

## Hurricane Sandy

# Capitalist Greed, Labor Heroism



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Devastated New Dorp neighborhood of Staten Island (center). Less than two days after storm, billionaire mayor Bloomberg reopened NY Stock Exchange (left) while millions remained without electricity. Meanwhile, Con Ed crews worked around the clock to restore power (right).



WV Photo

NEW YORK CITY, November 5—Billionaire mayor Michael Bloomberg rang the opening bell of the New York Stock Exchange on October 31, signaling the priority for the Wall Street financiers in the wake of Hurricane Sandy: getting the capitalists' profit machine back up and running. Meanwhile, working people were still only beginning to pull out the bodies of family members and neighbors from the wreckage of flooded homes on Staten Island and elsewhere. The sharp juxtaposition of the high life for the masters of finance capital vs. darkness, cold, hunger, misery and death for working people, the poor and minorities led some journalists to write that New York was "a tale of two cities."

The capitalist class has let this country's infrastructure go to hell while waging a one-sided class war against organized labor, with the union bureaucrats working to keep labor in line. The heroes of this disaster are precisely the vilified union workers who, along with others, have toiled for days on end to save lives and get people the services they need—electricity, transportation, heat, sanitation, food, water, schools, hospitals, communications.

These are the very workers that politicians from both capitalist parties—Democrats and Republicans—have portrayed as public enemies: the heavily black and immigrant transit workers who were called "thugs" by Bloomberg when they dared to strike in 2005; the "greedy" utility workers locked out by Consolidated Edison in July for trying to hold on to promised pensions; the "lazy" schoolteachers now staffing shelters who are fighting the destruction of public education and union seniority rights; the "privileged" Verizon communications workers who went

over a year without a contract after striking last year to defend health coverage; the "selfish" state employees struggling against New Jersey Republican governor Chris Christie and New York Democratic governor Andrew Cuomo to maintain the right to collective bargaining. With tens of thousands now added to the legions of homeless in NYC alone, these workers' skills, organization and self-sacrificing labor are what stands between life and death for untold numbers of people.

City workers were told they had to report to work but they had no way to get there—no subways or commuter rail, no gas for their cars and no traffic lights. Mainly immigrant taxi drivers got many of them to work, until they ran out of gas. Some who couldn't get to their jobs were told the time would be taken out of their sick leave or vacation time! Then there is the growing army of part-time workers who don't even have benefits for the bosses to gouge. For them it was no work, no pay, including if their workplace was closed because there was no power. The desperation to get to work without public transport or gasoline illuminated in a flash why Karl Marx called wage labor *wage slavery*.

Some transit workers were confined to

company property for days on end, often without cots or other necessities. But workers were threatened with docked pay if they left company property to sleep in their cars. Con Ed workers have been working 16-hour shifts, struggling to bring back electricity and heat as the thermometer plunges and hypothermia emerges as another danger, particularly with a northeaster storm headed into the area. Hospital workers labored around the clock to evacuate patients when emergency backup generators failed at two of Manhattan's largest hospitals, forcing them to close.

Government officials made damn sure that "security" would be at the head of the line for scarce resources. So while drivers' tempers flared at those filling stations that could pump gas, where lines have reached a mile in length, cop cars had plenty of fuel. A 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. curfew in Jersey City gave the cops license to further besiege minority neighborhoods. A black NYC transit worker told WV that he risked arrest by leaving his home at 4 a.m. to report to Manhattan for work. In the face of police intimidation, on November 2 some 50 black residents of one of Jersey City's poorest neighborhoods rallied outside its City Hall chanting, "What do we

want? Electricity! When do we want it? Now!"

The teeming prison population on Rikers Island, in a treacherous stretch of the East River, was threatened with the kind of homicidal racist treatment meted out during Hurricane Katrina. Asked before Sandy hit about the safety of the 12,000 inmates, Bloomberg replied that "jails are secured. Don't worry about anybody getting out."

After ringing in the stock exchange, Bloomberg's priority was to hear the starting gun for the New York City Marathon, which brings in millions for business owners. With electric power desperately needed everywhere, some 41 generators were held in reserve for the race. Tens of thousands of bottles of drinking water, massive stores of food, thousands of blankets, and the labor of emergency medical services, sanitation, parks department and volunteers were secured for the exclusive use of a run starting on the Verrazano Bridge, barely a mile from where most of the drowning victims have been found. A mounting uproar from the public—and from sanitation workers who appealed to union officials that they should be mobilized to help suffering Staten Island and Queens residents instead—finally pushed Bloomberg back from his plan to prance on the dead and the forsaken.

### Class Divide

Chris Christie's embrace of Barack Obama as they toured the devastated Jersey Shore was a bipartisan photo-op. Christie was angling for a big chunk of federal money while Obama and his media entourage put out the message that "we're all in this together"—patriotic eyewash intended to blind people from seeing the irrationality, inequalities and advanced decay of this class-divided society on the eve of a presidential election.

Hurricane Sandy was a natural disaster enormously compounded by the anarchy

*continued on page 6*









In lead-up to elections, ongoing capitalist crisis devastates workers, poor. Left: Line at job fair, Los Angeles, August 17. Right: Girl at food bank in impoverished Utica, New York, May 15.



Getty

# Elections 2012: Wall Street Democrat vs. Wall Street Republican

*This part concludes this article. Part One appeared in WV No. 1011 (26 October).*

The “Southern Strategy” [by which the Republican Party attracted white Southern Democratic voters in the wake of the civil rights struggles] may be associated with the Republicans, but the rightward turn in this country really kicked into gear with the Democratic Party administration of Jimmy Carter. Coming to office in 1977, the Carter administration kicked off an

## PART TWO

onslaught of domestic social reaction and the renewal of the Cold War drive against the Soviet Union.

A primary concern was to reverse the economic decline of American imperialism. By the 1970s, the arrogant U.S. rulers had let their industrial infrastructure become technologically obsolete. Particularly with the economy distorted by defense spending for the Vietnam War, the U.S. no longer was the world’s undisputed capitalist powerhouse. A good number of auto and steel factories were closed. To increase profitability, the ruling class moved a good deal of production to low-wage places in the open shop South as well as to neocolonies in Latin America and Southeast Asia. The ruling class launched a campaign to crack down on the working class.

For the American bourgeoisie, the radicalism of the 1960s—the fight for black equality, the struggle for women’s rights and against the Vietnam War—was a dangerous bubble, with social protest threatening to spill over into an aroused labor movement. A major ideological assault was launched, aimed at instilling unquestioned acceptance of capitalism, god and family, including the desirability of dying for one’s country. The “born again” Carter brought religion into the White House. As school

### Notice to Our Readers

Due to the disruption caused by Hurricane Sandy in New York City, where we are headquartered and the paper is printed, this issue of *Workers Vanguard* is eight pages instead of our normal twelve.

## For a Workers Party That Fights for a Workers Government!

busing was going down to defeat in city after city, Carter stoked the anti-busing, segregationist backlash by proclaiming the virtue of “ethnic purity.” Carter signed the Hyde Amendment cutting off government funding for abortions for poor women, while declaring that “there are many things in life that are not fair.” He drafted plans to break a threatened strike by the PATCO air traffic controllers union, and his successor, Reagan, fired the entire PATCO membership of 12,000 when they went on strike, opening the way for what has been a one-sided war on labor.

