

Obama's Kill List and Imperialist Terror



U.S. Air Force

In one respect at least, Barack Obama's pitch for bipartisanship in Washington is paying off. From liberal Democrats to the Republican right, the two parties of U.S. capitalism responded to the Department of Justice White Paper justifying assassinations of U.S. citizens by overwhelmingly hailing this augmentation of

the lethal powers of the imperial presidency. Obtained by NBC News, the previously secret document confirms what was already known: the executive branch of the government can assassinate a U.S. citizen anywhere, anytime, without even the pretense of judicial oversight. Obama asserted this principle with his "targeted

killings" of Anwar al-Awlaki, Samir Khan and al-Awlaki's 16-year-old son, Abdulrahman al-Awlaki—all U.S. citizens—in Yemen in 2011. Those assassinations are but a tiny fraction of the murderous toll of U.S. imperialist terror on the people of Yemen, not to mention Afghanistan and Pakistan.

As described by Glenn Greenwald in the London *Guardian* (5 February): "The president's underlings compile their proposed lists of who should be executed, and the president—at a charming weekly event dubbed by White House aides as 'Terror Tuesday'—then chooses from
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Immigration "Reform": Repression and Exploitation

Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!



AP



HNG/HNNUSA

Left: Immigrants arrested by local cops and federal agents, Phoenix, Arizona, 2010. Right: Palermo's Pizza factory workers strike against mass firings of immigrant co-workers in "desktop" raid designed to sabotage unionization effort, Milwaukee, June 2012.

Barack Obama's re-election last November was hailed by liberal commentators as a confirmation of the "historic" and "consequential" nature of his presidency. For many others, it seemed to signal a rejection of the reactionary brew of bigotries and threats of savage austerity that were the bedrock of Mitt Romney's candidacy. The president had wooed Latino voters with promises of immigration "reform" while his opponent urged "self-deportation." A key consideration for Obama is that the corporate bosses of important sectors of industry, e.g., agribusiness, manufacturing and information technology, have suffered from a drought of both low-wage manual and highly skilled immigrant labor that has adversely impacted their profits. On January 21, Obama kicked off his second term by renewing the push to overhaul

immigration policy. "Our journey is not complete," he intoned, "until bright young students and engineers are enlisted in our workforce rather than expelled from our country."

The White House blazed the trail for that "journey" out of the U.S. With 410,000 deportations in 2012, the administration set a new record for the fourth consecutive year in its escalating war against "illegal" immigration. Over 1,000 people are deported every day even as attempted border crossings have dropped by 53 percent since 2008, a sign of the greatly diminished prospects for employment in the U.S. Officials have widened the anti-immigrant dragnet by trolling state DMV records for information on foreign-born applicants and dispatching agents to traffic safety checkpoints to detain anyone without a driver's license. These "great unwashed" are apparently of little weight in the administration's calculations, as against the talented engineers.

In the State of the Union address on February 12, Obama touted his admin-

istration's "putting more boots on the southern border than at any time in our history." Washington also poured more money into policing immigration last year than all other federal law enforcement projects combined. A formidable machinery is now in place on the border: over 21,000 agents along with thousands of thermal-imaging sensors, a fleet of aerial drones and nearly 700 miles of fence. Between 2007 and 2011, the rate of reported deaths of those attempting to cross vastly increased—over 350 such deaths were acknowledged each year.

Following the 2012 elections, more savvy Republican politicians noted that their party had failed to attract the votes of certain sectors of the U.S. population—to name a few, black people, women, Latinos, Asian Americans and youth—and timidly ventured the opinion that it needed to expand its appeal. As the Republican Party has deep roots in the South and among those given to religious fanaticism, not much room is available for a wiggle to the left, rendering difficult the search

for support from those who are not older white male bigots. Nevertheless, certain Republicans, notably John McCain and Marco Rubio, last month joined hands with a passel of Democrats to put forward an immigration reform proposal in the Senate.

