Mormon polygamists to NAMBLA (North American Man/Boy Love Association), a group vilified by mainstream gay rights organizations and opportunist “socialists” for advocating the decriminalization of consensual sex between men and boys. We oppose all laws that enable the state to regulate consensual sexual activity, including those that allow the government to exercise social control under the guise of “protecting children.”

It is a vital task of the revolutionary vanguard to champion full democratic rights for gays and to fight to win the working class to this cause. Like the oppression of women, the oppression of homosexuals is not primarily the result of narrow-mindedness. Both are fundamentally grounded in the institution of the family—the root of the patriarchal subjugation of women—and in organized religion. Ending the dominance of church and family, which are necessary props of the capitalist system of exploitation, will require overthrowing bourgeois rule through workers socialist revolution. Through the expropriation of the productive property of the

capitalist class, a workers government will lay the basis for a planned economy that qualitatively expands society’s productive forces, eliminating scarcity and vastly expanding the range and depth of scientific knowledge. This will mark the beginning of the socialist epoch of human freedom, destroying the last vestiges of religious and social backwardness. ■

Chicago...

(continued from page 12)

totaling 90. Afterward, Obama praised the Chicago Police Department and the mayor, saying they “did wonderfully.”

As part of their effort to intimidate demonstrators and justify the massive show of police force, on May 16 the Chicago cops raided an apartment that housed out-of-town protesters, arresting the residents and charging three for a supposed “terrorist plot.” The men remain in prison in a clear case of entrapment. Two of those living in the apartment were either police informants or undercover cops. “It really is pretty playbook,” said Sarah Gelsomino of the National Lawyers Guild, which has provided legal counsel to the three men. “The police engage in this kind of conduct—very sensational charges and preemptive raids of activists in what we believe to be really an attempt to intimidate people to stop them from protesting.”

A YouTube video posted by the “NATO 3” prior to their arrest captures how the Chicago cops greeted protesters. With squad cars surrounding their vehicle, one officer invoked the police riot against pro-

testers at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. He asks, “What did they say back in ’68?” Another cop replies: “Billy club to the f---ing skull.”

The NATO 3 are the first ever charged with violating Illinois state’s anti-terror statutes, which were enacted after the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Here is another example of how the “war on terror,” which initially victimized Arab and Muslim immigrants, set into motion repressive measures ultimately meant for leftists, trade unionists and black people. It is in the interests of the working class to defend these men and all anti-NATO protesters against state repression.

The military adventures of the imperialist butchers abroad always come packaged with domestic repression at home. The U.S. capitalist ruling class that devastated Iraq and Afghanistan and is now unleashing its thugs in blue on protesters in Chicago is also responsible for grinding down working people nationwide. Struggle against U.S./NATO’s murderous occupations must be linked to a fight against the capitalist system that inevitably breeds war and depredation. Only through workers revolution can that system be swept away.

We reprint below a May 21 letter by the Partisan Defense Committee—a legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League—to the State’s Attorney.

* * *

The Partisan Defense Committee protests the police attacks on the demonstrations against the NATO summit in Chicago and arrest of over 50 protesters. The

Amid the recent attacks on the highly unionised public sector workers, nurses, teachers and social workers are regularly vilified in the press as overpaid and living cushy lives. Yet the leadership of the unions has made no attempt at a class-struggle response. Faced with an earlier round of budget cuts, the trade-union bureaucracy signed the 2010 Croke Park agreement, which effectively renounced class struggle until 2014. Such “partnership” agreements ensured that wages remained low during the boom years so as not to endanger the Celtic Tiger economy. Now they are being used to take away any benefits that workers still have.