Having lost the presidency to Reagan and George Bush the First in the 1980s, the Democratic Leadership Council came up with a plan to win back white racist voters. In 1992 they fielded a ticket with two Southerners—Clinton and Gore. Clinton promised to “end welfare as we know it,” a promise he kept—something the arch-conservative Reagan couldn’t accomplish. The Southern and Southwestern states achieved new prominence. This largely non-union region contains a big part of the “bible belt,” whose considerable yahoo fringe became a potent political force. Within each party, the former right wing became the mainstream.

### Capitalists’ Labor Lieutenants

No less than the Republicans, the Democrats are a capitalist party, a political vehicle for the filthy rich, racist capitalist rulers. Structurally part of the Democratic Party, the labor bureaucracy acts as the political agents of the capitalist class within the workers movement. Presiding over the decimation of the unions they sit atop, the “labor statesmen” work harder and harder to keep an increasingly frustrated base in the Democratic Party fold. Since the 2000 election cycle, the AFL-CIO has ponied up at least a billion dollars for the Democrats while doing next to nothing to organize the unorganized or to prepare and support strike action to defend unions from a bipartisan capitalist onslaught. How about this for a souvenir at the next AFL-CIO convention: “My

union federation spent hundreds of millions on the Democrats and all I got was this lousy T-shirt.”

The bosses and their state have been taking it to what’s left of the organized labor movement. The past two years have seen an increased use of the tactic of locking out union workers. At the height of this summer’s heat wave, New York’s giant Con Edison utility locked out over 8,500 utility workers for nearly four weeks. Members of the United Steelworkers were locked out for 13 weeks by Cooper Tire & Rubber Co. in Ohio. After more than a year, workers at American Crystal Sugar in North Dakota and other states remain on the street, and Oakland Teamsters at Waste Management Inc. have been locked out since July as well.

The pro-capitalist union tops have overwhelmingly met this onslaught with the same prostration they perfected in past decades. In a bitter and ominous defeat for labor, on August 17 a 15-week-long strike against the Caterpillar corporation by 780 members of International Association of

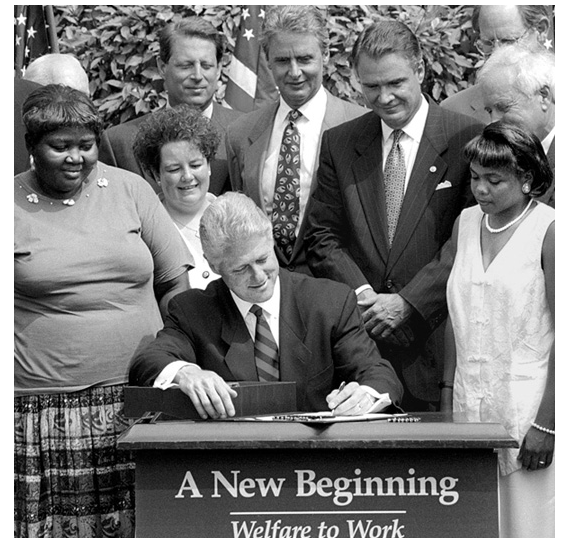
Machinists and Aerospace Workers Local Lodge 851 in Joliet, Illinois, ended when workers narrowly voted to accept a draconian two-tier contract. With company profits at an all-time high, the company got wage freezes for most workers, while the contract also doubles health care premiums, weakens seniority rights and eliminates the defined-benefit pension plan.

And it’s not like there isn’t anger and will to fight out there. In Chicago, public school teachers, perhaps the most vilified sector of the labor movement, struck and held firm for seven days at the start of the school year. For a couple of September days last year, in Longview, Washington, the ILWU longshore workers union and its allies flexed their muscle in the kind of labor action not seen in this country for decades. Mass pickets mobilized to block trains bringing grain into the scab terminal, and ports in the region were shut down for a day. Longshoremen from throughout the Pacific Northwest poured into Longview. Ultimately the union held the line but ended up with a concessionary contract that could embolden the bosses in future struggles.

As the Wisconsin legislature debated a law last year to strip collective bargaining rights from public workers, some 100,000 pro-union demonstrators flooded the streets

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Naythons/Gamma-Liaison



Reuters

Democrats embrace social and racist reaction. Left: “Born again” Jimmy Carter at pulpit before 1976 election. Right: Bill Clinton signing 1996 bill to “end welfare as we know it.”

# Elections...

(continued from page 3)

of Madison, the state capital. The teachers unions organized sick-outs, causing schools to close across the state. But there was no strike action. The labor leadership worked overtime to divert workers' militancy into Democratic Party electioneering, centrally through a campaign to recall Republican legislators as well as the union-busting governor Walker—which failed.

Parroting the bosses, the union bureaucrats have told their members that sacrifice is needed to assure the continued profitability of American industry against foreign competition. Obama has gone after Romney for “outsourcing American jobs” as head of Bain Industries in the 1980s. As he set out on a campaign swing in the Midwest a few weeks ago, Obama announced that his administration was bringing its second lawsuit in two months (the eighth since he took office) against what the U.S. calls China's unfair trade practices, this one targeting the export of automobiles. Such chauvinist appeals have been used to sell givebacks in health insurance coverage, work rules, seniority rights and wage scales. Wages have been reduced to near Walmart levels by the infamous “two tier” system, leading many embittered younger members to call into question the value of unions at all.

## Labor and the Fight for Immigrant Rights

Just as the union tops line up with a wing of the capitalist rulers in mobilizing American workers against their working-class allies abroad, they are aligned with the administration in screaming that immigrants are stealing “American jobs.” The capitalist-imperialist rulers see in immigrant workers a pool of labor to be brutally exploited and deprived of the most fundamental rights. While much of the bourgeoisie wants to preserve this cheap and vulnerable labor pool to ratchet up the rate of exploitation of all workers, the openly nativist wing that is behind the spate of anti-immigrant laws rants that American culture—by which they mean white Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture—is being overrun by those from south of the border. They particularly mean Mexico, which had one-half of its land including Texas stolen by the U.S.

Thanks to the nativist bigots, Obama and the Democrats are able to posture as friends of immigrants, winning 70 percent of the Latino vote last time around. They are way ahead in the polls once again, despite carrying on a coldly more effective policy than the Bush administration of sealing the borders, rounding up brown-skinned people and deporting those here without papers.

It is important to combat anti-immigrant chauvinism in the working class and especially among black workers, while the immigrant-derived proletariat must understand that anti-black racism remains the touchstone of social reaction in this country. As we wrote nearly 40 years ago in “Immigration and the Class Struggle” (WV No. 41, 29 March 1974):

“It is in the interests of the working class to back the fight of undocumented workers for their rights, because undocumented workers will otherwise continue to be used as a weapon against the rest of the working class. Those in desperate, illegal situations are more difficult to organize and must accept lower wages. Unfortunately, labor does not always see its real interests so clearly. It is led today by bureaucrats who not only accept, but actively enforce, the capitalist ‘rules of the game’ in which unemployment and high profits are automatically accepted as natural....

“In fact, as long as the labor movement *accepts* unemployment it will remain divided against itself. Instead of fighting for more jobs it will fight against those it sees as threatening the jobs it has. And the bosses will use this fight quite skillfully against the working class, breaking strikes and pushing down wages. The solution to the problem of *both* U.S.-born and immigrant workers lies in overthrowing the system which creates unemployment and perpetuates poverty....

