

Quebec: Mass Defiance of Anti-Protest Law

Broad Support for Student Strike

JUNE 4—The nearly four-month student strike in Quebec, which was sparked by proposed massive tuition hikes, has now escalated into a major social crisis. Fueling protest is the repressive Law 78—popularly known as the “*loi des matraques*” (law of the nightsticks). This measure was enacted on May 18 by the widely despised pro-

vincial Liberal government after up to 200,000 students throughout Quebec had boycotted classes and shut down the campuses with mass pickets, often in defiance of court injunctions. Students have faced brutal, near daily assaults by the police. The emergency law bans any protests in or outside the

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Michel Giroux

Montreal, May 22: 300,000-strong demonstration in support of striking students and against Law 78. Banner reads, “100 days of strike, 100 days of contempt!”

The Euro Crisis and the French Elections Socialist Party Takes Charge of Austerity

JUNE 1—The May 6 elections in Greece and France were the latest in which ruling parties in Europe have been voted out amid growing anger over the austerity dictates of the imperialist European Union (EU) and International Monetary Fund (IMF). Led by Germany, the EU demands that working people, particularly in those countries most racked by the capitalist economic crisis, pay for the bailout of failing banks through mass unemployment, the sacrifice of pensions and other attacks on their lives and livelihoods.

As we reported last issue, the dominant EU powers are strong-arming weaker member states into adopting a “Fiscal Treaty” that would enshrine the conditions of the bailouts and permanent austerity in their constitutions (“Irish Rulers Push Attacks on Working People,” WV No. 1003, 25 May). Under heavy pressure from EU leaders, the Irish government rammed through approval of this treaty

in a referendum yesterday, although only half of those eligible bothered going to the polls, and working-class districts in Dublin voted heavily against the measure.

The results of EU/IMF policies can be seen in outright starvation, in the suicides of older workers and ruined small businessmen and in exploding numbers of homeless people—from those sleeping in Athens’ subway stations to men living on the streets of Italian cities and towns because they cannot meet child support and alimony payments. And the imperialist bloodsuckers promise more of the same.

Germany under Angela Merkel is not budging in its demands that Greece continue to slash spending as a condition of remaining in the euro currency zone. Greece is heading into a second round of parliamentary elections on June 17 after none of the top vote-getters in the first round—New Democracy, Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left) and PASOK—were able to cobble together a new governing coalition. The bourgeois parties that ran the previous government, New Democracy and PASOK, lost ground to Syriza, which benefited from mass anger over the economic crisis by promising to

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Getty (top), Tejederas/El País



Top: Hours after his May 15 inauguration, French president François Hollande visits German chancellor Angela Merkel in Berlin. Bottom: Protest against austerity measures in Barcelona, May 12.



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“Homosexual Oppression and the Communist Program”

This August marks the 35th anniversary of the conference at which the Red Flag Union (RFU, formerly Lavender & Red Union) and the Spartacist League merged their organizations and political futures. The Lavender & Red Union, which was founded in Los Angeles in 1974, originally defined itself as a “Gay liberation-Communist organization.” At the time, its members, who felt a “cultural and political identity with our people and work for our liberation,” had not yet entirely broken from the gay milieu’s sectoralism—the notion that each oppressed sector of society should organize separately for its own liberation. But they also realized that their aim of socialist revolution necessitated the building of a vanguard party to fight in the interests of the working class and all the oppressed. Three years later, at the point of fusion, an RFU spokesman said: “We did not know that we were founded on a political contradiction.”

Workers Vanguard No. 172, 9 September 1977 (Excerpt)

The RFU was assiduously courted and patronized by other groups on the left, from the socialist-feminist Freedom Socialist Party to the anti-Soviet Shachtmanite Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL). In contrast, the SL sharply confronted the RFU, seeking to clarify the contradiction between their gay lifestyle and sectoralism on the one hand and the Marxist program to build a proletarian, revolutionary internationalist party as a Leninist “tribune of the people” on the other. Thus, the fusion of the RFU and SL was widely seen and excoriated by our opportunist opponents as some kind of “unnatural act.”

The August 1977 fusion conference marked the culmination of three years of

the RFU’s political development, especially the several months of intense discussion and political collaboration with the SL. Two key questions that figured in the SL-RFU discussion and dominated the RFU’s “Stonewall 77” Conference were the class nature of the Soviet

Union as a degenerated workers state and the necessity of a Leninist vanguard party. The debate over these and other programmatic questions precipitated a split in the RFU. The majority was won to the Leninist-Trotskyist Spartacist League, while a minority joined the anti-Soviet, gay-lifestylist RSL.

This was a fusion in the best Leninist sense. The SL gained valuable cadre, who entered the organization with proportional representation on leading party

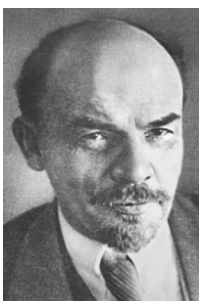
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TROTSKY

On Economic and Political Struggle

In a report to Friedrich Bolte, a leading member of the First International in New York, Karl Marx spelled out how the basic economic struggles of the working class give rise to political struggle against the ruling capitalist class. The instrument necessary to advance this struggle toward overturning the capitalist order is a revolutionary workers party forged in the fires of class battles.



LENIN

The political movement of the working class naturally has as its final object the conquest of political power for this class, and this requires, of course, a previous organisation of the working class developed up to a certain point, which arises from the economic struggles themselves.

But on the other hand, every movement in which the working class comes out as a *class* against the ruling classes and tries to coerce them by pressure from without is a political movement. For instance, the attempt in a particular factory, or even in a particular trade, to force a shorter working day out of the individual capitalists by strikes, etc., is a purely economic movement. The movement to force through an eight-hour *law*, etc., however, is a *political* movement. And in this way, out of the separate economic movements of the workers there grows up everywhere a *political* movement, that is to say a movement of the *class*, with the object of achieving its interests in a general form, in a form possessing general, socially binding force. Though these movements presuppose a certain degree of previous organisation, they are in turn equally a means of developing this organisation.

Where the working class is not yet far enough advanced in its organisation to undertake a decisive campaign against the collective power, i.e. the political power, of the ruling classes, it must at any rate be trained for this by continual agitation against, and a hostile attitude towards, the policies of the ruling classes.

—Karl Marx, “Letter to Bolte,” November 1871



Red Flag Union
conference
in Los Angeles,
June 1977.



WV Photo

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Toll Group Port Truckers Win Union

Los Angeles

Braving anti-union intimidation, harassment and firings, port truckers who transport apparel for the Toll Group at the Port of Los Angeles voted 46 to 15 on April 11 to join the Teamsters union. The militancy and determination of the Toll Group drivers were key in this organizing victory. Their fight could inspire efforts to unionize by the overwhelmingly immigrant port truckers on the West Coast and nationwide who are a vital link in the vast cargo chain. This in turn would strengthen the fighting capacity of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and International Longshoremen's Association (ILA), which are increasingly isolated bastions of union power amid a sea of unorganized workers at the ports.

The Toll Group organizing campaign started last summer at the Los Angeles/Long Beach port complex, which employs some 10,000 truckers. The largely Latino immigrant Toll drivers—who are among the few port truckers considered direct employees rather than independent contractors—wanted to combat degrading and dangerous job conditions. Drivers routinely face retaliation for reporting any safety issues. The Toll bosses would not even allow truckers into company restrooms, instead forcing them to use filthy portable johns with no running water. As Toll driver Karael Vallecillo put it, “I didn’t come to this country to be treated like an animal just because of my background” (*In These Times*, 13 April).

Last fall, 26 Toll truckers were fired



Toll Group truckers at Port of Los Angeles celebrate after winning union recognition on April 11.

after wearing Teamsters T-shirts on the job to protest the lack of sanitary facilities and signal their aim to organize a union, as some 200 unionists and supporters rallied outside. The company also attempted to intimidate workers by holding biweekly mandatory anti-union meetings. (Toll recently forced its truckers in Newark, New Jersey, to attend a similar meeting to forestall organizing there.)

In December, Toll driver Xiomara Perez and four other port truckers from both the West and East Coasts wrote a pro-union open letter to the Occupy movement

describing conditions under which truckers toil:

“We receive Third World wages and drive sweatshops on wheels. We cannot negotiate our rates. (Usually we are not allowed to even see them.) We are paid by the load, not by the hour. So when we sit in those long lines at the terminals, or if we are stuck in traffic, we become volunteers who basically donate our time to the trucking and shipping companies. That’s a nice way to put it. We have all heard the words ‘modern-day slaves’ at the lunch stops. There are no restrooms for drivers. We keep empty bottles in our cabs. Plastic bags too. We feel like dogs.”

After a Teamsters-requested complaint was filed in January by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) charging illegal retaliation and harassment against workers trying to unionize, the company ratcheted up its anti-union offensive. In March, just weeks before the union election, Toll fired Perez, a single mother of three and one of two women among the drivers, along with trucker Steven Chavez, who was also known to be pro-union. Perez was sacked for making a pit stop at a McDonald’s and Chavez for using his lunch break to renew a Department of Transportation certificate required for his job. “Toll is trying to fire its way out of having a worker’s union,” Chavez noted. To date, the two have not been reinstated. While the majority of the 26 fired in October are back at work, several others have also not yet gotten their jobs back. The Teamsters and other waterfront workers should rally to their defense, fighting to reinstate these drivers.

Headquartered in Australia, Toll is one of the world’s largest transport/logistics companies. In the months leading up to the union election, members of the Transport Workers Union (TWU) from the Toll Group’s Australian workforce repeatedly visited L.A. in support of the unionization campaign. Numerous solidarity statements were also received from transport unions and officials worldwide, many a part of the International Transport Federation. The vice president of ILWU Local 13 in Los Angeles took part in an organizing rally. Such expressions of solidarity are a positive first step. But it will take a class-struggle fight, not just statements of solidarity, to

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Letter

Reformists Knifed 1960 NYC Woolworth’s Protests

Dear WV,

The photo and caption to the article “For Black Trotskyism” in WV No. 1002 (11 May)—an excerpt from the July 1963 document of the same name by the Revolutionary Tendency, a minority faction in the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and forerunner of the Spartacist League—showed a 13 February 1960 picket line in New York City against Woolworth’s. This protest was in solidarity with the Southern sit-in campaign against segregation at lunch counters that began on 1 February 1960 at a Woolworth’s in Greensboro, North Carolina. The sit-in campaign, by mobilizing large numbers of young militants in direct action, was a watershed in the civil rights movement. Our readers may be interested to know about the role of the social democrats and Stalinists in moving to squelch the solidarity movement in the North, which we wrote about previously in the article “Socialists and the 1960 Woolworth Sit-Ins” (WV No. 579, 2 July 1993).