The Left and the Treaty

The “Fiscal Treaty” should be voted down. But while the United Left Alliance is calling for a “No” vote, it does not link this opposition to the need for class struggle against the attacks of the Irish bourgeoisie and the EU robber barons. Instead, the SP and SWP reformists in the ULA seek to tinker with the terms of austerity as a part of applying pressure to reform the EU. In a May 2 leaflet, the SP’s Joe Higgins states that a rejection of the treaty would be “a powerful demand for a change of course.” Or as the April 30 SWP leaflet titled “The Fiscal Treaty Demystified” declares: “If you believe in a fairer solution to the economic crisis Vote NO.” Neither can bring themselves to utter the word “imperialism” in those leaflets.

So committed are the reformists to offering a solution to the crisis within the framework of the capitalist system that the ULA TDs Clare Daly and Richard Boyd Barrett jumped at the opportunity to meet with representatives of the “troika” in Dublin in January. When given an audience, they presented these imperialist bloodsuckers with their suggestions for a less onerous bailout policy for working people, from higher taxes on the rich to preventing the sale of public assets.

Like the Labour Party, to which it is an auxiliary, the ULA offers no challenge to the rule of the capitalists and bankers. What is needed is a revolutionary workers party that fights for class-struggle opposition to capitalist austerity and seeks to mobilise the working class to overthrow the whole wretched capitalist system. Such a party will be committed to fighting for a Socialist United States of Europe. ■

massive police mobilization and frontal assault on civil liberties accompanying the summit are directed against labor, leftists, antiwar activists and others who simply seek to exercise their First Amendment rights of speech and assembly.

On May 16, with no warrant but guns drawn and battering rams swinging, the Chicago police stormed an apartment in the Bridgeport neighborhood. Nine people were arrested. Three—Brent Betterly, Brian Church and Jared Chase—face charges of “conspiracy to commit terrorism, providing material support for terrorism, and possession of an explosive or incendiary device.” The arrests came less than a week after the accused “NATO 3” had posted on YouTube a video of an officer threatening them: “We’ll come look for you, each and every one of you.” Outrageously, each is being held on a \$1.5 million bond and faces up to 40 years in prison if convicted!

The arrests of Betterly, Church and Chase have all the earmarks of a classic case of police entrapment and provocation. According to their attorneys, the allegations were trumped up by informants, who may have been undercover agents, living with them at the time of the police raid. Since then, two other political activists, Mark Neiweem and Sebastian Senakiewicz, have been arrested on terrorism-related charges, reportedly based on accusations by the same police informers. A spokesman for the National Lawyers Guild rightly described these charges as an “effort to frighten people and to diminish the size of the demonstrations.”

We demand that all the charges be dropped! Hands off the anti-NATO protesters! ■

WORKERS VANGUARD

Student Strike Shakes Quebec



Carpenter/Montreal Gazette



Canadian Press

Left: Students striking against tuition hikes block entrance to Collège Lionel-Groulx in Sainte-Thérèse, May 15. Right: Riot cops later assault strikers. We demand: Drop all charges against Quebec strikers and their supporters!

MAY 22—We reprint below the translation of a French-language supplement to *Spartacist Canada* issued on May 17 by the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste, Canadian section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist). Since the supplement was issued, the Quebec government has enacted a draconian “emergency law” in an attempt to break the student strike. The law, passed on the evening of May 18, bans any protests in or outside the schools, severely restricts all other protests and threatens huge fines against groups or individuals who defy these edicts.

Young Spartacus

Student federations, trade unions and the main Quebec nationalist parties have all denounced the law. Many have compared it to the Canadian government’s imposition of the War Measures Act in October 1970, which saw hundreds of leftists, nationalists and union leaders arrested as part of a move to suppress widespread social protest in Quebec. Within hours of the law’s adoption, at least 10,000 students and their supporters took to the streets of Montreal in protest. Police attacks on student protesters continued over the following evenings, with more than 300 arrested on May 20 alone. On May 22, at least 300,000 people marched in solidarity with the students and to protest the government’s emergency law.

* * *

The 2012 student strike has been the longest in Quebec history. After more than three months, about 160,000 students remain on strike, boycotting classes and shutting down universities and Cégeps [junior colleges] with mass pickets, often in defiance of court injunctions. There have been well over 1,000 arrests and protesters have faced brutal, near-daily assaults by the police.