“It is not enough to provide an alternative



WV Photo

**NYC Labor Day rally amid 1981 PATCO air traffic controllers strike. Government smashing of PATCO union opened door to nationwide anti-labor offensive.**

to the capitalist parties. There must be an alternative to capitalist *politics*.”

In the late 1950s, 35 percent of workers were unionized—today it's under 12 percent. The only way the labor movement can be revitalized is by returning to the road of class struggle. Immediately posed is the fight to organize the mass of unorganized workers, particularly in the “right to work” South. This will require actively combating black oppression, long used by the capitalists to divide and weaken labor as a whole. Against the government's anti-immigrant crackdown, which has derailed one organizing campaign after another, the union movement must fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. Key to all such battles is the fight for the political independence of the workers from the capitalists and their government and political parties.

## Racism and Patronage Politics

I wasn't much of a student and actually peaked in the first grade. One of the few things I recall from my early education was the textbook characterization of the early Democratic Party as representing the interests of the working man and the Republicans as representing the unbridled greed of the rich. I am sure you are aware that the Democratic Party that was being portrayed as the champion of the down-trodden was the party of slavery and the defeat of Reconstruction; the party of Jim Crow segregation and KKK terror.

We had a very interesting series of articles in *Workers Vanguard* called “Wall Street and the War Against Labor,” which is reprinted in our pamphlet on the economy, *Karl Marx Was Right: Capitalist Anarchy and the Immiseration of the Working Class*. The articles made the point that sundry left-populist movements that have existed in the U.S. have been absorbed by the Democrats. Since I keep using the word populism, I should define what it is, which is nothing but the doctrine that if the little people get together and democratically elect representatives of the little people, the government will carry out their will. It is nothing less than a doctrine of profound illusions in the capitalist state.

The Democratic Party has played a critical role in maintaining the divisions within the working class, while at the same time fostering the belief within each of these constituencies that it is the political vehicle through which their particular needs and interests can be realized. The patronage machines and political bosses of yesterday may be gone, or significantly attenuated, and the ethnic constituencies may have changed a bit, but the Democrats still play this same game, which is instrumental to capitalist rule in the U.S.

The quintessence of such political machines was Chicago under Mayor Richard Daley. It was such patronage that made Chicago known as Segregation City. Yet the black component of that machine, led by Harold Washington (who later became the city's first black mayor in 1983), always dutifully delivered the black vote for the party's candidates. Should any of Washington's black constituents have sought to

relocate their families to another Democratic Party stronghold, they would more likely have been met with firebombs than a welcome wagon. Daley insured that there was never an attempt to implement school busing. To a greater or lesser degree, this type of political machine was replicated in cities across the North and remains the norm to this day, with Latinos becoming a key part of the Democratic Party structure in cities like New York, L.A. and others.

In the early 19th century, the Democratic Party, then dominated by the Southern slavocracy, gained support among the Irish Catholic immigrants who made up the bulk of unskilled urban workers in the North before the Civil War. The Democrats combined a posture of hostility toward the Yankee ruling elite with racist demagoguery that the abolition of slavery would result in black freedmen taking their jobs and driving down wages. Following the Civil War, the Democrats benefited from growing support among Midwestern farmers, especially those of German ancestry, along with foreign-born Catholics. In industrial states, immigrants from Ireland and Germany filled factories and voted Democratic, many of them alienated by the Republicans' pursuit of some rights for black people, who were seen as competition in the job market.

## Populism and the Democrats

As described by Mike Davis in *Prisoners of the American Dream*:

“The cooptation of individual labor leaders was facilitated by the revolution in American city government that occurred in the 1880s as an aspirant petty bourgeoisie of Irish—and occasionally German—extraction began to take municipal power from old Yankee elites.... Local trade-union leaders—especially in the Irish-dominated building trades—were often key links in cementing machine control as well as principal beneficiaries of political sinecures. The overall effect of this ‘spoils system’ was to corrupt labor leadership, substitute paternalism for worker self-reliance, and, through the formation of ethnic patronage monopolies, keep the poorer strata of the working class permanently divided.”

In a Congressional debate following the 1893 economic collapse, Nebraska's William Jennings Bryan declared, “Today the Democratic party stands between two great forces, each inviting its support.... On one side stands the corporate interests of the nation, its moneyed institutions, its aggregations of wealth and capital, imperious, arrogant, compassionless.... On the other side stands the unnumbered throng which give a name to the Democratic party and for which it has assumed to speak.” The “side” of corporate interests was led by President Grover Cleveland. Tales of Cleveland's contempt for the poor were legion, including one joke describing Cleveland confronting a man eating the White House front lawn, who explained he was unemployed and hungry. Cleveland suggested, “Why don't you go around to the back yard? The grass is longer there.”

Three years later, that same Bryan headed the Democratic Party's presidential ticket and won as well the endorsement of the populist People's Party, largely under the illusion that Populist

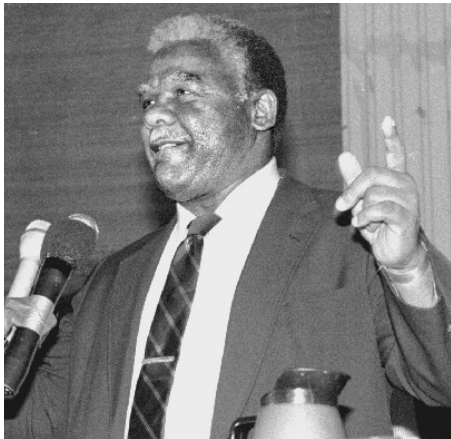
leader Tom Watson would be Bryan's running mate. This paved the road for the fusion of the Populists back into the Democratic Party. But the populist Bryan selected bank president and railroad director Arthur Sewall.

The Populists were initially a multiracial movement, encompassing poor white and black farmers as well as small businessmen. But the heroic efforts of its organizers in the South were defeated when the local ruling class and its Democratic Party enforcers launched a wave of racist demagoguery and violence. Having made their way back into their Democratic Party home, many Populist leaders, such as Watson, turned against impoverished blacks and openly embraced racism. Watson himself became an outspoken champion of lynching. On the other hand, the Populist movement also included people who would become key figures in the labor and socialist movements, such as Eugene V. Debs.

## The New Deal Coalition

In the North, ethnic ward politics remained a constant of the Democratic Party, which increasingly won support of the young labor movement. The support of Samuel Gompers' American Federation of Labor was instrumental in the 1912 election of the patrician “progressive” Woodrow Wilson, the former president of Princeton University and a staunch segregationist. Gompers played a key role in winning labor support for U.S. entry into the first imperialist World War. In 1919-20, Wilson's administration launched the first anti-red witchhunt, the Palmer Raids, named for his attorney general, in which thousands of foreign-born communists, anarchists and socialists were deported.

This coalition was later consolidated in the New Deal of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The New Deal coalition, which is today hailed by most liberals and leftists, included pro-Communist labor organizers, liberals and black leaders in the North and racist Dixiecrats and Klansmen in the South. Key to the New Deal was an attempt to protect U.S. capitalism against growing radicalization and labor struggle. New Deal reforms such as the National Labor Relations Act, which made it easier



WV Photo

**Chicago's first black mayor, Democrat Harold Washington, presided over massive cutbacks, strikebreaking in 1980s.**

to organize unions, or the Works Progress Administration, which carried out public works, were aimed at stabilizing capitalism by tying the new, powerful industrial unions, grouped in the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), to the capitalist system. On the part of the CIO tops, the social democrats and Stalinized Communist Party, the New Deal coalition was a *betrayal* of the interests of the working class, heading off the evident possibility of forging an independent workers party.