In theory, Obama should have little problem coming to an agreement with this bipartisan effort. The day after the announcement of their proposal, a White House memo laid out its own plan for immigration reform: further securing the border and intensifying the crackdown on undocumented workers under the guise of penalizing employers on the one hand and offering a remote possibility of citizenship and streamlining legal immigration on the other. These points are almost identical to those raised by the Senators save the not insignificant detail that for them the borders must be closed, not merely "defended." This difference opens up the possibility of unending hours of debate in Congress as it awaits the placement of the last stone in the great wall, deemed
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Class, Race and the Black Struggle in the U.S.

Claude McKay, a Jamaican-born poet active on the left in the U.S. and Britain, traveled to Soviet Russia for the Fourth Congress of the Communist International in November 1922. In his presentation at the Congress (reprinted in “Blacks and Bolsheviks,” *Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 5, February 1988), McKay stressed the centrality of black oppression to American capitalism and criticized American Communists for not adequately addressing this issue. It took the intervention of the Comintern to get the American Communists to begin to actively fight for black rights.

At the time of the Congress, he drafted notes about the situation of black people in the United States, the Caribbean and Africa. The notes are unsigned, but McKay referred to them in other correspondence. We print below excerpts from the sections on the black struggle in the U.S., which we obtained from Tamiment Library at New York University. The original is in the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI) in Moscow. In his notes, McKay refers to the African Blood Brotherhood, a Harlem-based organization, mainly comprising Caribbean immigrants, whose leadership had recently joined the American Communist Party.

* * *

During the World War the economic status of the Negro Race in the New World underwent a swift transition for the better. Especially was this the case in the United States where, on account of the giant war industries and the shutting down of immigration, the services of Negro workers were greatly in demand in the northern industrial zone. During this period it is estimated that over 500,000 Negro workers left the South for jobs in the less hostile atmosphere of the North.

Along with the improvement in their economic status came a great wave of emotional racialism, aroused in part by the wrongs suffered by the race and the sacrifices it was called upon to make for “World Democracy,” as well as by the fine democratic phrases with which the Entente statesmen were gassing the credulous liberals of their own countries and misleading the peoples of the colonies. This racialism among the Negro workers at first took the form of a proletarian movement but has been to a great extent perverted by subsequent activities of opportunists and charlatans with their cowardly compromises and surrenders and their grafting of all sorts of stock schemes upon the mass movement....

The prey of unscrupulous leaders who glibly promised everything but accomplished nothing save the periodical emptying of the pockets of their credulous followers, the Negro masses are discouraged and suspicious, yet there are organizational possibilities on a wide scale for any organization that can, first, win their confidence and, second, push energetically the campaign of organizing and,

ized Labor. However, several thousand are now unionized. Some in the regular unions, but many in segregated unions which are generally affiliated with the national bodies.

Most of the class radicals are to be found in the ranks of the “African Blood Brotherhood” and the “Friends of Negro Freedom”—the latter an organization backed by the Socialist Party of Amer-

nate a large but not compactly organized or effectively functioning body of workers and professionals. The domination of the bourgeoisie is here more open and complete than in the Garvey Movement which, while cursed with petit-bourgeoisie for leaders, has a rank and file wholly made up of workers, and the bourgeoisie in the latter movement have been accordingly forced to resort to camouflage tactics. The compact organization of the Garvey Movement, together with the mighty enthusiasm and blind fanaticism of most of its membership have made it in the past more of an obstacle to the proper prosecution of the Negro Liberation Struggle than has been the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People....

As is well-known, the Negro workers are the most viciously oppressed and poorly paid of any group of workers in the United States. No matter what a Negro’s ability and fitness there are positions which he may not fill and trades whose doors are closed to him. As a rule, only the most menial jobs are open to him during normal times. Made to believe that the antagonistic attitude of Organized Labor is wholly responsible for his exclusion from the better-paid industries, he becomes a willing—and often a joyous—tool of the Interests, and a scab in times of crisis for Organized Labor. He knows that in numerous instances White Labor opposes his employment. He knows, too, of frequent and widely heralded “philanthropies” to his race—by way of subsidies to Negro colleges, etc.—on the part of the White Bourgeoisie and being at least as backward as White Labor, which by its silly prejudices splits the ranks of Labor, he is not able to see the facts as they really are.... His doubts are further increased when he is shown that the white bourgeoisie controls the press, the schools, the churches, the theatres, etc., in which race prejudice is engendered and promoted....