On 15 February 1960, supporters of the *Young Socialist* (YS) newspaper, who in April 1960 would found the Young Socialist Alliance and formally affiliate with the then-Trotskyist SWP, launched a national student campaign of picket-line protests in support of the Southern activists. The young socialists formed an ad hoc New York Youth Committee for Integration. Calling to “Boycott Woolworth’s,” the YS campaign immediately got a powerful response, with committees and pickets soon spreading to Boston, Philadelphia, Minneapolis, San Francisco and other cities. But the picket-line movement against racist Jim Crow quickly ran into opposition in New York from liberal



Picket outside Woolworth’s in New York City, 13 February 1960.

and pacifist groups like the NAACP and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), as well as the National Student Association (NSA) and the Young People’s Socialist League, which was affiliated with the anti-Communists of the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation (SP-SDF).

These groups, abetted by the reformist Communist Party (CP), sought to demobilize the mass pickets with diversionary rallies, pledges of “nonviolence” and redbaiting while attempting to wrest leadership of the struggle away from the Trotskyists. Spearheading the charge was A. Philip Randolph, the veteran liberal

civil rights leader associated with the SP-SDF. Waving a copy of *Young Socialist* over his head at a March 26 rally in Harlem, Randolph “declared that he would prefer no picket demonstrations at all to united demonstrations with ‘Communists’” (*The Militant*, 11 April 1960).

Meanwhile, the NSA and the CP Stalinists had packed a meeting of the Youth Committee and voted to dissolve it. The liberals then formed a “Metropolitan Students for Non-Violent Civil Rights Action” group that did nothing for three weeks before finally holding a small picket of ten white students. At one of their pickets, the CP urged the cops to arrest a YS salesman

and Youth Committee members who had come to help strengthen the line. Against such sabotage, the Trotskyists regrouped what was left of the Youth Committee and continued to wage a militant campaign in New York and elsewhere. The YS took up a call by Randolph for a mass rally on May 17, the sixth anniversary of the Supreme Court’s decision formally outlawing segregation in the public schools. The Trotskyists organized pickets in several cities, and the youth committee submitted 10,000 boycott pledges to Woolworth’s headquarters in NYC.

In the spring of 1960, the liberal civil rights leaders Martin Luther King Jr., Bayard Rustin and Randolph, joined by the SP-SDF and CP, pushed a strategy of begging the two capitalist parties to put some verbiage in favor of civil rights in their 1960 election platforms. They all threw support to John F. Kennedy’s Democratic Party, with its racist Dixiecrat component in the South. Forcing the Trotskyists out of leadership of the Woolworth’s campaign was part of their efforts to contain the movement for civil rights within the framework of capitalist electoral politics.

Comradely,
J.W.

NOTICE
Workers Vanguard skips
alternate issues in
June, July and August.
Our next issue
will be dated July 6.

Young Spartacus

Freedom Road Socialist Organization: Democrats' Loyal Maoists

American Maoism died a shameful death 40 years ago when Mao Zedong warmly embraced President Richard Nixon in Beijing at the very moment that U.S. warplanes were bombing Vietnam. But the Maoist group Freedom Road Socialist Organization never got the news. In New York, Freedom Road (not to be confused with its identically named and equally reformist split-off in the Midwest that publishes *Fight Back!*) mostly works through a front group called the Revolutionary Student Coordinating Committee (RSCC). The keystones of Freedom Road's identity are guilty liberalism and an appetite to liquidate into any "movement" regardless of its program or purpose.

Freedom Road's origins are in the right wing of the U.S. Maoist movement, in particular the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) of the megalomaniacal Bob Avakian. The fragmentation of the Maoist organizations naturally followed the death of Mao in 1976 and the resulting power struggle in the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy. While Freedom Road's founding cadres doubtless pride themselves on having (eventually) broken from the repulsive cultism of Avakian to form the Revolutionary Workers Headquarters (RWH), its political line remains defined not only by the reformism and class collaboration of Maoism but also by the particular "theoretical" contributions of Avakian's organization.

In line with these traditions, the Freedom Road reformists tout their bogus "anti-imperialist" credentials while simultaneously embracing unity with a wing of U.S. imperialism, namely, the Democratic Party: "We have worked on national campaigns focused on the Democratic Party, but only when they help to promote an anti-racist and pro-people agenda" ("Frequently Asked Questions," freedomroad.org, 24 August 2005). No less than the Republicans, the Democratic Party is a bourgeois party. No socialist worthy of the name would give even critical support to a politician whose program explicitly upholds the continuance of this inherently racist and oppressive capitalist system.

Freedom Road supported Obama for president in 2008. Its National Executive Committee declared before the election, "If Obama wins it will be in celebration and preparation to push him as much as possible to take progressive positions and move policies in the interest of working class and oppressed people here and outside of the U.S." (29 October 2008). Free-



Young Spartacus

Freedom Road contingent at 2012 May Day march, New York City.

dom Road proclaimed with "enormous pride and joy and hope" after the election that "Obama's Americanism is obviously preferable to live under and provides the more favorable terrain for the struggles of the working class and the oppressed." Their article muttered only the most parenthetical caution about Obama's vow to escalate the murderous occupation in Afghanistan ("Savor the Victory, Get Right to Work," 11 November 2008).

Today—after Obama's administration has deported well over one million immigrants, fulfilled his campaign promises in Afghanistan, bombed Libya and Pakistan, repeatedly bailed out Wall Street on the backs of the workers, and escalated attacks on civil liberties like Bush on steroids—Freedom Road in age-old opportunist fashion is muting its praise of "Obama's Americanism."

Kneeling at the Altar of Black Democrats

The pro-Democratic Party tradition of these fraudulent "socialists" dates back to their 1985 founding, a fusion of RWH and a group called Proletarian Unity League (PUL). Writing about a later fusion, Freedom Road said, "Our organizations have extensive experience in electoral campaigns, having worked in the Jesse Jackson [1984 and 1988 Democratic Party] Presidential campaigns, in the Rainbow Coalition, and on local campaigns and issues" ("Unity Statement," June 1994).

From his earliest days in the civil rights movement, Jesse Jackson acted as a fireman brought in to douse the flames of black revolt and herd angry people back into supporting the Democratic Party. Notably, he enlisted early on in the racist "war on drugs," demanding harsher laws and applauding prosecution of "offenders." Jackson infamously proclaimed, "We've lost more by dope than by the rope." Thus, in the despicable Booker T. Washington tradition, Jackson laid the blame on black people for their oppression while belittling the struggle against racist terror, exemplified by the lynch rope.

Today the consequences of the "war on drugs" are plain to see: the racist cops are given the go-ahead to stop and search millions of black and Latino youth at will and hand them over to be ground up by the capitalist courts and prisons. Freedom Road and its forebears, and indeed all those opportunist "leftists" who built support for Jesse Jackson, have their own little share of responsibility for the mass incarceration resulting from the racist "war on drugs."

Nothing could be further from the mind of Freedom Road than learning anything from history. Indeed they continue to promote the lie that the real gains for the working class and oppressed are won through the ballot box, not through struggle: "Electoral politics has been and will remain an important realm of political struggle for working people, to improve

their daily lives" (*ibid.*). No better than the International Socialist Organization (ISO), Workers World Party and so many others who falsely claim to be socialists, Freedom Road uses the black Democrats as the wrapping in which to package its support for this capitalist party. If anything they are more open about it: the ISO for example normally stops short of explicitly pushing the ballot box as a vehicle for political "struggle," while of course pandering to illusions in the Democrats by celebrating Obama's victory.

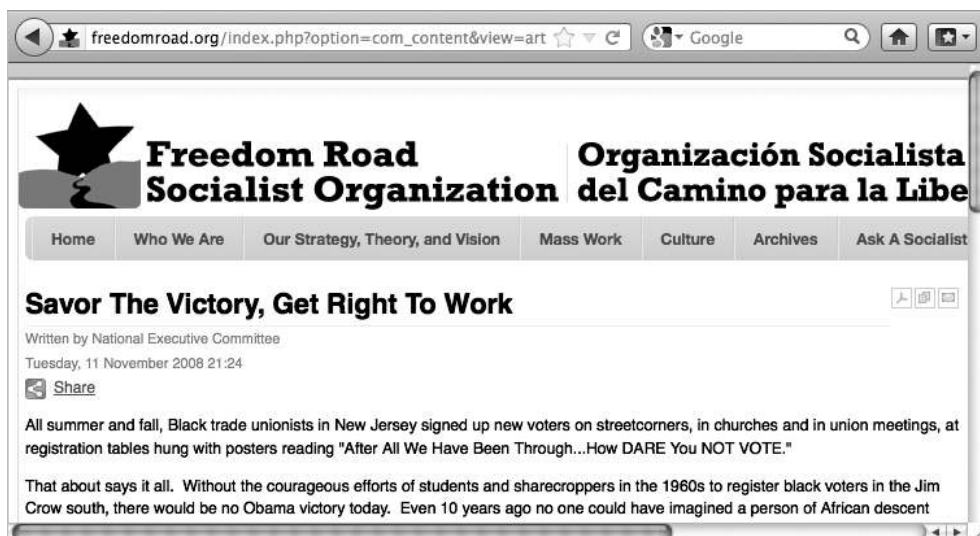
The prominent role of black politicians in the Democratic Party is a direct result of the bourgeoisie's need to derail the explosive struggles of the civil rights movement of the 1960s by teaching activists to look to the federal government and to the election of Democrats to bring supposed liberation from racist oppression. Long before Obama, black mayors were installed in one major city after another to put a lid on the ghetto upheavals, which were a desperate response to the inability of formal civil rights gains to address the ingrained social oppression and discrimination that black people endure in racist America.

Supporting the Democrats stands fully in the tradition of Stalinist class collaboration, as practiced by Maoists as well as by the formerly pro-Soviet Communist Party (the latter has been in bed with the Democrats since Franklin Roosevelt's "New Deal" in the 1930s). The search for an illusory "progressive" wing of the bourgeoisie actually dates back to the Russian Mensheviks. Ruthlessly combating the Menshevik program, Lenin and his Bolshevik Party fought for the independent mobilization of the proletariat and against the illusion that any wing of the imperialist bourgeoisie could play a progressive role.