Now, I said that our opposition to the Democrats is a class opposition to any capitalist party. So what precisely is meant by “class”? In this country, where the most rapacious imperialist ruling class wields the purest ideology of raw, naked exploitation of any advanced capitalist country, there's a longstanding obfuscation of what class means. In a 1948 article in the *Militant*, our forebears in the then-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party wrote:

“The biggest political myth the ruling capitalists are trying to sell to the workers is that this country is different from any in history, that here there are no real



class divisions, and, therefore, no basis for class politics.... But all politics is class politics. It is to the interests of the ruling capitalists and their various agents and dupes to conceal this elementary fact of the realities of political life.”

The capitalists, their agents and dupes are still at it. Donning his populist hat for a few months, Obama has resurrected himself as the champion of the “middle class.” Echoing their Commander-in-Chief, the labor tops appeal not for labor action but to broad public opinion by describing the war on the unions as attacks on the middle class. In the 1950s and ’60s, a middle-aged white industrial worker could be excused for believing in the “American Dream,” living in a suburban home with an affordable government-subsidized mortgage and driving a late-model car. Some may have added a Harley, others maybe even took up golf, with their children attending state universities or city colleges with low tuition. (For black people, of course, it has always been an American nightmare, as Malcolm X described, even for a unionized black worker in the Northeast or Midwest, who was more likely to live in an inner-city ghetto than in a tree-lined suburb.)

That was a short period based on a particular set of circumstances. By 1945, one-third of nonagricultural labor was in unions. The international dominance of U.S. imperialism, secured through the devastation of its imperialist rivals Germany and Japan in World War II, made possible some substantial improvement in the material conditions of the working class. But the industrial economies of Germany and Japan eventually recovered from the devastation of WWII and made deep inroads in world markets, including the American market, and started to surpass the U.S. By the late 1960s, U.S. wages were stagnating and good jobs were soon to become scarce, especially for young workers. The deterioration of conditions for unionized industrial workers shows that whatever gains they had made was the best that American capitalism could offer—and those days are long gone.

This past year and a half has added to the political lexicon the “99 percent” versus the “1 percent.” This was the mantra of the fleeting Occupy movement. For months, the Occupy trademark was affixed to just about any political activity called by the reformists: “Occupy the Hood,” “Occupy the Justice Department,” even protesting mass incarceration by calling to “Occupy the Prisons”—something the capitalist rulers would be very happy to accommodate. It got to the point where I was wondering if Robert De Niro’s next movie would be “Occupy This.” Not surprisingly, as the elections near you no longer hear about Occupy, largely because as we predicted, such an amorphous, populist movement could in the main only occupy the Democratic Party.

It is false that 99 percent of the population, which includes such diverse strata as the unemployed, technicians, computer programmers, dentists, and direct agents of the state—cops, security guards, judges—as well as real workers, share common interests. We start from the Marxist understanding that society is divided into two main classes: The bourgeoisie—that is, the tiny group of families (more like the .001 percent) that own the banks, industry, mines, newspapers, telecommunications—and the proletariat—that is, the vast majority of society who must sell their labor power to the capitalists in order to live. It is the labor of the working class that creates just about all of the wealth of this society.

The interests of these two classes are diametrically counterposed—they cannot be reconciled. The capitalist state is, at bottom, organized violence to protect the class rule and profits of the bourgeoisie. At the core of the state are armed bodies of men—the cops, military, courts and prisons. The state cannot be made to work in the interests of the exploited or oppressed. Social gains and political reforms that have benefited workers and the oppressed were not won through the ballot or in the courtroom but were the product of tumultuous class and social struggle. Gains that have been won by unions, often in pitched battles, have immediately come under

**NYC, October 2011:  
Spartacists at populist  
Occupy protest  
highlighted our  
opposition to pro-  
Democratic Party  
pressure politics.**



attack before the ink is dry on the contract, which, as the bosses recognize, is but a momentary truce in an ongoing class war. Similarly, the capitalist rulers set about dismantling those formal political and legal rights that resulted from the civil rights and women’s movements as soon as they were attained. No democratic rights are secure under capitalism.

### Reformist Left: Democrats’ Fifth Wheel

Lending what little authority they may have to the miseducation of young radicals is the reformist left. Before talking about their posture toward Occupy, it is worth reviewing their take on the elections.

Four years ago, the Workers World Party (WWP) stated: “The election victory of Barack Obama will go down in history as a triumphant step forward in the struggle against racism and national oppression in the U.S.” (*Workers World*, 14 November 2008). Now in an editorial titled “Stay in the Streets” (*Workers World*, 29 August), the WWP declares, “Workers World is for socialism—where the workers, not the billionaires, own the means of production. This will take a titanic struggle by the masses of people who have nothing to lose but their chains. One of those chains is the two-party political system.”

Look carefully: Helping wield those chains is the same Workers World Party, which has a decades-long history of supporting black Democrats, going back to Harold Washington, Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton. The latest object of their affections is Brooklyn’s Charles Barron, who they supported in the Democratic primary for Congress in 2006. Workers World also supported Barron’s 2010 campaign for governor on the ticket of the stillborn Freedom Party, which they deceitfully described as “a break from the imperialist Democratic Party.” This year, they again supported Barron’s efforts to be the Democrats’ candidate for Congress.

Also upon Obama’s election, the International Socialist Organization (ISO) threw an election night party in Harlem to “celebrate the end of far too many years of Republican rule” and to discuss “what can activists do to press their demands on the next administration?” Today, the ISO describes the Democratic Party as the “graveyard of social movements.” They easily could have added, “Pass the shovel.”

Then there’s the Maoist Freedom Road Socialist Organization in New York. A recent polemic against them in the *Young Spartacus* pages in WV that pointed to their electoral support to Obama in 2008 struck quite a nerve. In response, one of their leaders protested that their organization didn’t support Obama, it was just most of their leadership. In terms of the Freedom Road split-off in the Midwest that publishes *Fight Back!*, this is what they have to say: “We know that many activists...are likely to continue to vote for the lesser of two evils” ([fightbacknews.org](http://fightbacknews.org), 12 August). And what do they think about that? “In terms of voting in the presidential election, it is better to vote against Romney, especially in swing states. In other states like California, the Republicans are unlikely to win. In these cases, it would be positive to have a strong third party vote total.” They add, “Our faith and our future are in the people’s struggle, not the ballot box.”

Of course, all these groups fawned over Occupy. Last fall the ISO wrote: “The movement is already a success in what it has done to revive the legitimacy of mass protest and establish beginnings of a new radical left in the United States.” This is the present-day watchword of the heirs of Eduard Bernstein, the revisionist leader of German Social Democracy a little over a century ago, who declared, “The final goal, no matter what it is, is nothing; the movement is everything.” Bernstein was characterized by the great Polish Jewish revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg, who wrote in 1898-99 that whatever lip service such revisionists may pay to wanting socialism, they are not choosing a different “road to the *same* goal, but a *different* goal. Instead of taking a stand for the establishment of a new society they take a stand for surface modification of the old society.” This certainly fits Bernstein’s modern-day acolytes.