And this leads naturally to a consideration of the present aspirations of the Negro Race. The vast masses of the race in America have only the very simplest aspirations, viz: to be permitted to live and eke out a mean and miserable existence in peace. Of the various groups that rise above this low level, the aspirations of some are confined to safety of life and property and the protection of their women from insult and rape at the hands of white men. Other groups would have political equality in addition; while the most progressive groups demand nothing less than full equality: political, economic, racial; and the abolition of human exploitation. ■

Claude McKay, 1922



Beinecke Library

Moscow, 1922: Jamaican-born poet Claude McKay speaking on racial oppression in U.S. at Fourth Congress of Communist International.

third, *keep up interest in the organization.*

The Negro masses are leavened by an increasingly large body of *race radicals* and *class radicals*. The former are Negroes who, while roused to thought and action by the wrongs of the race, have not yet recognized the essential class nature of the struggle, nor the exact cause and source of their oppression, which they blame indiscriminately upon the entire white race. They are, however, generally inclined to side with and follow the leadership of the class radicals who, fully cognizant of the value of race radicalism for rousing the masses and as a natural and necessary step toward class radicalism, have not been slow in utilizing it and even in helping in its development.

Comparatively few Negro workers are in the unions for the reason that, until recently, they were almost universally barred from the ranks of Organ-

ica; the former said to have Communist tendencies.

A large group of race radicals are also in the African Blood Brotherhood (which makes a race as well as a class appeal); and a larger group in the so-called “Garvey Movement” of “Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League.” The true race radical should not be confused, however, with the motley crowd of fanatics, emotionalists, title and tinsel worshippers who make up the huge mass of the Garvey organization....

The petit-bourgeoisie, with whom the race is honeycombed, find expression chiefly in the “National Association for the Advancement of Colored People,” in which a group of bourgeois gentlemen (colored and white) and gentlemen who, while lacking the bourgeois gold, carry around the bourgeois psychology, domi-

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Britain 1919: Class Struggle, Racism and Labour Reformism

The following article, reprinted from *Workers Hammer* No. 221 (Winter 2012-2013), is based on remarks made by an ICL comrade in the discussion following Jacob Zumoff's presentation at the Historical Materialism conference in London in November 2012. The presentation was previously published as "The Black Freedom Struggle and the Comintern" in *WV* No. 1006 (3 August 2012).

The intervention of the Comintern into the newly founded Communist Party in the United States that provided a corrective on the black question was part of a broader effort to impart the lessons of the Bolshevik revolution to the fledgling Communist parties internationally. The American party had the considerable advantage over its British counterpart of having been forged from among the most vibrant elements of the left at that time, including many immigrants, syndicalists and others who formed the left wing of the socialist movement. The Comintern sought to regroup into its ranks those sections of the working-class movement that were breaking from the Second International during and after World War I. In Britain, the task was to win those elements who rejected the treacherous Labour leaders to the concept of a Leninist party.

The year 1919 saw a proletarian upheaval in Britain that shook capitalist rule to its foundations. Soldiers returning from the trenches of the interimperialist slaughter faced economic slump, poor housing and a scramble for a dwindling number of jobs. The demobilised soldiers

WORKERS HAMMER

included a number of young black men from Britain's former colonies, who often bore the brunt of vile racism. Asians, blacks and other minorities were scapegoated, including by Labour leaders, for the rising unemployment level that was caused by the capitalist system.

In 1919 Claude McKay, a young black man who grew up in Jamaica, moved from the U.S. to London where he lived until 1921. By the time he arrived in London McKay was a committed socialist and radical poet. He was appalled by the level of racism he encountered, not least among Labour Party and trade-union leaders whom he had previously admired. George Bernard Shaw, the person McKay most wanted to meet in London, saw fit to ask why he chose to become a poet rather than a boxer.