Publicity Agents for "Occupy" Liberalism

During the populist Occupy protests last year, Freedom Road mouthed empty platitudes against "the danger of the Occupy movement being coopted by the system, particularly by the Democratic Party." But the whole point was to stave off any notions of breaking with the Democrats entirely: "There is in fact an equal danger in a political line that says we should have nothing whatsoever to do with the Democrats in any way" ("The Occupy Movement: Lessons for Revolutionaries," 30 October 2011). Long before Occupy came into existence, Freedom Road redefined "socialism" as "full democracy and some form of public direction of the economy" (1991 "Unity Statement"), a notion that would probably meet with approval from the vast majority of liberal Occupy activists. In truth, socialism is about eliminating scarcity worldwide through international socialist revolutions that smash capitalism and install the dictatorship of the proletariat.

On March 17, comrades of the Spartacist League exposed Freedom Road's reformist program at this year's Left Forum in New York. The Left Forum was a three-day event sponsored by the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), which seeks to turn angry Occupy protesters into voting cattle for the Democrats. At a workshop titled "The Occupy Motion and the Revolutionary Process," featuring Freedom Road spokesman Eric Odell and two speakers from the League of Revolutionaries for a New America,



Left: Freedom Road, which supported Obama's 2008 campaign, said his "victory marks a new milestone in the battle for democracy in the US." Right: Commander-in-Chief congratulates new recruits for enforcing racist "law and order," Columbus Police Academy graduation, Ohio, 2009.



White House

the panelists fatuously hailed the petty-bourgeois Occupy protests as a “revolutionary process.”

Against Odell’s claim that the Occupy protests were “implicitly anti-capitalist,” a Spartacist comrade pointed out that these protests were petty-bourgeois and populist, submerging any working-class component into the so-called “99 percent”—a term that treats workers, their supervisors and the cops as all part of the “middle class” with supposed common interests. He explained that the program of the Occupy movement “was to clean up and reform capitalism” and achieve true “democracy” for all within this hideously exploitative, class-divided society. Our comrade noted that we defended the Occupy protesters against the cops and intervened into the protests with our revolutionary program in frank opposition to Occupy’s pro-Democratic politics, which Freedom Road tails after today. He exposed the supposed “socialists” on the panel for not even mentioning the Democratic Party, which is a dead end for struggle.

Odell replied by exhorting the audience to put its faith in the wisdom of the Occupy protesters. “The collective wisdom of the masses is greater than any one smart person or even any single organization.... We just need to get out there and build the movement.” Bolshevik leader Lenin had nothing but contempt for the reformists of his time who “kneel in prayer to spontaneity, gazing with awe... upon the ‘posterior’ of the Russian proletariat” (*What Is To Be Done?*). Freedom Road gazes with awe upon the posterior of the petty-bourgeois liberals. Another comrade at the workshop pointed out that the “movement” Freedom Road was busy building in 2008 was the movement to elect America’s next top war criminal.

The “Mass Line”: Regurgitated Reformism

During the March 17 workshop Odell offered his organization’s theoretical justification for its craven reformist cheerleading: the so-called Principle of the Mass Line. In his presentation Odell defined this “principle”: “Revolutionaries should get out and work and struggle among the masses, on the same level as them.... You don’t stand on the sidelines and hector the masses or get so far out in front of them that they don’t follow you, or run along behind them trying to catch up. We believe that this principle applies everywhere, in all situations.”

The “mass line” is nothing but warmed-over social-democratic reformism. It is a justification in different words for the time-dishonored minimum-maximum program exemplified by the practice of the German social democracy, which became infamous for voting for war credits for its own bourgeoisie during the first imperialist world war. According to this “principle,” actually arguing the need for socialism is reserved for occasional Sunday speechifying, while the real program is pushing the idea of the reform of capitalism in political work all day and every day.

In the hands of Freedom Road, the “mass line” is an explicit justification for telling people whatever you think they want to hear: you can enthuse over Obama or accommodate to the suicidal idea that cops can be allies of Occupy activists, while you can put on a more left face if you happen to encounter somebody who is what Freedom Road calls more “advanced.” Needless to say, the ISO and innumerable others are quite capable of doing exactly the same thing without having a “theory”

to justify their opportunism.

What Freedom Road seeks to be “on the same level” with is thoroughly *bourgeois consciousness*. Marxists, on the contrary, seek to break the hold of bourgeois ideology on the working class and oppressed masses. We are indeed “far out in front” of the masses in our principled opposition to voting for Democrats or any other capitalist party. But when class struggle heats up and consciousness changes, the workers will remember which party told them the truth they did not want to hear at the time as well as which groups flattered their bourgeois liberal prejudices as “revolutionary.”

Freedom Road will eagerly ditch its “divisive” socialist pretensions and blend into the movement like chameleons. In response to a Frequently Asked Question on their Web site, “Why don’t I see you with banners and papers at demos?” they admit they have no print newspaper and add, “Overall we probably err in a ‘movementist’ direction—focusing on the

proletarians, but who are incapable of waging an *independent* struggle for their emancipation” (emphasis in original).

Freedom Road has embraced just about any left-talking capitalist politician or party, from President Hugo Chávez in Venezuela to the African National Congress in South Africa. Freedom Road’s political support to neocolonial capitalist rulers, to anti-proletarian petty-bourgeois nationalist movements and, not least, to the Democratic Party of U.S. imperialism are all positions cut from the same Maoist cloth.

While hostile to the Soviet bureaucracy after the Sino-Soviet split, Mao and his cothinkers were no less devoted to the Stalinist fiction of building socialism in a single country (in the case of the Maoists, of course, the country was China). Opposing the Leninist program for workers revolutions worldwide, Mao sought to buy the neutrality of the world bourgeoisie toward China by eschewing revolutionary struggle abroad. Like the

nists’ political liquidation into bourgeois-nationalist forces. The second stage is the slaughter of the communists and advanced workers at the hands of the bourgeoisie.

Mao’s program of “peaceful coexistence” with “friendly” capitalist governments led China straight into the arms of U.S. imperialism. In 1972 Mao and President Nixon sealed an alliance against the Soviet Union while American bombs rained over Vietnam. Freedom Road’s forebears proudly saluted Mao’s alliance with the U.S. and railed against “Soviet social-imperialism” as a greater enemy of the workers and oppressed of the world than the mass-murdering U.S. imperialists.

In contrast, we Trotskyists fought for the victory of the Vietnamese Revolution, without placing political confidence in the Vietnamese Stalinist leadership, which had handed power back to the capitalist rulers in the southern part of the country in 1954 and sought to make deals with the imperialists almost up until the final military defeat of the U.S. forces. Our



AFP

Mao sealed anti-Soviet alliance with war criminal Nixon at 1972 meeting in Beijing, as U.S. imperialist bombs rained down on Vietnam.



U.S.A.F.

broad movement and underplaying our own independent public face.” A leaflet distributed at the March 17 workshop baldly stated, “The socialist Left must be prepared to entertain the idea of a ‘front’ of parties.... The assumption that there will only be one leading party constitutes idealism and dogmatism” (“The Life of the Party: Thoughts on What We Are Trying to Build”). Many parties, many programs: Freedom Road will meander down any path except the road to revolution.

“Anti-Imperialist People’s Front”: Maoist Formula of Class Betrayal

We fight for the defeat of U.S. imperialism and for the right of all nations to self-determination. Unlike Freedom Road, we give no political support to capitalist governments, including those in the oppressed countries. Successful struggle against U.S. imperialism in the underdeveloped countries requires workers revolution to overthrow the semicolonial bourgeoisie, which ultimately relies on the imperialists and will unite with them at every turn to destroy revolutionary struggles that threaten their rule. We defend the Colombian FARC, the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and other guerrilla forces against state repression. But we do not extend political support to such petty-bourgeois nationalist groups, which are hostile to the perspective of workers revolution to overthrow capitalism. Nationalism serves to tie the proletariat to its “own” bourgeoisie. Motivating the burning need for proletarian unity on an internationalist basis, Karl Marx wrote in the *Communist Manifesto*, “The working men have no country.”

What Lenin explained in *The State and Revolution* about the centrality of the proletariat is no less true in the Third World than in the imperialist countries: “Only the proletariat—by virtue of the economic role it plays in large-scale production—is capable of being the leader of *all* the working and exploited people, whom the bourgeoisie exploit, oppress and crush, often not less but more than they do the

Kremlin Stalinists, Mao pursued a policy of class collaboration with supposedly “progressive, anti-imperialist” capitalists in other countries, ostensibly to secure bourgeois democracy in the “first stage,” with socialism relegated to some mythical future stage.

One example of the devastating consequences of such reformism resulted from Mao’s and the pro-Chinese Indonesian Communist Party’s (PKI) support to Sukarno’s “anti-imperialist” capitalist government in the 1960s. Exactly as the pro-Soviet Stalinist parties themselves had done for decades, the PKI politically subordinated its supporters to “brother” Sukarno rather than fighting for a socialist revolution against imperialism and capitalism. The pro-Communist workers were politically disarmed and defenseless when U.S.-backed reaction overthrew the Sukarno regime and slaughtered over a million people in 1965-66—workers, peasants and members of the ethnic Chinese minority. The largest Maoist party outside China was obliterated. The Stalinist/Maoist formula of “two-stage revolution” has been put into practice in Spain, Chile, Egypt, Iran, and so many other countries: the first stage is the commu-

fight for revolution abroad went hand in hand with pursuing the class struggle at home, as we fought to win antiwar militants to forthrightly oppose the capitalist system. In contrast, Stalinists, social democrats and other reformists built platforms for Democratic Party politicians who espoused “peace” in Vietnam only because the U.S. was losing. As Trotskyists we defended the gains of the Russian and Chinese Revolutions, calling for workers political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracies and establish Lenin’s program of international proletarian revolution.

Guilty White Liberalism Serves Racist Rulers

We reject the liberal illusion that black equality can be achieved under capitalism. We champion every struggle against racial discrimination and seek to imbue other anti-racist militants with the understanding that black freedom requires nothing less than smashing the capitalist system and constructing a socialist society into which black people will be fully assimilated as equals.

This perspective is flatly counterposed
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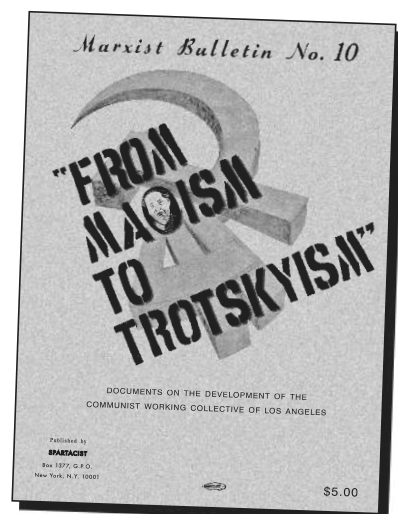
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France...

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alleviate the austerity while retaining the euro and EU membership through which the EU powers subordinate Greece and other peripheral European states.