History has shown that whether it be the Occupy kids, the antiwar movements led by Workers World and ISO front groups or the other movements that episodically spring up, these movements can only be a tail on and ultimately be subsumed by the Democrats because they are not consciously directed toward the formation of an independent working-class party to lead the working class in struggle against capitalist rule. Invocation of the “people’s struggle” and action on “the streets” is little more than a conjurer’s trick to pretty up the pro-Democratic Party pressure politics common to all the reformists.

Though careful not to explicitly support a Democratic Party politician, the ISO speaks for them all in promoting activities that are centered not on advancing the need for independent working-class politics leading toward socialist revolution but on pressuring the Democrats to come through. At a talk in January 2010 on “The Left and Obama,” leading ISO member Lance Selfa described the need to “provide a foundation for further organization to pressure the government to respond to the progressive majority and not to the loud right-wing minority.”

In a recent interview, Selfa declared, “If the Democrats know that activists won’t hold them accountable *for their record*—i.e., what they actually do—they have no incentive to do anything the left might demand” ([socialistworker.org](http://socialistworker.org), 5 September). On such political foundations, the ISO has supported capitalist third parties, what they call a “left alternative,”

momentarily standing outside Democratic Party ranks. Examples are Ralph Nader or their own member Todd Chretien running a few years ago on the ticket of the Green Party, a bourgeois environmentalist outfit whose counterparts in Germany were part of the capitalist government that joined the U.S. in carrying out the bombing of tiny Serbia in 1999.

The 1912 article by Lenin that I’ve cited (“The Results and Significance of the U.S. Presidential Elections”) addressed such capitalist third parties. Writing about the Bull Moose progressives of Theodore Roosevelt, who polled over four million votes, surpassing the Republican Taft, Lenin stated:

“We shall save capitalism by reforms, says that party. We shall grant the most progressive factory legislation. We shall establish state control over *all* the trusts (in the U.S.A. that means over *all* industries!). We shall establish state control over them to eliminate poverty and enable everybody to earn a ‘decent wage.’ We shall establish ‘social and industrial justice.’ We revere *all* reforms—the *only* ‘reform’ we don’t want is *expropriation of the capitalists!*”

### A Revolutionary Perspective

In closing, I have an observation for someone looking around at the world and hating what he sees and wanting to do something fundamental about it. Coming to political awareness when I did, having grown up in the ’50s and ’60s, had an advantage over today. We had the benefit of seeing labor when it was more likely to use its muscle—like the 1966 NYC transit strike that shut the city down for twelve days and *won*. One could not avoid seeing the question of black oppression as central to American society. And you also had the courageous Vietnamese workers and peasants fighting to defend a social revolution against the most dangerous imperialist power in the world—and winning.

Most important, though, was the existence of the Soviet Union, a workers state that, despite its bureaucratic degeneration, showed that a different type of society was possible. Many of those seeking to change the world were compelled to study Marxism to see what this was all about. Obviously, most of those young activists did not choose the revolutionary Marxist path and found their way back to the Democrats and points further right, thanks in no small measure to the same reformists I’ve referred to. But with the destruction of the USSR and the triumphalist blaring of the “death of communism” by bourgeois ideologues, you don’t see the same impulse to study revolutionary Marxism, and the idea of creating a new world is gone. In its place is left a belief that the best one can fight for is a partial amelioration of the horrors of capitalism.

But just as medical science, despite being confined under capitalism, is continuously finding new cures for horrible illnesses, such as the recent genetic studies that pose breakthroughs in treating certain cancers, Marxism is the science of the development of society through class antagonism. It provides the framework for rooting out the cancer of capitalist rule through workers revolution and finally bringing a better world to birth. The necessary instrumentality to make that happen remains, as Trotsky eloquently put it, “a party; once more a party; again a party!” ■

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# Hurricane...

(continued from page 1)

of the capitalist system of production for profit. As the five-year-long financial crisis grinds on, not a few of those trying to pick their lives back up are unemployed or, if they have found work, are stuck in part-time jobs at miserable pay—one of the few areas of job growth in the so-called “recovery.”

Every natural disaster has social implications. Hurricane Katrina slammed smack into the racial oppression that is the bedrock of the American capitalist system. The predominantly black population of New Orleans’ Ninth Ward was trapped by systematic racial segregation as Katrina hit. They were left to drown as the cops impeded evacuation attempts and relief efforts. As Hurricane Sandy developed, people in Haiti suffered disproportionately, as is always the case in that wretchedly impoverished country under U.S. imperialism’s heel. Even though Haiti was hit only by the storm’s tail, the death toll reached 54. The hurricane left in its wake a renewed threat of cholera, at a time when more than 300,000 people in the capital of Port-au-Prince are still living in camps for those displaced by the January 2010 earthquake.

When Sandy hit the U.S., it threw its biggest punches mainly at waterfront properties along the Jersey Shore, Staten Island, Coney Island, the Rockaways and further east on Long Island, affecting people of all races. The better-off residents of those areas are used to having the social services and standard of living that all people should have. The deprivation, danger and neglect they suffer today offer a bitter taste of what life is like for minorities and the poor in the U.S. on a daily basis.

Also hard-hit were those living in public housing projects that were constructed along NYC waterfront areas back when those plots were cheap to build on, in a no man’s land of slaughterhouses, factories and warehouses. The projects’ mainly black and Latino residents, including many elderly and infirm, have now been entombed for almost a week in high-rises without elevators, heat or water. Some projects have been ringed with a heavy police presence in a show of intimidation and repression. Residents are surviving on the strength of their ingenuity and solidarity, making communal kitchens with dwindling food supplies, relying on the healthy to trudge up the many flights of stairs with water, guiding those trapped alone to the comfort of company through pitch-black stairwells and corridors.

Volunteer efforts have been crippled by the absence of both gas and any well-coordinated plan to get the right services and supplies where they are needed. The Bloomberg administration, for one, decided to keep Red Cross disaster trucks safe from harm by parking them far from the city! Volunteer aid cannot begin to substitute for the resources at the dis-



Reuters

**October 29: Paramedics evacuate patients from New York University hospital after backup generators failed during storm.**

posal of federal, state and municipal governments. From the Jersey Shore to Long Island, people have been screaming: Where’s the help we need from this government? This government is the executive body of the capitalist ruling class, and its priority is the pursuit of private profit, not human need. The authorities are patting themselves on the back for providing unusually accurate forecasts about the hurricane and issuing mandatory evacuation orders. So those with means escaped to the comfort of their second homes or to hotel rooms. But what do you do if you’re poor and have to rely on nonexistent public transport? At best, it meant risking your well-being in a city shelter overflowing with people and with barely any provisions.

### Capitalist Bloodsuckers

The gas shortages that had drivers fuming recalled the last time there was fuel rationing: the gas crisis of the mid 1970s. Then, as now, market calculations intensified and magnified people’s misery. As we wrote in “Expropriate the Energy Trusts!” (WV No. 145, 18 February 1977): “In order to maximize the rate of profit, all capitalists therefore seek to minimize unused capacity and inventories. That is why any significant change in natural conditions—drought or flood, arctic freeze or heat wave—produces under the capitalist mode of production ‘emergencies’ for which adequate preparations and material reserves do not exist.”

Profiteering is already at work in the wake of the storm. Lumber futures hit a 19-month high, and stock prices for Home Depot and Lowe’s are also up. Devastated homeowners will likely have to pay more for building supplies due to the “magic of the marketplace.” There is

nothing new here. Referring to the Great Fire of 1835, which destroyed New York City’s financial district, Friedrich Engels wrote in “Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy” (1844): “The speculator always counts on disasters, particularly on bad harvests. He utilizes everything—for instance, the New York fire in its time—and immorality’s culminating point is the speculation on the Stock Exchange, where history, and with it mankind, is demoted to a means of gratifying the avarice of the calculating and gambling speculator.”