McKay was in London during a grotesque racist propaganda campaign led by E. D. Morel, a supporter of the Independent



Herald & Times

Red Clydeside, January 1919: Workers demonstrate in Glasgow's George Square during general strike.

Labour Party who campaigned against the enslavement of blacks in the Congo under Belgian King Leopold. Morel was incensed by the presence of black troops in the French army of occupation in the German Ruhr following World War II. The *Daily Herald* published Morel's racist tirade under the grotesque headline: "BLACK SCOURGE IN EUROPE" and railed about "Sexual Horror Let Loose by France on the Rhine." An expanded version of this filth was distributed as a pamphlet to delegates attending the annual Trades Union Congress in 1920.

McKay wrote a letter to the *Daily Herald* protesting Morel's campaign. But the letter was returned to him by the editor of that time, George Lansbury, a prominent Labour "left" figure who assured McKay that he was not personally prejudiced against black people, but refused to publish his letter. Lansbury led the Labour council that was elected in 1920 in Poplar, east London. To this day "Poplarism" remains a model for the reformist left, who foster the illusion that the interests of the working class can be served by administering the capitalist state at local council level. (See "When Militant Ran Liverpool: Down With Executive Offices of the Capitalist State!" *Workers Hammer* No. 210, Spring 2010 [reprinted in *WV* No. 957, 23 April 2010].)

In the letter that Lansbury refused to publish McKay said:

"I do not protest because I happen to be a negro...I write because I feel that the ultimate result of your propaganda will be further strife and blood-spilling between the whites and the many members of my race, boycotted economically and socially, who have been dumped down on the English docks since the ending of the European War."

—Quoted in *Staying Power*, Peter Fryer (1984)

McKay is referring to a shameful campaign in the ports by leaders of the seafarers unions to exclude immigrant seamen from jobs on British ships. Many seamen drawn from overseas—Indian "lascars" as well as Chinese, Arab and other sailors—had been employed on British merchant ships during the war, when British crews were enlisted in the Royal Navy. With the demobilisation of the armed forces, the competition for jobs intensified. Prominent among the leaders of the anti-immigrant campaign in Glasgow was Manny Shinwell, who went on to become a Labour MP [Member of Parliament]. Effectively, the seafarers unions—including the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union, the British Seafarers' Union (of which Shinwell was Glasgow branch leader) and the National Union of Ships' Stewards, Cooks, Butchers and Bakers—excluded non-British sailors and in some cases campaigned for their deportation

by the state. The chauvinist campaign by Labour leaders led to violent racist attacks on immigrant areas by enraged mobs in Glasgow, Cardiff, London, Liverpool, Tyneside and other port cities.

Shinwell's anti-immigrant tradition was revived in 2009 when strikes and protests on construction sites erupted under the slogan "British jobs for British workers" (later "local jobs for local workers"). These were fully supported by the Socialist Party, and given backhanded support by the Socialist Workers Party. The Spartacist League/Britain denounced these strikes as poison to the interests of the multiethnic working class, pointing to the necessity for "a fight for jobs for *all*, through a shorter workweek with no loss in pay, and to undertake a union organising drive," including low-paid immigrant workers ("Down With Chauvinist Campaign Against Foreign Workers!" *Workers Hammer* No 208, Autumn 2009 [reprinted from *WV* No. 939, 3 July 2009]).

The newspaper that *did* publish McKay's protest against Lansbury's *Daily Herald* was Sylvia Pankhurst's *Workers' Dreadnought*. McKay later said that he could not have survived a year in London if not for the fact that he was an active communist. In a letter to Leon Trotsky in 1922, McKay recalled: "I was working at that time in London in a communist group. Our group provided the club of Negro soldiers with revolutionary newspapers and literature, which had nothing in common with the daily papers that are steeped in race prejudice." McKay was a supporter of the Workers Socialist Federation, led by Pankhurst, which was anti-racist and tried to attract to its ranks black soldiers who ended up in London after the war. Pankhurst was battle-hardened in the fight against chauvinism, having led the left wing of the women's suffrage movement before WWI. McKay himself wrote that Pankhurst "was always jabbing her hat pin into the hides of smug, slack labor leaders" (McKay, *A Long Way From Home*, published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970).