The *Financial Times* (23 May) reports that “tensions have begun to emerge among EU leaders over how hard a line to take with Greece as the prospect looms of parties opposed to the country’s harsh bailout terms winning next month’s elections.” These tensions are seen in a developing rift between Germany and France, the number two EU power, under its newly elected Socialist Party (PS) president, François Hollande. In arguing to soften the terms for pumping in more funds, Hollande wants to give the Greek rulers more time to implement cuts—i.e., prolong the torture. At home, as the article below explains, the “Socialist” Hollande promises to carry out the interests of the French capitalist rulers by continuing the austerity, appealing to the workers, in a way that the right-wing Nicolas Sarkozy never could, to accept new sacrifices.

Hollande and others worry that German intransigence will force Greece out of the euro zone, with the “contagion” threatening to spread throughout Europe’s weaker economies. Spain is in the midst of an expanding banking crisis. The government takeover of Bankia, a giant mortgage lender, helped touch off a massive outflow of foreign capital, raising the potential for an increase in what is already the EU’s highest official unemployment rate at 25 percent. Any bailout of Spain, Europe’s fourth-largest economy, would come at a much higher price for the EU than those of Greece, Portugal and Ireland. Coming on top of the uncertainty over Greece, the crisis in Spain has thrown the euro as well as European securities into a major tumble, adding to the distinct possibility of a deepening and more prolonged world recession.

Yesterday the head of the European Central Bank, Mario Draghi, told the European Parliament that the bank was reaching the limits of its powers, declaring that the structure of the euro zone had become “unsustainable unless further steps are undertaken.” Draghi has been desperately appealing to Europe’s leaders to make “a brave leap of political imagination” to effect greater “European integration.” This is to call for the impossible.

The International Communist League has always opposed the EU, counterposing the program of proletarian revolution leading to a Socialist United States of Europe. As the current crisis graphically reveals, opposition to the EU and the euro is a necessary starting point for a class-struggle fight by the workers of Europe against their exploiters and oppressors. Originally established as an adjunct of the U.S.-led NATO military alliance against the Soviet degenerated workers state, from its inception the EU has been a mechanism by which the combined capitalist powers attack their own working classes and the dominant countries sub-

ordinate the weaker ones. Although the introduction of the euro furthered both those aims, it also embodied the contradictions that preclude “European integration” under capitalism. As the ICL stated in “For a Workers Europe—For Socialist Revolution!” (WV No. 670, 13 June 1997):

“Control over the quantity of money within its boundaries is a basic economic prerogative of a bourgeois state, one necessarily closely linked to other instruments of economic policy. A stable monetary system based on the ‘euro’ would require tight and permanent restrictions over taxation and government expenditure in all the EU member states.... But since capitalism is organised on the basis of particular national states, itself the cause of repeated imperialist wars to redivide the world, it is impossible to cohere a stable pan-European bourgeois state.”

The following article, translated from French and adapted for WV, is taken from *Le Bolchevik* No. 200 (June 2012), newspaper of our comrades of the Ligue Trotskyste de France. It is based on a public forum by comrade Alexis Henri held in Paris four days after the French presidential elections.

LE BOLCHEVIK 4

First of all, I would like to recall what Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx’s collaborator, explained more than 100 years ago: The working class cannot take power through the ballot box; elections are merely an approximate barometer of the mood of the masses. He wrote:

“The possessing class rules directly through the medium of universal suffrage. As long as the oppressed class, in our case, therefore, the proletariat, is not yet ripe to emancipate itself, it will in its majority regard the existing order of society as the only one possible and, politically, will form the tail of the capitalist class, its extreme Left wing. To the extent, however, that this class matures for its self-emancipation, it constitutes itself as a party of its own and elects its own representatives, not those of the capitalists. Thus, universal suffrage is the gauge of the maturity of the working class. It cannot and never will be anything more in the present-day state; but that is sufficient. On the day the thermometer of universal suffrage registers boiling point among the workers, both they and the capitalists will know where they stand.”

—*The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884)

Engels did not live to see it, but three decades later the Russian workers knew what they had to do. They had their own separate party, a revolutionary vanguard party led by Lenin, and in the October Revolution of 1917 they seized power, not through a parliamentary majority but through their own organs—workers councils, or soviets—organized by factory, barracks, etc. This is our model: A workers government was able to tackle poverty and inequality in a manner inconceivable under capitalism, despite the backwardness of an agrarian country ravaged by war, and then civil war, which Russia underwent after 1917.

In the French election campaign, the Socialist Party’s François Hollande announced an anti-working-class pro-



Sipa

Above: Hollande (far left) joins fascist National Front’s Marine Le Pen (third from right) at March 21 service for French parachutists, whose killings near Toulouse were seized upon to push anti-terror “national unity.”
Right: Dismantling of immigrant camp by cops in Calais, France, 2009. Hollande will continue deportations of immigrants.



AFP

gram. There will be no fight against poverty and inequality. Instead there will be “fair” and equal austerity for all the poor. He explained during his TV debate with Sarkozy on May 2 how he was going to restore the nation’s financial health. He intends to pour hundreds of billions into the banks to repay the debt quickly by making deep cuts in the budget (with the exception of hiring more cops and rescinding some of the job cuts made in education in the last few years). Hollande proved that, at bottom, he would carry out the same anti-immigrant policies as his predecessor by deporting tens of thousands of immigrants.

As for Sarkozy, what we could say about him as an epitaph is that he remarkably personified many essential features of the French bourgeoisie: racist prejudice, viciousness, pettiness, greed, arrogance, brutality, the profound lack of culture of French imperialism in its period of decay. This is why the French bourgeoisie chose him with such enthusiasm five years ago. And in the second round of the elections, he still won comfortable majorities in the richest neighborhoods, among retirees and in rural areas.

The bourgeoisie finally got rid of Sarkozy, not because of all these “qualities” which reflected its own, but because Sarkozy did not fulfill the promises he made them. He was not able to sufficiently restore either the rate of profit or the position of French imperialism vis-à-vis Germany. Being in a position of weakness, Sarkozy had to accept all the humiliations imposed by his American and German imperialist rivals. The French chauvinist Hollande publicly criticized him for these capitulations, showing his own determination to better defend French imperialism, particularly against Germany.

Hollande hopes to extort a bit of money from Germany, using the Greek crisis and relying on ultrareactionaries such as the Spanish conservatives, the heirs of Franco, who are currently in power in Madrid. In fact, in Europe the crisis is only worsening given the imminent bankruptcy of Greece. And this time, the Hollande government will not be able simply to devalue its currency as previous popular fronts did in autumn 1936 and autumn 1981. That would require reinstating the franc, which would shatter the euro zone and the entire EU. There is no solution

under capitalism except austerity for the workers—which can only exacerbate the crisis—and war, as in 1914 and 1939.

There is no solution within the framework of the Hexagon (the territory of France). All Hollande proposed is to repackage the European super-austerity pact signed by Sarkozy and Merkel with some talk of “growth.” We say: **Down with the capitalist European Union!** We counterpose the **Socialist United States of Europe**, which means the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist classes everywhere in Europe and a rationally planned economy across the continent, under the rule of soviet governments.

For Proletarian Political Independence

Hollande pledged that French workers would make all necessary efforts to defend the position of the French bourgeoisie. He even announced how he would do it: by mobilizing the union bureaucrats to tame the working class. Throughout his campaign, Hollande kept repeating that he was going to “reconcile the French people,” meaning that he wanted to convince the workers to stand shoulder to shoulder with the bosses and accept new sacrifices, since the bosses themselves will supposedly also contribute a bit to the common national effort. Whereas Sarkozy divided the French people by waging a one-sided class struggle of the capitalists against the workers, Hollande proposes class collaboration, or in other words, that the workers should willingly submit to their exploiters. A difference of style, not of program. For all these reasons, we called for no vote to Hollande nor to his left water boys of the NPA (New Anti-Capitalist Party), the Left Front and Lutte Ouvrière (LO).

The Left Front of Jean-Luc Mélenchon and the French Communist Party (PCF) bear particular responsibility. The Left Front was the heart and soul of Hollande’s electoral campaign. It remobilized many activists who had been discouraged by too many betrayals under the earlier Socialist-led governments of François Mitterrand and Lionel Jospin and who were initially determined to abstain. As Mélenchon quite rightly pointed out in the PCF newspaper *l’Humanité* (10 May): “Without our four million votes, Sarkozy would never have been defeated. Without our four million votes, Hollande would never have



Maxppp

February 18: Union protest in Aulnay-sous-Bois, suburb of Paris, against job slashing by Peugeot Citroën.

France...

(continued from page 7)

the unions, replacing the bureaucrats who are today in the pay of the bosses.

The revolutionary party must tirelessly show the workers that to elect Hollande, and then elect members of the PS or Left Front to parliament, is to vote for the attacks waged against the working class for the past 20 years to continue. The only way to realize the demands that are essential for the very survival of the working class is for the proletariat to take power through socialist revolution. The extension of the revolution throughout Europe and beyond is the only way to organize the economy, once it is collectivized, on a rational international basis, in the interest of all the workers and oppressed.

Mélenchon: Tricolor “Far Leftist”

The Left Front’s Mélenchon geared his entire campaign toward assuming a presidential stature, albeit somewhat radical. He wants to administer French imperialism himself. Now, let’s leave aside for a moment Mélenchon’s protectionism, his plans to reform the European Central Bank so that it really “serves the people,” his habit of singing the *Marseillaise* at all his meetings. Let’s take the moments when, on the contrary, he raises the question of racism against North Africans, as he did in Marseille in a speech on the beach, looking toward the Mediterranean. I quote what *l’Humanité* (2 May) reported:

“France cannot be the Republic and the nation it is unless it is a universalist nation that gives every one of its children what it believes is good for the entire world.... We must remember that the peoples of the Maghreb are our brothers and sisters. We must repeat that there is no future for France without the Arabs and the Berbers of the Maghreb.”

In any case, he prefers assimilated Arabs and Berbers who don’t wear the Muslim headscarf. Like Hollande and LO’s Arlette Laguiller, Mélenchon supported the racist law prohibiting the headscarf in high schools. He declared in *Le Figaro* (22 November 2003): “Starting with the banning of the veil in schools, we will seize on a surge of secularism, to come back to a categorical refusal to divide French people among each other according to their ori-

gins. In short, this is the concept of a nation defined by its republican principles.”

In all religions, the veil is both a symbol and an instrument of women’s oppression. But we have consistently opposed these racist laws, which only increase the oppression of women who wear the headscarf. Secularism was historically synonymous with the struggle against the influence of the Catholic church over the French state. Now it is coded language for hunting down not so much Muslims as people who “look Muslim,” as Sar-



Left Front candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon campaigning in Marseille on April 14.

kozy admitted quite openly (which Hollande criticized him for). In reality, this amounts to racial profiling of persons suspected of being of North African or West African background. In fact, Mélenchon is interested in a less openly racist policy for French imperialism in order to secure its international influence, and in particular to ensure the support of African and North African states for France’s dealings at the United Nations.