Recently, the scoundrels who run profit-bloated Con Ed and charge exorbitant rates for electricity announced plans for yet another steep rate increase. These same bosses, backed by Governor Cuomo, strong-armed the utility workers union into making major concessions to end the lock-out this summer, giving the lie to the union tops’ tired refrain that Con Ed bosses and workers are a “family.” Electricity is not a luxury; it is a necessity of life. Private ownership of electrical power is an anachronism. Con Ed and all other private utilities should be expropriated without compensation—a task for a *workers government*.

From New Jersey and Pennsylvania to New England, the massive rebuilding effort cries out for labor to organize the unorganized at union wages and full benefits. Worker safety and public safety depend on organized labor flexing its muscle to shut down unsafe work on the spot. The harrowing record of toppling cranes and collapsed scaffolding in New York City the past several years are deadly evidence of the low-bidder system, cronyism and the demise of union power. A renewed labor movement should fight for *jobs for all*, with wages fully indexed to inflation. This country urgently needs a massive program of public works to

rebuild bridges, roads, housing, mass transit and other infrastructure. Against all manner of reformist “socialists” who argue that capitalism’s priorities should be reordered for butter, not guns, we speak the truth—it will take a socialist revolution to get this done, and to aid in rebuilding Iraq and other countries around the world that have been ravaged by U.S. imperialism.

### Build a Workers Party!

The workers who are toiling mightily to get this region running again know they don’t need their bosses, much less FEMA or any other branch of the bosses’ government, to tell them how to do their jobs. In this fact is the germ of the understanding that the working class has the capacity, through its collective labor and organization, to run society for the benefit of all.

So how does the capitalist profit system, with its glaring inequality separating a tiny handful of exploiters from the vast majority, keep running? Why is there abundant and growing misery, yet an absence of class struggle? Fear, hopelessness, racial and ethnic divisions in the working class, the use of state repression against any challenge to the status quo: these are part of the answer. Another fundamental reason is false consciousness—a deep and misplaced belief among working people in the lie of capitalist “democracy,” reinforced by the rulers’ “death of communism” ideology.

As we go to press, those among the workers and poor who exercise their “freedom” to vote will help choose who will exploit and repress them for the next four years. At the same time, there is justified fear among black people that their hard-won right to vote is threatened.

The ideological chains that bind workers to their exploiters are reinforced by their misleaders in the union movement, the labor bureaucrats whose own relative positions of privilege are earned as loyal servants to the capitalist system. Every union has a political action committee that takes members’ dues to promote Democratic Party politicians (with a nod to the occasional Republican as well). Those dues are needed for strike funds and organizing drives. But that means fighting for a new, class-struggle leadership of the union movement, one that doesn’t scrape and bow to the Democratic Party.

Every worker knows the importance of having the right tool for the job at hand. If we are to have a society where working people can enjoy the fruits of their labor and stop paying the price for the capitalists who have looted this country’s wealth, if we are to have a rationally planned centralized economy that will lay the basis for eradicating poverty, racial oppression and other ills, then what we need is a workers government. The tool to achieve that is a workers party—a U.S. section of a revolutionary international—that fights for all the exploited and oppressed. Building this party is the task to which the Spartacist League is dedicated. ■

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## Holiday Appeal...

(continued from page 2)

program and saw themselves as an auxiliary of Third World liberation movements. But, like the Weathermen before them, the Ohio 7 were spurned by the “respectable” left. From a proletarian standpoint, the actions of these leftist activists against imperialism and racist injustice are not a crime. They should not have served a day in prison.

**Ed Poindexter** and **Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa** are former Black Panther supporters and leaders of the Omaha, Nebraska, National Committee to Combat Fascism. They were victims of the FBI’s deadly COINTELPRO operation under which 38 Black Panther Party members were killed and hundreds more imprisoned on frame-up charges. Poindexter and Mondo were railroaded to prison and sentenced to life for a 1970 explosion that killed a cop, and they have now spent more than 40 years behind

bars. Nebraska courts have repeatedly denied Poindexter and Mondo new trials despite the fact that a crucial piece of evidence excluded from the original trial, a 911 audio tape long-suppressed by the FBI, proved that testimony of the state’s key witness was perjured.

**Hugo Pinell**, the last of the San Quentin 6 still in prison, has been in solitary isolation for more than four decades. He was a militant anti-racist leader of prison rights organizing along with George Jackson, his comrade and mentor, who was gunned down by prison guards in 1971. Despite numerous letters of support and no disciplinary write-ups for over 28 years, Pinell was again denied parole in 2009. Now in his 60s, Pinell continues to serve a life sentence at the notorious torture chamber, Pelican Bay Security Housing Unit in California, a focal point for hunger strikes against grotesquely inhuman conditions.

*Send your contributions to: PDC, P.O. Box 99, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013; (212) 406-4252. ■*

Mexico...

(continued from page 8)

Lázaro Cárdenas’s populism—to adopt neoliberal “openness,” i.e., privatization, anti-union attacks and increased political and economic subordination to U.S. imperialism. At the same time, this adaptable bourgeois party has kept its old links with powerful unions, such as the oil workers union, SUTERM [national electrical workers union] and the CTM [Mexican Labor Federation]. The PRD, which was founded by former PRI members, among them AMLO himself, arose after 1988, initially through the Frente Democrático Nacional [National Democratic Front], as a national-populist alternative to keep worker discontent within the framework of “democratic” bourgeois politics. Now Morena could grab the populist baton, though it might simply remain a mere appendage of the PRD.

Neoliberalism and nationalist populism offer no way forward for the working masses—both are capitalist policies that can be wielded by the same individuals depending on the circumstances. The PRD, just like the PRI and the PAN, is a capitalist party. Through its concessions to the working class and the poor and “anti-neoliberal” rhetoric, PRD populism seeks to preserve this brutal system of exploitation and oppression. For all its nationalist rhetoric, the PRD, as is true of the Mexican bourgeoisie as a whole, is bound by a thousand strings to its U.S. imperialist masters. In fact, this party does not even oppose NAFTA—the treaty of imperialist rape of Mexico—and seeks only to renegotiate the terms of subordination to the imperialists, leaning on the working class for support in this regard.

It is necessary to break the ties that bind the proletariat to the supposedly “progressive” bourgeoisie. Chief among these ties is the ideology of bourgeois nationalism, which obscures class divisions and promotes the lie that the exploiters and the exploited share common interests. This lie not only keeps the proletariat ideologically chained to the national bourgeoisie but also prevents it from seeing the class divide beyond the borders, particularly in the U.S. The main potential ally of the Mexican working class is the powerful U.S. proletariat, which must also break with the “national unity” promoted by its “own” bourgeoisie. For joint class struggle on both sides of the border!

Basing ourselves on the experience of the Russian Revolution of 1917, we fight for a workers and peasants government through socialist revolution. In countries of belated capitalist development such as Mexico, only the seizure of power by the working class—led by a revolutionary workers party and marching at the head of the desperate peasant and urban petty-bourgeois masses—can achieve genuine national liberation through the expropriation of the national bourgeoisie, repudiation of foreign debt and the international extension of the revolution. Socialist revolution would replace bourgeois democracy, which actually is nothing but a sham for the workers and the poor, with genuine democracy for the exploited and the oppressed, under which workers and poor peasants would rule the country through soviets (councils).