The strike wave of 1919 that swept the cities of Glasgow, London and Belfast was part of a post WWI wave of proletarian struggles throughout Europe. Workers of Glasgow's "Red Clydeside" mobilised behind the engineers, who struck for a 40-hour week. With workers battling police in the city streets, the government sent troops to Glasgow to restore order, but it was an open question whether the soldiers would have attacked the strikers, or sympathised with them. In the event the troops were not tested: the strike leaders were arrested and the engineering strikes were settled. However the threat remained of a major class confrontation between the

government and the Triple Alliance—the unions representing miners, transport and rail workers. The treachery of the union misleaders was shown when Prime Minister Lloyd George called their bluff by pointing out that a joint strike by these three powerful unions would, in effect, pose the question of taking power. "Are you ready to take the power?" the prime minister cleverly asked these fakers. As miners leader Robert Smillie remarked, from that moment "we were beaten and we knew we were."

The Communist International urged the formation of a unified Communist party from among the best elements of the British far left. These included revolutionary syndicalists like John Maclean and Willie Gallacher who led heroic proletarian struggles during WWI. These struggles were waged not only in opposition to wartime restrictions and state repression but also in defiance of the right-wing Labour and trade-union leaders who opposed strikes as damaging to the "war effort." Yet the Communist Party of Great Britain that was founded in 1920 did not include the most militant, internationalist elements of the socialist movement. Thus it lacked a leadership core that was experienced in fighting the politics of the Labour Party and trade-union bureaucracy. The Labour Party cynically positioned itself to contain the revolutionary upsurge, not least by adopting a formal commitment to "socialism" which was enshrined in its constitution in 1918. Lenin wrote his 1920 pamphlet, "*Left-Wing" Communism—An Infantile Disorder* to help win over the left-wing leaders like Sylvia Pankhurst to an understanding of the need for tactics to win the mass of the working class away from Labour reformism.

As we observed in a seminal article on the origins of British Communism, the best revolutionary elements did not make the transition from syndicalism to Leninism, and the party that was founded in 1920 was ineffective in its strategic task of breaking workers from Labour reformism. The article noted:

"This study of the British SLP [Socialist Labour Party] illuminates in one important, concrete case the historic problem of forging Communist parties in the West out of the subjectively revolutionary elements in the pre-1917 socialist and anarcho-syndicalist movements. It also adds appreciably to our understanding of why the Communist Party in Britain was stillborn. The sterility of the CPGB and absence of a real Leninist tradition in Britain have been key negative conditions for the complete hegemony of Labourite reformism over the workers movement right down to the present."

—"British Communism Aborted," *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 36-37, Winter 1985-86 ■

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2012 California Ballot

Repeal Death Penalty? BT Votes No

Opposition to capital punishment has long been a tenet of the Marxist movement. In 1913, the famed Socialist Party spokesman Eugene V. Debs wrote that an Arizona measure to abolish the state's death penalty "should appeal to every just and humane person in the state. Capital punishment is simply a relic of barbarism. There is absolutely no justification for its survival in our present civilization." One can exclude from the "just and humane" the dubious Bolshevik Tendency (BT), which boasts of opposing a measure to do away with California's death penalty in last November's election.

Proposition 34 (the SAFE California Act), a ballot initiative calling to repeal the state's death penalty and replace it with life without parole, went down to defeat. The BT showed its mettle by announcing *two weeks later* that they opposed Prop. 34. Under the heading "Why Marxists Voted 'No'" the BT's article is a grotesque repudiation of the most elementary Marxist principle on the death penalty and the understanding of the capitalist state as an apparatus for the violent repression of the working class and oppressed.