Mélenchon seeks to sell the myth of 1789 France, when the rising and revolutionary bourgeoisie placed itself at the head of the classes oppressed by feudalism. It carried the revolutionary abolition of feudalism throughout the European continent, declaring itself universalist and welcoming into the nation all those who wanted to struggle for liberation. Indeed, the bourgeoisie, once in power, forced open the doors of the ghettos where Jews were confined in the rest of Europe; it began to abolish slavery in the colonies in 1794. But eight years later it restored slavery. Shortly thereafter, it launched the colonial conquest of Algeria, followed by other parts of Africa and other territories,

slaughtering native populations and dispossessing the survivors in the process. Forced labor was officially abolished in the colonies of “French” West Africa only after World War II. The bourgeois “republic” that Mélenchon praises was in fact definitively established on the ashes of the Paris Commune in 1871, when tens of thousands of revolutionary workers were slaughtered by Adolphe Thiers’ troops.

It was over 100 years ago that capitalism passed over to the era of imperialism. The dividing up of the world was con-

cluded in this period, opening up a period of redivision, with the imperialists who felt aggrieved in carving up the spoils calling it into question. That was the cause of both world wars in the 20th century, and it will be the cause of the third if the working class does not succeed in overthrowing the capitalists before then. In the imperialist era, the bourgeoisie has become totally reactionary. Productive forces stagnate, with capitalism increasingly being a brake on their development, as we can see in the current prolonged systemic crisis. The bourgeoisie is today totally incapable of abiding by the universalist values of its own past.

Socialist Party’s Left Flank

In its electoral campaign, the NPA—whose forerunner was the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) of Alain Krivine and Olivier Besancenot—faintly claimed to distinguish itself from Mélenchon, who was supposedly too subservient to the PS and Hollande. In fact, throughout the campaign the NPA itself was just as adamant as Mélenchon that it was necessary to “beat Sarkozy,” meaning vote Hollande in the second round. So the NPA bears its own small share of responsibility for the coming five years of anti-working-class attacks.

The NPA claimed that what sets it apart is its refusal to join the government under any circumstances, saying that it isn’t clear whether or not Mélenchon and the PCF can be trusted on that score. In response, we note first that one of the founding pillars of the NPA was that it would not rule out taking its share of responsibility in a capitalist government (as long as this government pays lip service to “anti-capitalism”). Secondly, Mélenchon himself declared that he wouldn’t enter the government, and there is no reason to believe he would want to compromise himself in a government as openly right-wing and anti-working-class as Hollande’s will be. He will do what the PCF did in 1936, which was to stay outside the Leon Blum government, which placed the PCF in a better position to break the June ’36 strike.

It is so difficult for anyone to distinguish between the faction-ridden NPA and the Left Front that a significant number of NPA members, including prominent leaders, have joined Mélenchon’s front, including in the middle of the election campaign. This question has taken on really sordid dimensions in recent weeks. When the LCR of Krivine-Besancenot dissolved in 2009 to form the NPA, it maintained a legal structure in the name of the LCR in order to continue receiving subsidies granted by the government based on the LCR’s results in the 2007 parliamentary elections. The sums are quite significant: almost a million euros a year.

However, the entity handling this money came under the control of some NPA cadre who subsequently went over to

the Left Front in March—no doubt hoping for a parliamentary or ministerial reward in exchange for their defection—taking the cash box with them. This represents a substantial dowry, which probably played a role in their courting of Mélenchon. But Besancenot and Krivine weren’t about to give up their cash (or more precisely, the government’s cash). They rushed to the bourgeois courts to get their hands back on the loot. Consequently, the banks cancelled the checks that the NPA defectors tried to cash, and the latest word is that Krivine and Besancenot have withdrawn their formal complaint.

As Marxists, we are opposed to taking money from the capitalist state on principle: “He who pays the piper calls the tune!” And we are equally opposed to the workers movement resorting to the capitalist state to wash its dirty linen. This truly obscene affair reveals the extent of the NPA’s social-democratic rot, complete with appeals to the capitalist courts to decide which of the two factions will get the subsidies of the capitalist state. The very concept of a class line separating the workers from the capitalists and their institutions has no meaning for these social democrats.

As for Lutte Ouvrière, Nathalie Arthaud’s election campaign ended in the worst result in LO’s history. But at least, unlike Philippe Poutou’s NPA, she did not explicitly reject the Russian Revolution. Arthaud even conceded to defending the dictatorship of the proletariat. But this only underlines LO’s contradictions. Throughout the campaign, both before and after the first round of the elections, LO refused to call on workers not to support Hollande. In reducing the question of whether to abstain or to vote for Hollande to a “personal choice,” LO implicitly encouraged workers to believe that having Hollande as president would constitute a lesser evil compared to keeping Sarkozy.

This is typical of LO’s conception of a rearguard, anti-Leninist party, tailing the workers who might yield to the pressure to support Hollande’s bourgeois popular front. For LO, whether or not to give political support to a bourgeois coalition is by no means a matter of principle. They have demonstrated this on a daily basis for the last four years by participating in capitalist municipal governments, in which they have joined the municipal majority led by mayors of the PCF or Chevènement’s Citizens Movement in managing capitalism at the citywide level.

For years, we have denounced LO for voting for the budget in these municipal governments. LO’s members are involved in the daily management of capitalism, whether as union bureaucrats in large companies or as “responsible municipal councillors.” LO justifies this by saying: “By definition, municipal activity, just like union activity, cannot be revolutionary, but only reformist” (*Lutte de Classe*, February 2008). This increasingly open opportunism is itself an expression of the retrogression of consciousness of the workers following the overwhelming defeat of the working class 20 years ago with the capitalist counterrevolutions in the Soviet Union and East Europe. In the task of reforging a genuine communist party in this country, LO, far from being the solution, as it claims to be on occasion, is part of the problem.

To conclude, it must be emphasized that workers voted not so much for Hollande as against Sarkozy. There are few illusions that Hollande’s policies will be less anti-labor than Sarkozy’s. Does this mean there will be significant social struggles in the coming period against a rising wave of attacks? There is no way to know. But sooner or later the working class will fight against these attacks. The key is to maintain the independence of the working class, and to maintain the revolutionary program. This is the precondition for revolutionary Marxists to win the confidence of the working class in the coming struggles, and to one day lead it to a socialist revolution that puts an end to this decadent capitalist system once and for all. *For the rebirth of the Fourth International!* ■

Mothers...

(continued from page 12)

addiction, it is a medical condition, treatment for which requires access to decent health care, free of puritanical moralism. We oppose punitive mandatory drug tests on pregnant women and newborns, and other state interference into the medical practices and decisions of doctors.

We also consider drug use, prostitution and gambling as “crimes without victims” and call for their decriminalization. Anti-drug laws are used purely to regiment and repress the population. The bipartisan “war on drugs” is a racist war on black people and the poor and has granted the state greater powers to invade people’s lives and homes, of which Alabama’s chemical endangerment law is an example.

Last November, when a “personhood” measure was on the ballot in Mississippi, Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney made clear that he would support a Constitutional amendment to define life as starting at conception. While the GOP is forthright in its assault on women’s rights, the Democratic Party is no alternative. Obama has also pandered to religious reaction, from overruling the FDA’s approval of the “morning after” birth control pill for teens to agreeing to exclude women working at Catholic institutions from mandatory contraceptive health insurance coverage. Both capitalist parties are committed to advancing the interests of the bourgeoisie and seek to buttress the institution of the family—the main source of women’s oppression—which along with religion



Bei Bei Shuai (right) and her lawyer outside county jail in Indianapolis, May 2012. Shuai faces life imprisonment for “feticide” after attempting suicide while pregnant.

is a key prop to the maintenance of this system of exploitation.

As we wrote in “Utah Prosecutes Mother in Childbirth Tragedy” (WV No. 823, 2 April 2004): “A pack of wolves shows more solidarity and concern for its nursing females and young than the capitalist rulers do.” What is posed is a class-struggle fight for women’s rights and to stem the tide of capitalism’s ravages. Only a workers socialist revolution will shatter the power of the depraved capitalist class and usher in an egalitarian socialist society organized to provide for people’s basic needs. ■

Defend Quebec Students!

The following statement was written by our comrades of the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste, Canadian section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

Since their strike began in mid February, Quebec students and their supporters have faced brutal repression at the hands of the capitalist state. A recent “Request for solidarity and support” by the Legal Committee of the CLASSE student federation notes that the Quebec government’s Law 78 represents “the biggest attack on civil and democratic rights since the enactment of the War Measures Act in 1970.” As of May 18, the Legal Committee had already “documented and is supporting 472 criminal accusations as well as 1047 ticket and penal offenses.” Following the passage of Law 78 that same evening, the number of arrests has risen to well over 2,500.

The CLASSE Legal Committee adds that “those numbers only reflect those charged with an offense, without mentioning the thousands pepper sprayed and tear gassed, clubbed and beaten, detained and released. It does not mention Francis Grenier, who lost use of

most of an eye when a sound grenade was illegally thrown by a police officer into his face in downtown Montreal. It does not mention Maxence Valade who lost a full eye and Alexandre Allard who clung to life in a coma on a hospital bed for days, both having received a police rubber bullet to the head in Victoriaville.” In addition, students who have called to defend strike pickets in the face of court injunctions, including CLASSE spokesman Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, face “contempt of court” charges that carry fines of up to \$50,000 and possible jail time. Drop all charges against students and their supporters!

The Partisan Defense Committee—the legal and social defense organization associated with the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste—has made a donation to the CLASSE Legal Committee, and we join with the Committee in urging that trade unions, other organizations and individuals do the same. Make cheques payable to “Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante,” and send them to: ASSÉ, 2065 rue Parthenais, Bureau 383, Montreal QC H2K 3T1. “CLASSE Legal Committee” should be noted in the memo line.



Reuters

Cops arrest demonstrator during May 22 protest in Montreal.

Quebec...

(continued from page 1)

schools, severely restricts all other protests and threatens fines of up to \$125,000 for groups who defy these edicts. Even advertising such protests is now illegal, as is supporting any kind of strike at a university or college.