With the devastating effects of the world economic crisis and constant attacks against the already meager living standards of the working class, the peasantry and the urban poor, it is necessary

for the proletariat to demonstrate its ability and determination to fight not only for its own survival but also for all the poor and the oppressed. In the face of rampant scarcity, we call for price-monitoring committees composed of delegates from factories, unions, cooperatives, peasant organizations and the urban poor. We fight for a sliding scale of wages to guarantee that wages increase proportionally with prices. Against massive unemployment, it is necessary to fight for a sliding scale of working hours to distribute available work, as well as for an extensive program of public works. No bourgeois party will carry out these demands. Rather, these indispensable demands serve as a bridge to socialist revolution and the establish-



Puebla, July 7: Thousands of students of electoralist #YoSoy132 movement march against election of Peña Nieto.

ment of a planned economy that, through the expropriation of the capitalists, will devote the entire economy not to fattening the wallets of a handful of magnates but to satisfying the needs of the population.

#YoSoy132: In the Service of the PRD

The #YoSoy132 movement started at the Universidad Iberoamericana last May, when some students, more than justifiably, harangued Peña Nieto for his role in the brutal repression [against peasant protests] in Atenco in 2006, when he was governor of the State of Mexico. However, by declaring itself to be strictly “anti-Peña Nieto,” this movement not only whitewashes the PRD—a perennial partner in capitalist repression—but even the “war-on-drugs” PAN. Having initially arisen at elitist private universities in Mexico City, several of them Catholic, #YoSoy132 enjoyed some level of respectability at the beginning and, in that context, was endorsed by none other than Calderón.

Students at public universities soon joined the 132 movement, whose demands are incredibly narrow and sometimes frankly ludicrous—e.g., contests for student productions to be shown on TV, “making Internet access a constitutional right” (in a country where large masses of the population still lack electricity and potable water, to say nothing about phone service or computers) and the “national broadcasting of the presidential debate.” Making a fetish out of the vote, the movement notably came out against abstention and spoiling ballots, labeling these as “ineffective actions for advancing the construction of our democracy.”

In past months, the 132 movement has

acquired a more traditionally populist, “anti-neoliberal” and nationalist profile, in part through its alliances with the SME [the remnants of the combative union that was destroyed after the government dissolved the state-run Central Light and Power Company and fired all the workers in 2009] and the FPDT [Atenco peasants organization]. The majority of the Mexican left has shamelessly embraced the bourgeois-liberal politics of #YoSoy132. Meanwhile, the participation of students from private universities has decreased considerably.

#YoSoy132 is an amorphous, electoralist and petty-bourgeois movement, politically related to the Spanish “Indignados” and the Occupy movement in the U.S.

Its sole objectives are “democratizing the country” through the vote and “democratizing the media.” Even though it claims to be non-partisan, from the get-go it has in practice served as an appendage of AMLO’s and the bourgeois PRD’s campaign in Central Mexico, without closing the door to the PAN in other areas of the country. It is a measure of the betrayals of the misleaders of the workers movement, who are subordinated to the PRD and the PRI, that the electoralist mobilizations of #YoSoy132 (and of the PRD itself) became the center of every protest against the more grotesque effects of the economic catastrophe.

Just like its counterparts in Europe and the U.S., #YoSoy132 dissolves the proletariat as just another sector of the “people.” On the contrary, the proletariat, because of its relationship to the means of production, is the *only* class with the social power and the historic interest to overthrow capitalism. Not having anything except its labor power to sell, the working class has no objective interest in the preservation of the rule of private property; its interest is to collectivize the means of production. The petty bourgeoisie—a heterogeneous layer that includes peasants, students, professionals, etc.—is incapable of raising its own revolutionary program: it always trails behind one of the two fundamental classes in capitalism—the proletariat or the bourgeoisie.

The Democratic Scam

As communists, we defend democratic rights and understand that in countries of belated capitalist development the democratic aspirations of the masses—such as national emancipation, agrarian revolution and political democracy—cannot be satisfied under capitalism. These aspirations *act as a motor force* for socialist revolution. Democratic illusions under capitalism, however, *are suicidal*. This is a country where a stable bourgeois democracy can never exist. The weakness of the Mexican bourgeoisie, subordinated to imperialism and fearful of the proletariat, does not allow it that luxury.

In the epoch of imperialist decay, there is no “progressive” wing of the bourgeoisie capable of breaking the subordination to imperialism. Revolutionary Marxists, based on the Trotskyist perspective of permanent revolution, have no democratic

program separate from the socialist one. In the struggle for democratic demands, we counterpose the proletariat to the bourgeoisie, based on the fact that these demands are only attainable under the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The #YoSoy132 student movement is based on and pushes illusions in democratic abstractions that ignore the division of society into classes. It demands a “change in the model of national security,” reducing the “security budget” in favor of funding “public expenditure, education, culture and health.” No matter what its “security model” is, the capitalist state—with the police, the army, the courts and the prisons at its core—will always be an instrument for organized violence to maintain the rule of the exploiters. This machinery cannot be reformed to serve the interests of the exploited and the oppressed. It must be destroyed and replaced by a workers state.

Democracy has a class nature; “pure democracy” is a liberal scam to dupe the workers and the oppressed and obscure the real *dictatorship* of capital. This scam is particularly successful in the advanced capitalist countries, where the imperialist bourgeoisies can afford to maintain a more or less stable parliamentary system. Parliamentarism, in the words of French socialist Paul Lafargue (Karl Marx’s son-in-law), “is a system of government in which the people acquires the illusion that it is controlling the forces of the country itself, when, in reality, the actual power is concentrated in the hands of the bourgeoisie—and not even of the whole bourgeoisie, but only of certain sections of that class” [quoted in Leon Trotsky, *Terrorism and Communism*, 1920]. In countries of belated capitalist development, this facade is exceedingly brittle and unstable. However, in both advanced and backward countries:

“Bourgeois democracy, although a great historical advance in comparison with medievalism, always remains, and under capitalism is bound to remain, restricted, truncated, false and hypocritical, a paradise for the rich and a snare and deception for the exploited, for the poor.” —V.I. Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* (1918)

In contrast to the fashionable (and illusory) “non-partisanship,” we fight to forge a vanguard workers party, uniting advanced workers and declassed intellectuals under a revolutionary and internationalist class-struggle program. A Bolshevik party is the fundamental instrument to bring political consciousness to the proletariat, essential for it to carry out and consolidate socialist revolution.

It is necessary to intervene in social and class struggle *with the program of revolutionary Marxism*, fighting to break workers and the oppressed from the bourgeois populism of AMLO and the PRD. This is the only way to build the Leninist-Trotskyist party that will lead the working class to power. This is an enormous task, with no shortcuts. But it is the task to which the Grupo Espartaquista de México and the International Communist League are committed. ■

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# WORKERS VANGUARD

## Amid “War on Drugs” Militarization, Economic Crisis

# Mexico: PRI Back at Helm of Capitalist State

The following article is translated and excerpted from *Espartaco* No. 36 (September 2012), newspaper of the Grupo Espartaquista de México, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

Following two six-year terms of reactionary PAN [National Action Party] governments, the PRI [Institutional Revolutionary Party] will return to the presidential residence of Los Pinos on December 1. According to the official results of the July elections, PRI candidate Enrique Peña Nieto defeated his closest contender, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (known as AMLO and formerly affiliated to the Party of the Democratic Revolution [PRD]), by a little over 6 percent of the vote, while the PAN came in third, around 6 percentage points behind the PRD.