As we wrote in support of Prop. 34 ("Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!" WV No. 1009, 28 September 2012):

"As Marxists, we oppose the death penalty on principle—for the guilty as well as the innocent. We do not accord the state the right to determine who lives and who dies, and welcome any measure against the death penalty or curtailing the reach of the state's killing machine. While the measure is couched as a means of making the system of capitalist repression more effective and efficient, including by redirecting money to police departments, what is primary for us in calling for a 'yes' vote is that the SAFE Act is a referendum on state-sanctioned murder."

One need not be a Marxist to seek the abolition of capital punishment, a tradition that can be traced back to the Enlightenment of the 17th and 18th centuries. "The Other Death Penalty Project," an organization of prisoners sentenced to life without parole, succinctly put it: "We encourage a yes vote because any other vote would be in favor of state-sanctioned executions, but for that reason alone." Following the February 9 execution in India of Kashmir-born Muhammad Afzal for his alleged role in the 2001 attack on its parliament, the South Asia director for Human Rights Watch declared, "Human Rights Watch opposes the death penalty in all circumstances as an inherently irreversible, inhumane punishment."

Far to the right of the liberals, the BT did not just stand on the side of maintaining California's death penalty. They also rewrote history by glorifying the appeals that are purportedly the right of those condemned to death as "limited democratic rights won through past struggles." In reality, the mass struggles for civil rights led to a decade with no executions, beginning with a de facto moratorium in 1967. Five years later, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down all existing death penalty laws as "wanton," "freakish" and "arbitrary," directing states to draft new ones. To get around these objections, states rewrote their laws to include minimal restrictions on the imposition of the death penalty, aiming to give a "democratic" veneer to racist legal lynching. In 1976, the first of these laws was approved by the Supreme Court, opening the sluice gates for executions that have since taken over 1,300 lives.

Taking such trappings as good coin, the BT scoffs at our assertion that "death penalty appeals provide little more than a facade of 'due process'." Countering that "federal-level challenges from California have actually been upheld in 70 percent of the cases heard," they neglect to mention that only *three* of those challenges led to full exoneration and release from prison. For most, the remedy was limited to reversal of the penalty phase of their cases,



AP
Entrance to death row at California's San Quentin prison, 2004.

resulting at best in the same sentence of life in prison called for in Prop. 34!

The BT fawns over the appeals process for those convicted of capital crimes, falsely implying that the same procedures are not available to all others in prison. The only thing they cite that is actually unique to death row inmates is that California "presently pays qualified private attorneys to represent indigent death row prisoners in *habeas* proceedings." But the remuneration provided by the state for complicated and time-consuming death penalty appeals is so low that private lawyers almost never take the cases.

Contrary to the rosy picture of California "justice" painted by the BT, one story

of the Kafkaesque maze of the death penalty appeals process was told in a statement by Darrell Lomax, who has been on San Quentin's death row for 16 years: "I have been in a long fight with the federal public defenders' office, which has tried to work with the attorney general's office to deny me my constitutional right to a new trial and has refused to assign me state *habeas* counsel, even though this is mandated by law in my appeals process.... There are over 300 people on death row in California who have been here for over 10 years, myself included, who have not yet received appointment of counsel" (*Socialist Worker*, 12 April 2012).

Lomax was among the 46 other death row prisoners in San Quentin who wrote in opposition to the SAFE Act, justly protesting that it would condemn them to the living death of prison and force them to work as slave labor in conditions worse than death row. We profoundly sympathize with these death row inmates who saw the SAFE Act as depriving them of the sole possibility of relief, no matter how remote, in the courts of American capitalism. As we wrote in our article last September on Prop. 34: "It is a profoundly searing indictment of this country's judicial system that some prisoners prefer a death sentence on the grounds that this provides some means to prove their innocence and avoid the worse day-to-day violence and torture in the maximum-security prison chambers."

In arguing to maintain California's death penalty as the slim thread to freedom for at best a scant few, the BT is content to shoot craps with other people's lives. This argument can only be premised on the lie that those sentenced to die in California will rarely be executed. As elsewhere, California's capitalist rulers will seek to empty their death row and reduce the expense of capital litigation either by eliminating the death penalty or eliminating the inmates.