The student struggle has intersected and heightened a growing social crisis in Quebec. The governing Liberal Party of Jean Charest is deeply unpopular and mired in scandals. The 200,000-strong Montreal rally in support of striking students on March 22 was one of the largest demonstrations in Canadian history. One month later, the Earth Day demo, usually little more than a charity parade, drew a quarter million people, many of whom raised slogans against both the Quebec Liberals and the ruling federal Conservatives.

The strike has shown the depth of anger and defiance among Québécois youth,

Mobilize the Power of the Working Class!

who have kept this massive struggle going despite vicious state repression and bourgeois media slander. With staggering levels of youth unemployment and poverty in Quebec, there is reason for anger. At the same time, this months-long battle has illustrated in a fundamental way the limitations of a struggle that has not been connected to the social power of the working class.

The capitalist rulers around the world aim to make workers and the oppressed pay for the financial crisis that is a direct product of the bourgeois profit system. [Prime Minister Stephen] Harper’s Conservatives have attacked the unions at Canada Post, Air Canada and elsewhere, while bringing down austerity measures against public sector workers. Workers in

Quebec have had to taste the strikebreaking medicine of Quebecor, Aveos, Rio-Tinto and more. The student strike, precipitated by the Charest government’s plan to impose a 75 percent tuition increase, has marked something of a break in the mostly one-sided war that the bosses are waging on workers and the oppressed.

The bourgeoisie and its media mouthpieces inveigh against the students’ “violence” and “irresponsibility.” Yet for the last several years the utter venality of the ruling class has been on full display in Quebec. There has been a never-ending string of corruption revelations involving mayors and Liberal cabinet ministers, including Education Minister Line Beauchamp, who quit under the pressure of the student strike. This, together

with daily revelations of construction and engineering firms’ illegal kickbacks, provides a sharp contrast to the courage and vibrancy of the student activists. The infamous “five percent”—the unspoken public construction “tax” that ends up in the pockets of various agents of the mafia and the Hells Angels, helping in turn to finance “friendly” politicians—is a practice as old as the hills in Quebec. The federalist Liberal Party is particularly shameless, but such dealings happened under Parti Québécois [PQ] administrations as well. And the notoriously brutal cops of the Montreal SPVM and provincial Sûreté du Québec, whose mutual enmity is legendary, have never been as united as when bashing students’ heads.

From the opposition benches, the bourgeois-nationalist PQ has given lip service to supporting the students as an electoral move against Charest. This is a cynical ploy by a party that only recently attacked the Liberals for being too “timid” in their drive to slash spending and balance the budget. The PQ itself tried to jack up tuition fees when it was in government

continued on page 9

Defend Anti-NATO Protesters!

Chicago

MAY 21—Over 10,000 people marched in Chicago yesterday as part of a week of protests against the annual summit meeting of the U.S.-dominated NATO imperialist military alliance. This gathering of war criminals, hosted by U.S. Commander-in-Chief Obama in his hometown, takes place against a backdrop of the now decade-long U.S./NATO occupation of Afghanistan and last year’s bombing of Libya, not to mention the ongoing austerity forced on working people. **Down with NATO!**

To shield NATO’s bloody imperialist rulers from justified outrage, Obama’s former henchman and current Democratic mayor Rahm Emanuel imposed a state of siege on Chicago. In the months leading up to the protests, Emanuel rewrote city ordinances to limit the rights of demonstrators, including by placing sweeping restrictions on permits. In one case,



Muhammad/NY Times

Police attack protesters near NATO summit meeting in Chicago, May 20.

National Nurses United, whose members are facing a wage- and benefit-slashing offensive, was forced to cancel a march it had planned to accompany its rally.

Thousands of National Guardsmen,

active-duty troops and deputized cops from as far away as North Carolina descended on the city. Police brutally attacked protesters, with arrests now

continued on page 11