The evening that Law 78 was enacted, at least 10,000 students and their supporters took to the streets of Montreal. Protests continued over the following nights and the police declared them illegal, moving in with tear gas, sound cannons and pepper spray and staging mass roundups. Altogether, more than 2,500 people have now been arrested during the student strike (see “Defend Quebec Students!” above). This total far exceeds the arrests even under the War Measures Act in October 1970, when the federal government in Ottawa suspended civil liberties and imprisoned hundreds of leftists, nationalists and union leaders in a move to suppress widespread social struggle over national rights for the French-speaking Québécois.

The Quebec government clearly hoped that the threat of stepped-up repression and huge fines would quell the student protests and smash the strike. But the opposite happened. Four days later on May 22, thousands of trade unionists marching behind union banners as well as large numbers of teachers, parents and high school students joined a 300,000-strong demonstration in Montreal. CLASSE, the more left-wing, anarchist-influenced student union representing the majority of strikers, refused to announce the route of the march and thus effectively dared the government to ban the “illegal” protest and arrest its leaders. The immense size of the protest and substantial union presence stayed the hand of the police.

CLASSE had called on other organizations opposed to the emergency law to join it in active defiance. The union bureaucracy, other striking student groups and leaders of the petty-bourgeois nationalist Québec Solidaire responded by saying

that they could support only “peaceful and legal” protests. Nonetheless, a significant majority of protesters went with CLASSE when the demonstration split about ten minutes into the march.

Despite a daily media barrage demonizing “violent” students, polls show that a majority of the francophone Québécois oppose the emergency law. Many are wearing red squares, the symbol of support to the students and opposition to the crippling student debt (i.e., “being in the red”). As the May 22 demo passed a major downtown hospital, elderly wheelchair-bound patients hooked up to IVs sat on the sidewalk with red squares pinned to their hospital gowns, applauding and raising their fists. The protesters responded with massive cheers. Nightly “pots and pans” marches against Law 78 have broken out in Montreal and other cities, emulating protests during the recent student strikes in Chile.

Having earlier, and repeatedly, vowed that there was nothing to negotiate, the Quebec government did an about-face and resumed talks with the student federations. But the negotiations collapsed on May 31 after the students rejected a gratuitously insulting “offer” to cut one dollar off the planned 75 percent tuition hike. Liberal premier Jean Charest soon after raised the prospect of further repression, slandering CLASSE as “people who are threatening the Québécois” (*La Presse*, 1 June).

Our comrades intervening in the demonstrations reported that many students put forward the notion that better “democracy” is the answer to government repression. In fact, “democracy” does not exist in a vacuum but rather its content is determined by the class that rules society. Under capitalism, democracy is a thin veil to hide the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, which is enforced by its state machinery of violence, namely the cops, courts and prisons—the very forces that are beating and jailing strikers.

While campus activists clearly welcome support from the unions, there is little sense of the unique social power of the working class. Students do not have

any direct relationship to the means of production and lack the social power to beat back the capitalist onslaught. This power resides with the working class, which can withhold its labor and bring the capitalist system to a grinding halt. In the French-language supplement that our comrades distributed at the May 22 mass protest, which appeared in English translation as “Student Strike Shakes Quebec” in WV No. 1003 (25 May), we noted: “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.”

It also is in the interest of workers to champion the struggle for free, quality education for all, with a state-paid living stipend and free childcare for students. In the face of mounting debt servitude to the banks, there should be a fight to abolish the student debt. Since all reforms wrested from the bourgeoisie are temporary and reversible under capitalism, such struggles on behalf of students, workers and the oppressed must be linked to the necessary task of overthrowing this system through socialist revolution.

CLASSE has called for workers to strike in solidarity with the students. But in no way is it advancing a perspective of working-class struggle against the very capitalist system that deprives youth and working people of their basic needs. Like the other two student federations leading the strike, CLASSE seeks to refurbish the education system within the framework of capitalism. A short-lived May 5 deal that the CLASSE leaders endorsed—which was later widely rejected by students—simply tinkered with the terms of austerity and could easily have spelled wage cuts and layoffs for university and college employees.

The abortive deal was brokered in part by the union bureaucracy, which has done its part to attempt to restore “social peace.” Despite the broad anger among working people against the Liberal government, the potentially powerful trade

unions of Quebec have not been mobilized for strike action or anything more than an occasional contingent at a demonstration. The union misleaders are firmly wedded to a class-collaborationist outlook, as expressed by their support to one or another bourgeois nationalist party.

The French-speaking Québécois have long been forcibly retained in a “united” Canada. We call for independence for Quebec as a means to combat Anglo chauvinism and address the national antagonisms that divide the workers of both nations. The mutually reinforcing nationalisms of the Maple Leaf and *fleur de lys* serve to tie workers to their own exploiters, poisoning prospects for united class struggle.

When in the provincial government in the 1990s, the bourgeois-nationalist Parti Québécois (PQ) carried out sweeping attacks on the working class and social programs in the interests of the francophone bourgeoisie. A darling of the reformist left, Québec Solidaire employs populist rhetoric to attract those dissatisfied with the PQ, keeping them firmly in the grip of bourgeois nationalism. Its founding “principles and orientation” foster terrible illusions in a “reformed” bourgeois rule, upholding “democracy,” pacifism and environmentalism while eschewing socialism or class struggle.

Struggle against the all-sided attacks of the capitalist rulers must proceed from an understanding that the interests of the workers and their exploiters are irreconcilable. Only after the working class, standing at the head of all the oppressed, sweeps away the capitalist state and expropriates the bourgeoisie will the right of all to free, quality education, much less jobs, housing and health care, be secured. We are dedicated to winning advanced workers and radical youth to the struggle to forge a revolutionary workers party, one that can unite capitalism’s many victims behind the social power of the proletariat in the fight for a socialist egalitarian society. ■

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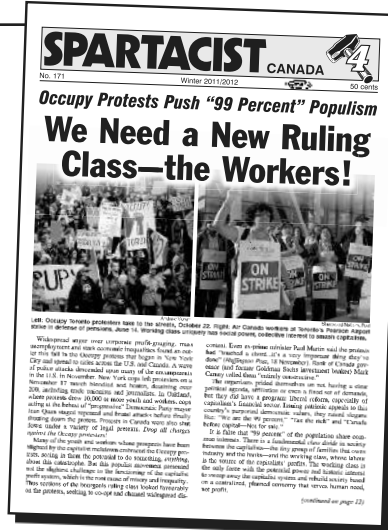
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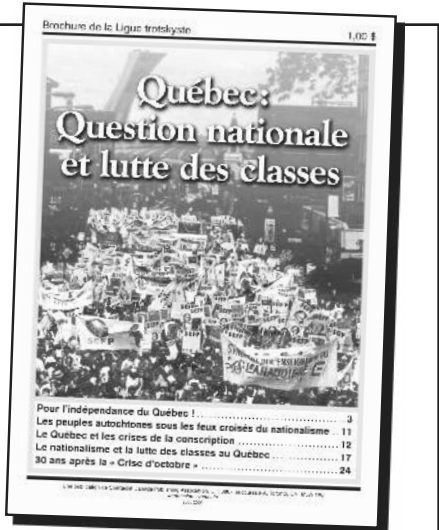
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Homosexual Oppression...

(continued from page 2)

bodies. The enrichment was also on the theoretical plane: the extensive discussions resulted in a more precise Marxist appreciation of gay oppression as a derivative of women's oppression under the institution of the bourgeois nuclear family.

We reprint below a selection from the main programmatic article in the last issue of *Red Flag*, the RFU's newspaper, which was published as a special fusion supplement to *Workers Vanguard* No. 172 (9 September 1977).

* * *

For sectoralists, the communist movement is seen as an amalgam of various oppressed strata rather than as a solitary movement with a singular program. In this context it seemed logical that the task of the "revolutionary" elements among each oppressed group should be to call on their constituency to support the socialist revolution. But the sum total of individual programs which address the various forms of capitalist oppression is not a communist program.

The program of the revolutionary party must express the *objective* historical interests and tasks of the international proletariat. There is only one communist program. Thus, the purpose of Trotsky's Transitional Program is to mobilize the entire working class—to bridge the gap between felt needs and objective tasks, between consciousness of oppression and the need to take state power under the leadership of the proletarian vanguard.

There is no special revolutionary program for homosexuals. The communist program includes demands which address the special oppression of homosexuals. But unlike sectoralists, revolutionaries understand that the fate of homosexuals—like that of any other oppressed group—is determined by the course of the class struggle.

Revolutionary Marxists approach the question of homosexual oppression as the only consistent defenders of democratic rights for all the exploited and oppressed. These rights are indivisible and can be secured only with the proletariat in power. The slogan "Full Democratic Rights for Homosexuals" means a commitment not only to fight against such abuses as job discrimination and legal inequality, but also to mobilize the power of the working class in defense of homosexuals' democratic rights. It is not a separate demand for homosexuals, but a demand in the interests of the entire working class.

The Trotskyist program is not only the Transitional Program, which Trotsky described as "a program for action from today until the beginning of the socialist revolution"; it is also everything the party stands for—on *both* sides of the proletarian revolution.

The Program and the Revolution

The socialist program is committed to the eradication of homosexual oppression, which is linked to the special oppression of women. The sexual division of labor based on child-rearing became a source of social oppression in class society. The



SL contingent at 1977 NYC gay rights demonstration.

nuclear family conditions sex roles which are inherently oppressive to those who deviate from the accepted sex role norms. While proletarian rule will do much to end homosexual oppression, the final eradication of all ideological oppression of homosexuals cannot occur until the family is replaced in socialist society.

Unlike the oppression of women or blacks in the U.S., the oppression of homosexuals is not directly based on the *economic institutions* of capitalism. Black workers, for instance, are disproportionately concentrated in the least skilled, lowest paid layers of the working people and among the unemployed. Thus, the overturn of capitalist productive relations will be a decisive and immediate step toward ending their oppression. Much of the oppression of homosexuals is situated in the realm of discriminatory denial of democratic rights. Homosexuals (like blacks and women, for that matter) will benefit immediately from the victorious proletarian dictatorship's assault on discriminatory laws and practices. But they will still continue to suffer from pervasive hostile social *attitudes* deeply ingrained in the residual nuclear family sex role norms of the culture of a transitional society.

The new transitional society can no more legislate away such attitudes than it can eliminate the family by legislation. To arrive at socialism requires a tremendous leap in the productive forces and the gradual development of real social freedom. The withering away of the family as the basic institution defining sexual relations will result in the eventual disappearance of male chauvinism, and with it of generalized anti-homosexual prejudice.

The Russian Revolution and the Bolshevik Program

The ultimate abolition of the family has been part of the Marxist program since the Communist Manifesto. The Russian Revolution of October 1917 provided the example of how even a backward, largely peasant country began to create the basis to replace the family. In the first few years of the proletarian dictatorship, under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, anti-homosexual laws were struck down and many measures were undertaken with the goal of liberating women from household

slavery: kitchens, child care, laundry, dwellings and schools were collectivized. This task was pursued even under the harsh conditions of war and famine.