Prior to the elections, we Spartacists explained why we oppose voting for the parties of the bourgeoisie—PRI, PAN, PRD, etc.:

“All the candidates defend capitalist exploitation and, therefore, will not do anything to combat the evils it causes. It does not matter who wins the July presidential elections. Hunger, repression, unemployment, women’s oppression and miserable poverty in the rural areas, which hits the indigenous population particularly hard, will all persist.”

—“No Vote for the Bourgeois Parties!” *Espartaco* No. 35, June 2012

Calls by AMLO to have the presidential election declared void were based on the PRI exceeding the allowed limit for campaign expenses and “buying votes,” that is, trying to get people to vote for the PRI by distributing groceries, T-shirts and other items. This is simply the normal functioning of electoral bourgeois democracy. Bourgeois democracy is always a farce for the oppressed masses, who are given the choice of who will head the repressive machinery used against them during the next term.

Like most elections in the history of Mexico, this last one was plagued by irregularities, violence and fraud. However, there is no evidence that the level of fraud altered the results. Our opposition to the PRI is not based on it being corrupt. We oppose the PRI, the PAN and the PRD/AMLO as a matter of principle, based on our revolutionary *proletarian* program and not on which one of the *bourgeois* parties is more, or less, fraudulent, corrupt or repressive.

The return to power of the PRI [which until 2000 ruled Mexico for seven decades] is not due to widespread support for the policies of this pragmatic bourgeois party but is instead based on rejection of the PAN, mainly because of the desperate economic situation and the brutal “war on drugs.” Thus, the PAN lost to the PRI some of its fundamental Cristero [heirs to the reactionary Catholic rebellion in the 1920s] bastions in the state of Jalisco and the city of León in Guanajuato state. As it became clear that the PAN’s candidate, Josefina Vázquez Mota, did not stand a chance and that support for AMLO was rising—in good measure thanks to the [student-based] #YoSoy132 [I Am 132] protests—even PAN ex-president Vicente Fox threw his support behind Peña Nieto.

Throughout his campaign, López Obrador made an effort to shed his false reputation as a “radical,” which is promoted by

his adversaries in the PRI and the PAN. He did this particularly through ridiculous rhetoric about a “Loving Republic,” as well as through pacts with businessmen and direct overtures to Carlos Slim, the world’s richest man. This won López Obrador support among a few notable capitalists in northern Mexico. Nevertheless, the large majority of voters in the north and west of the country, which

[US \$4.80] a day in zone A, the area with the highest wages! Meanwhile, the price of food staples rose more than 125 percent. During the first half of August, the price of eggs, for example, went up **100 percent** in Mexico City. According to [Mexico’s census agency] INEGI’s ever-dubious figures, by mid 2012 unemployment had reached 4.8 percent of the employable population; among the employed, 29.3

**PRI’s Enrique Peña Nieto (inset), newly elected president of Mexico. As governor of State of Mexico, he oversaw brutal repression against peasant protests in Atenco, 2006 (above).**



Reuters, Edgar Alberto Domínguez Cataño (inset)

## Break with the PRD! For a Revolutionary Workers Party!

includes the traditionally more Catholic and pro-PAN regions, supported the PRI.

Following the elections, AMLO’s refusal to recognize Peña Nieto as “president-elect” seems to have brought old grudges inside the PRD to the fore. After the PRD’s leadership accepted Peña Nieto’s triumph, López Obrador split from the party. In any case, it is fundamental for the working class to understand that López Obrador’s Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional [Movement for National Regeneration, known as Morena] is nothing but another bourgeois party, dedicated to the preservation of capitalist exploitation and hostile to the interests of the proletariat.

### Election Background: Hunger and Militarization

The world economic crisis and the PAN’s transparently anti-worker measures have spelled disaster for the population. Throughout the PAN’s last six-year term, the minimum wage rose just 28 percent, this year reaching a miserable 62.33 pesos

percent (14.2 million people) work in the “informal economy” and 8.9 percent (4.3 million) are “underemployed”! Adding to this, the escape valve offered by emigration to the U.S. has been increasingly blocked because of lack of jobs, anti-immigrant measures by the Obama government and the dangers of crossing the border, where those attempting to do so face criminal gangs and police/military forces on both sides.

Now, following the example of his counterparts in Spain and Greece, among others, [outgoing PAN president Felipe] Calderón is hurriedly trying to pass a reactionary labor “reform” that would facilitate firing workers, make temporary contracts the norm, promote outsourcing and attack all kinds of basic benefits, such as health care. This piece of legislation further curtails the right to strike and gives the state new powers to meddle in the finances and internal life of the unions.

This situation allows even the corrupt and repressive PRI to pose as a lesser

evil, even though Peña Nieto has promised nothing but further austerity, disguised by vague declarations, and more privatizations—notably of [state oil company] PEMEX, about which he has not been vague at all. We say: Down with the privatization of PEMEX and the rest of the energy sector! Down with the draconian labor “reform”!

Additionally, there is widespread loathing for the increasing brutality of the state and criminal gangs carried out under Calderón’s “war on drugs,” which has left over 60,000 dead in the last few years. This “war” has nothing to do with protecting the population but rather with regimenting it, particularly the working class.

The “war on drugs” has also served a purpose in allowing U.S. imperialism to tighten its control over its “backyard.” By 2010, military aid to Mexico had increased seven-fold through the Merida Plan. For the U.S., the “war on drugs” in Mexico serves the same purpose as the “war on terror” elsewhere: the presence of U.S. military and police personnel in Mexico is increasing, while drone flights are now common. Now there’s even talk about an independent U.S. plan—in the style of bin Laden’s execution in 2011—to come into Mexico and hunt down famous drug lord “Chapo” Guzmán.

In the same sense, Peña Nieto has promised a “strategy” change that in reality means business as usual for the Mexican masses: increasing police forces and strengthening intelligence services, particularly in coordination with the U.S. and Central American countries. This has not been enough, however, to convince his untrusting imperialist masters that he will continue the “war on drugs.” James Sensenbrenner, director of the House Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security, complains that during the 71 years of PRI rule, the party “minimized violence by turning a blind eye to the cartels.” On the other hand, the fear caused by the increase in “narco-violence” has stirred some nostalgia for the order of the olden days. Some graffiti mentioned in *Proceso* magazine, clearly referring to this desperate situation, evocatively read: “Out with the incompetent ones, bring back the corrupt.”

It is the duty of the workers movement as a whole to oppose the “war on drugs,” whose only purpose is to strengthen the repressive powers of the capitalist state. We say: Down with “war on drugs” militarization! FBI, DEA and all U.S. military and police agencies out of Mexico! We call for the *decriminalization of drugs*, which, by eliminating the superprofits derived from the illegal and underground nature of the drug trade, would reduce crime and its related social pathologies. We also oppose measures by the bourgeois state to restrict or prevent the population from carrying firearms. Gun control laws limit the rights of the population and guarantee that the state and criminals maintain a monopoly of weapons.

### Permanent Revolution vs. Bourgeois Nationalism

Since the 1980s, the PRI has set aside its old corporatist and nationalist policies—identified with [1930s president]

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