But the Bolshevik program also recognized that the revolution isolated in Russia could not advance to socialist society. For that, there would have to be revolution in the West. And so the Bolshevik program was necessarily *internationalist* at its core. It was Stalin who concocted the rationale for the consolidation of a bureaucratic caste in Russia with the nationalistic program of "Socialism in One Country." The revolution degener-

stitutions appropriate to its rule. So it establishes soviets (workers councils) while it seeks to lay the basis for replacing the nuclear family. But where capitalism is overthrown by peasant and petty-bourgeois forces, such as in China or Cuba, under the class collaborationist program of "Socialism in One Country," the bureaucracy fosters institutions appropriate to the peasantry and Stalinism—institutions which replicate the product of the Stalinist degeneration of the Russian Revolution: prison camps for revolutionaries and "deviants," the strengthening of the nuclear family.

Many New Leftists fall into the bourgeoisie's trap of equating Leninism with Stalinism; the degenerated workers state in the USSR is seen as the "natural" outgrowth of the Bolshevik revolution. In actuality, the revolution fell prey to a political counterrevolution. The goal of abolition of the nuclear family which had hitherto been a hallmark of the communist program was replaced by the Stalinist program of the family as a "fighting unit for socialism." No "autonomous gay movement" could have exempted homosexuals from the consequences of the Stalinist political counterrevolution, which exterminated the "Old Bolsheviks," liquidated the workers councils, reversed the drive toward progressive social institutions and turned the Communist International into an instrument of class collaboration and "peaceful coexistence."

It was only when the RFU came to grips with the continuity of revolutionary Marxism—Trotskyism—that we were able to explain the degeneration of the Russian Revolution and its consequences



Oakland: Spartacists at November 2008 protest against anti-gay Proposition 8.

ated, and with that came Stalinist class collaboration and terror. The nuclear family was reinforced, and laws against homosexuals were reinstituted.

The Russian Revolution demonstrates how the proletariat led by its vanguard party moves immediately to establish in-

for homosexuals in the "socialist" countries. Because the Spartacist League uniquely understood the Russian question and the primacy of program, it could play the decisive role in the transformation of the comrades of the RFU from gay left activists into revolutionary communists. ■

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Truckers...

(continued from page 3)

unionize the port truckers nationwide.

In response to militant Teamsters strikes in the 1970s, Democratic president Jimmy Carter pushed through industry deregulation to drive down shipping and transportation costs and strangle union power. This allowed the bosses to replace Teamsters drivers with non-union drivers in the ports. Today, the vast majority of port truckers are deemed “owner operators,” forced to buy or lease their own trucks, to wait unpaid for a load and to pay all gas, maintenance, insurance and fines for overweight containers themselves. Many clear only around \$20,000 a year. In February, hundreds of port truckers went on strike at the Port of Seattle in protest against just such oppressive working conditions, demanding their right to unionize.

The fate of the ILWU and the ILA is inextricably linked to the fight to organize port truckers as well as the many low-wage, non-union workers in the ever-growing chain of world trade, from the warehouses and intermodal facilities further inland to the mammoth cargo ships. The longshore unions will either take up the fight to extend union rights, wages, benefits and conditions to these workers or they will sooner or later face government-backed union-busting by the capitalist employers *without any union allies* on the docks.

No Reliance on the Capitalist State

Over 10 years ago, the Teamsters, ILWU and ILA announced an alliance to make the ports “100 percent union.” But far from engaging in the class battles necessary to make this a reality the union tops look to the “good graces” of the capitalist state. The legalistic strategy of the Teamsters bureaucracy is to appeal to state legislatures, the courts and the bosses’ Department of Labor to reclassify port truckers as employees so as to be able to organize them under NLRB rules. The Toll drivers fell into this category because a few years ago the company had switched from self-employed contract drivers when it bought new trucks under the terms of a Port of L.A. truck pollution cleanup program backed by the Teamsters. An appeals court overturned the port’s requirement that companies buy their own trucks and rehire contractors as employees, relieving other trucking outfits of the need to comply. The Teamsters were left with Toll as an organizing beachhead.

But the fight is far from over. The Toll



Lambert/Seattle Times

February 13: Port truckers strike rally at the Port of Seattle.

truckers, members of Teamsters Local 848, are now engaged in contract negotiations with the company. Most employers whose workers have just voted in a union try to draw out negotiations indefinitely and avoid signing a first contract at all. The Toll truckers and their counterparts who work as contractors at other companies could take a page from the five-week strike in 2005 in Vancouver by 1,200 mostly immigrant non-union drivers. The hemorrhaging of profits as containers piled up on the docks prompted the Canadian government to lift the antitrust laws used by shipping companies there as in the U.S. to prevent driver organizing. The strike opened the door to a port-wide contract.

Standing in the way of hardball class struggle is a union leadership that breeds illusions in the supposed “neutrality” of the state. But the purpose of the Department of Labor and its NLRB is to entangle the working class in protracted legal proceedings in order to maintain labor “peace,” i.e., prevent strikes or settle them quickly. These are strikebreaking agencies even if they occasionally rule against the bosses. In Australia, this role is currently filled by the federal government’s “workplace relations tribunal,” which recently banned industrial action by TWU members at Qantas Airlines. Such government entities are set up to keep the unions under the thumb of the capitalist state—at its core, the courts, police, prisons and military—which exists to maintain the rule of the capitalist exploiters.

Last year, the Teamsters and the Australian TWU launched “The Grim Truth

at Toll Group” Web site. A posting on it claims that the organizing of the Toll truckers occurred “despite their foreign employer’s vicious and expensive year-long campaign to intimidate workplace leaders and suppress their free choice.” Actually, the actions of the Toll Group are standard fare for capitalists everywhere attempting to stop unionization, regardless of national origins. In the U.S., employers fire workers in a quarter of all organizing campaigns and employ mandatory one-on-one anti-union meetings in two-thirds of unionization drives. Such tactics are formally illegal. But again demonstrating whose interests the capitalist state and agencies represent, the bosses almost always get away with it or receive a slap on the wrist from the NLRB.

Treacherously, the ILWU, ILA and Teamsters leaderships have offered themselves up as “national security” police auxiliaries at the ports. The ILWU fingered the largely immigrant port truckers as a potential “security” threat at the time that the 2002 Maritime Transportation Security Act, part of the government’s “war on terror” crackdown on the docks, was drafted. For his part, Teamsters president James Hoffa has organized chauvinist, racist demonstrations against “unsafe” Mexican truckers.

Such protectionist poison spread by the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy cripples the ability of the unions to struggle, subordinating workers to the national interests of U.S. imperialist rule. Crucial to organizing the over 100,000 port truckers nationwide is the fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants, as the truck-

ing companies prey on the desperation of foreign-born workers to enforce poverty wages and wretched working conditions. Much of this workforce comes from countries with strong traditions of labor militancy and anti-capitalist struggle and could help reinvigorate the working class here. Joint struggle would go a long way toward breaking down national prejudices.

The unions were built through hard class struggle—mass picket lines that shut down production and repulsed attacks by scab-herding cops, secondary strikes by other unions and the mobilization of the unemployed for strike support. Longshore and other transport workers in the global cargo chain, which increasingly relies on just-in-time delivery, have immense potential social power. Every link in this chain could be a chokepoint, giving the workers real leverage in taking on the employers. But that requires some basic labor solidarity, from respecting the elementary principle that “picket lines mean don’t cross” to refusing to handle scab goods.

Labor will succeed in fighting for its own interests only insofar as it is organized independently from all the bosses’ parties. The endorsement by the Teamsters and other unions of Barack Obama in the 2012 elections is an expression of the labor misleaders’ subservience to the class rule of the bourgeoisie. The Democratic Party is no less a party of the class enemy than the Republicans, as Obama’s tenure as president amply proves. He has deported more immigrants than Bush ever did and not hesitated in savaging the unions, with the complicity of the venal labor bureaucracy. In his capacity as imperialist Commander-in-Chief, Obama has waged bloody imperialist war on working and oppressed people internationally—from Afghanistan to Iraq to Libya.

And while Democratic L.A. mayor Antonio Villaraigosa piously called for “justice” for the Toll truckers, he has run point for the capitalists in their attacks on unionized L.A. teachers and city workers. Enough! As we wrote in “For a Class-Struggle Fight to Organize Port Truckers!” (WV No. 916, 8 June 2008):

“For the unions, the only significant racially integrated organizations in the U.S., to become battalions of struggle against this racist capitalist order requires a political fight to oust the chauvinist misleaders of the labor movement and replace them with a class-struggle leadership. This is integrally linked to the forging of a multiracial revolutionary workers party to lead the battle for the eradication of this increasingly depraved system of exploitation and racist reaction through a victorious socialist revolution.” ■

Young Spartacus

Maoists...

(continued from page 5)

to Freedom Road’s petty-bourgeois black nationalism, a defeatist acceptance of racial segregation. Freedom Road advances the idea of an independent “African American nation” in the South, a utopian fantasy that would deny blacks their birthright: the wealth and culture of this country that their labor along with that of other workers has created. Simultaneously, they push community control of the crumbling inner cities, a reactionary line compatible with the idea that black cops will be less devoted than their white counterparts in doing their job for the capitalists to repress the ghetto masses.

A particularly repellent contribution to anti-Marxist “theory” by the Avakian RCP as well as PUL was the notion that white working people and their bosses are somehow united in “white privilege.” This is an application of the position of the old New Leftists and right-wing Maoists that the working class in advanced capitalist countries has been “bought off” and can never play a revolutionary role. Among other things, it served as a justification for rejecting any potential for revolutionary struggle to break out in the imperialist countries.

Freedom Road continues to proudly trumpet the “white privilege” line as one of the “keystones of our identity.” Arguing that white workers must be won to renouncing their “privilege,” Freedom Road joins bourgeois liberals in viewing racist ideas among white workers as responsible for racial oppression, thus providing an alibi for the capitalist system. It is the bourgeoisie that profits from the double oppression of black workers and the division of the working people along racial and ethnic lines. Freedom Road’s “theory” also mimics the constituency politics of the Democratic Party, which pits workers of different ethnicities against one another in fighting for crumbs from the capitalists’ table.

In the same reactionary idealist vein, Freedom Road and its RSCC front group deflect the anger of oppressed minority students away from the capitalist system and instead blame teachers for the oppressive, stifling hellholes that are America’s segregated ghetto schools. The RSCC platform states, “We want teachers who suppress progressive and revolutionary ideas to be removed.” This is a despicable call to purge teachers and is of a piece with the nationwide crusade against the teachers unions, spearheaded by the White House and directed in New York

City by Bloomberg’s administration. We side with the teachers unions against the wholesale attacks on public education, including the attempts to shred seniority rights and tenure.

The systematic job discrimination, decrepit and overpriced housing and rampant cop terror that afflict most black Americans are materially rooted in the capitalist system, in which the mass of the black population is segregated at the bottom of society. Obviously, some white workers accept the racist rulers’ lies of white superiority and black inferiority, especially in this period lacking in class struggle—due in large part to the venal pro-Democratic union bureaucracy and its longstanding indifference to black oppression. Just as obviously, such prejudices do not shower “privilege” on white workers, on the contrary they *work to their detriment*. In the 1890s, revolutionary Friedrich Engels observed that the U.S. bourgeoisie is so skilled at using prejudice to divide the working class “that differences in the living standard of the workers exist, I believe, in New York to an extent unheard-of elsewhere.”

White workers, along with black, Latino and Asian workers, have lost their jobs in the current economic crisis and suffer bankruptcy and homelessness in stagger-

ing numbers nationwide. Thus white workers have *no* material stake in the perpetuation of this incredibly unequal society. Any serious strike on the part of the multiracial proletariat will undercut, often dramatically, the racism and other forms of bigotry that infect and cripple the working class. Ultimately, breaking down racial barriers requires the leadership of a revolutionary vanguard party intervening into social struggle to win the working class to reject the supposed inevitability of capitalism and fight for a socialist system, which alone can satisfy the needs of all working people and the oppressed.

With its support to the capitalist Democratic Party and its “mass line” adaptation to prevailing bourgeois consciousness, Freedom Road swims with the regressive ideological flow. The Spartacist League/U.S. and the other national sections of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) swim against the stream, fighting to break the working class and militant youth from the false consciousness that obstructs the struggle for new October Revolutions. Exposing the fake-Marxist pretensions of other organizations is crucial to removing the obstacles to workers and young radicals seeking a revolutionary alternative to this system of exploitation, poverty, racism and war. ■

“Fetal Rights” Crusade Against Women

States Criminalize “Bad” Mothers

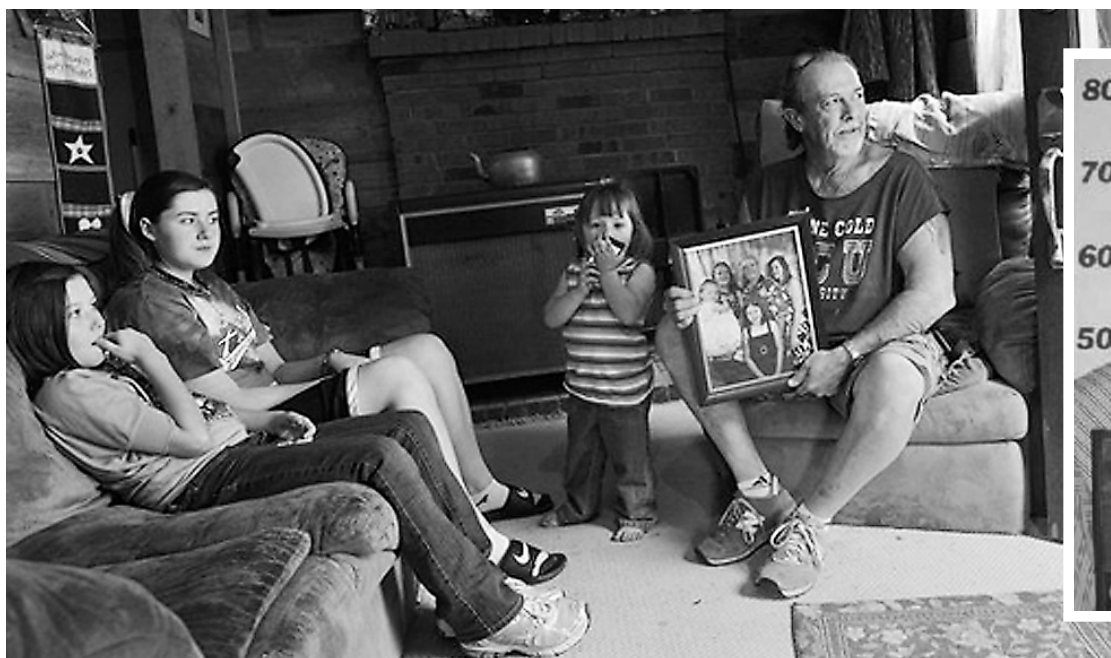
The Alabama Supreme Court is soon due to hear an appeal on behalf of two mothers who were convicted on felony charges of “chemical endangerment of a child,” even though there is no evidence that they ever caused harm to any of their children. These mothers are victims of a “fetal rights” campaign being pushed by reactionary crusaders as part of a wider assault on women’s rights, above all abortion. The “right to life” Liberty Counsel—the same group that helped defend Mississippi’s reactionary fetal “personhood” measure in November 2011—is among the bible-thumpers backing the state. On the other side, numerous medical and civil rights organizations have lined up in support of the appeal.

Some 60 mothers have been prosecuted under Alabama’s 2006 chemical endangerment law, which ostensibly was aimed at adults who expose children to the toxic byproducts from cooking methamphetamine. However, in some rural counties, ideologically driven prosecutors have wielded the law to go after mothers who have allegedly consumed meth or other drugs, asserting that the womb constitutes an “environment” and that the fetus is a “child.” In doing so, the capitalist state is setting the stage for its increased scrutiny of and interference into the lives of pregnant women.

One of the Alabama mothers in the appeal before the Supreme Court is Amanda Kimbrough, whose baby had Down syndrome and died minutes after being delivered prematurely by Cesarean section in 2008. The state turned this tragedy into a nightmare for the grieving family. Kimbrough tried meth once during the pregnancy, and it showed up in a drug test. Despite no proven link between her meth use and the baby’s death, Kimbrough’s two daughters were swiftly taken from her custody, and she was thrown in jail. After a two-day trial, she received the mandatory minimum sentence of *ten years*. While released on bail pending her appeal, she was arrested for selling oxycodone to an undercover agent. As a result of this setup, Kimbrough is back behind bars.

The second case in the appeal is that of Hope Ankrom, who used marijuana to control her severe nausea during pregnancy. She knew a positive drug test at delivery would risk prosecution, so she planned to stop taking the drug six weeks before her due date. However, the baby arrived early. Although her son was born, and remains, healthy, Ankrom was convicted of chemical endangerment and was not permitted to be alone with her own children.

Although Alabama currently is a leader in criminalizing the behavior of expecting mothers, it is far from unique. The Bush regime, which believed it was doing the work of God, passed the federal “Unborn Victims of Violence Act” in 2004. Its purpose was to extend the definition of “child” to include the fetus. Some 39 states now have “fetal homicide” laws on the books in the name of protecting pregnant women from violence. But far from reducing violence, these laws have been used to target mothers. In South Carolina, one man and an estimated 300 women



Addario/NY Times

Family of Amanda Kimbrough at home in Alabama. Kimbrough (inset) was sentenced to a minimum of ten years for testing positive for meth while pregnant.



Shoals Insider

have been charged under its “feticide” law.

One woman being punished for her personal tragedy is Chinese immigrant Bei Bei Shuai. Her “American Dream” of acquiring an education and achieving some financial security had been cruelly shattered by the brutal realities of this racist capitalist society, leaving her desperate and depressed. In December 2010 in Indianapolis, Shuai attempted suicide by eating rat poison when 33 weeks pregnant. She survived, but her child was delivered prematurely and died three days later. In March 2011, Shuai was charged with “feticide,” and she has only just been released on bond after spending more than a year in jail. Her trial is set for December after the Court of Appeals refused to dismiss charges. If convicted, she faces 45 years to life in a prison hellhole. *Drop the charges against Amanda Kimbrough, Hope Ankrom, Bei Bei Shuai and all other mothers charged under chemical endangerment and feticide laws!*

For the reactionary zealots and religious fundamentalists, “fetal rights” is a means to advance a broader agenda: overturning *Roe v. Wade* and banning

abortion. The president of the fanatical anti-abortion group Operation Rescue has gloated: “We win every time we establish the precedent that the unborn child in the womb is a unique human individual.” These anti-woman forces are also widely pushing “personhood” initiatives, which are currently under legislative debate in several states, including in Alabama. Such measures define human life as beginning at conception, effectively outlawing abortion, fertility treatments and certain methods of contraception.

The bigots treat women as if they were nothing more than “maternal hosts” for the next generation. As Emma Ketteringham, the director of legal advocacy at the National Advocates for Pregnant Women put it:

“Everyone talks about the personhood of the fetus, but what’s really at stake is the personhood of women.... It starts with cocaine, and then it’s cigarettes and alcohol. How much alcohol? And when? It’s only a matter of time until it comes to refusing a bed-rest order because you need to work and take care of your other children and then you have a miscarriage. What if you stay at a job where you’re exposed to toxic chemicals, as at a dry cleaner?”

As Marxist materialists, we reject the idealist notion—ultimately derived from religion—that a fetus is a human with a “soul.” Since a fetus and the mother are biologically united during pregnancy, all attempts to endow the fetus with rights come at the expense of those of the mother. We fight for full democratic rights and social services for women, including free abortion on demand.

For all the drivel spewed by prosecutors and legislators over the well-being of the fetus, the real threats to pregnant women and their babies are the massive inequalities built into this society that deprive millions of access to health care, not to mention jobs, decent housing and education. The real criminals are the landlords, employers, insurance companies and government at all levels—that is, the capitalists and their institutions of class rule, for whom the lives of the poor, working and black population are cheap. One result is that the rate of pre-term births in the U.S. is comparable to that of Kenya, East Timor and Honduras, while its infant mortality rate, especially for black people, is higher than those of other advanced capitalist countries.

Throwing women in jail for “endangering” their fetuses is cut of the same cloth as the demonization of black women during the “crack baby epidemic” of the 1980s and ’90s. This hysteria was manufactured to blame the ghetto poor for their own plight and flew in the face of scientific research. One 1999 article summarized research demonstrating what was already known about the relationship between poverty and the development of a young child’s brain, observing: “The inner-city child who has had no drug exposure at all is doing no better than a child labeled a ‘crack baby.’”

Today, even the conservative American Medical Association has come out in opposition to legislation that criminalizes pregnant women who use drugs. Such laws only serve to deter mothers-to-be from seeking out the crucial medical care and attention that they need. Drug use is a private matter. In the case of drug

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Oklahoma City, February 28: Protest at state capitol against anti-abortion, anti-woman “personhood” bill defining human life as beginning at conception.