Last year, the California Supreme Court ominously threatened attorneys who file repeat *habeas corpus* challenges to the death sentence. Reveling in a perceived mandate to get the state's killing machine back up and running after Prop. 34's defeat, the Los Angeles and San Mateo counties District Attorneys went to court demanding immediate execution warrants for three death row inmates. The

forces of racist law and order who led the campaign against Prop. 34 are promising to put forward their own initiative in the 2014 elections to speed up the killing of the more than 700 death row prisoners in California. Unmentioned by the BT is that dead men have no appeals.

The BT despicably crows, "It is good that Proposition 34 failed—had it succeeded, it might have become a model for similar campaigns in other states." What states do they have in mind? Texas, where 28 were executed in the past two years? Or maybe Arizona, Oklahoma or Mississippi—runners up in the legal lynching sweepstakes? That the BT shows such contempt for the lives of the predominantly black and Latino denizens of death row is hardly a surprise to us. Since its inception over three decades ago, the BT has been marked by a particular disdain for the struggles of the oppressed—not least those of black people in the U.S. As just one recent example, this outfit stands out for not having published a protest against the racist vigilante killing of black youth Trayvon Martin that sparked outrage and demonstrations across the country last year.

The BT disingenuously invokes the case of class-war prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, an innocent man who spent 30 years on death row before his sentence was reduced to life in prison in 2011. Noting that Mumia's lead attorneys Leonard Weinglass and Daniel Williams sabotaged his post-conviction relief hearings in 1995-96 by refusing to introduce powerful evidence of his innocence, they go on to denounce the "Liberals who turned their backs on Mumia...because they shrank from drawing the obvious conclusions about American 'justice' exposed by his frame-up." This is rich coming from the BT. Their involvement in Mumia's defense was to conciliate the reformists who subordinated the demand for Mumia's freedom to the call for a "new trial," promoting illusions in the justice of the capitalist courts in order to appeal to these same liberals.

The BT statement on Prop. 34 devotes not a single word to fighting to mobilize the working class and its allies in struggle for the abolition of the racist death penalty. Instead, their maximum demand is for an "honest campaign which educates people about the racism and barbarity of the death penalty" as against the capitulation to the police and their supporters by those who drafted the SAFE Act.

Only those blinded by their own illusions in "law and order" liberals would have expected anything different from the SAFE Act's authors and main spokesmen. Among them were the former warden of San Quentin, who oversaw four executions during her tenure, and the Republican architects of California's 1978 "Death Penalty Act" as well as the ACLU. In opposition stood the statewide associations of cops, D.A.s and prison guards, which believe that only the most monstrous measures of repression can keep the working class and oppressed cowed in the face of intensifying exploitation and mounting misery. And that was the side taken by the so-called Bolshevik Tendency.

We are for the abolition of the death penalty for everyone, not just those who live long enough and are lucky enough to win the appeals lottery. Our program is rooted in the class struggle, seeking to mobilize the social power of the multi-racial working class in opposition to the death penalty, life without parole, solitary confinement and all the other barbaric institutions of the capitalist state. Through such struggle our purpose is to win the working class to the understanding that the bourgeois state is not some "neutral" agency but rather exists to defend the class rule and profits of the capitalist class against those they exploit and oppress. To put an end to the grisly workings of capitalism's machinery of death—be they the executioners on death row or the cops gunning down black and minority youth on the inner-city streets—requires sweeping away this entire system and its state through proletarian socialist revolution. ■



WV Photo
Partisan Defense Committee contingent at Philadelphia demonstration for death-row prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, April 2008.

Gun Control British-Style

The following commentary was submitted by a comrade of the Spartacist League/Britain.

Advocates of gun control in the U.S. frequently cite Britain as a model. The truth of the matter was noted in the article “Bourgeois Hypocrisy and Gun Control Schemes” (WV No. 1015, 11 January) upholding the right to bear arms: “Whereas in U.S. cities the cops round up black and Latino youth on the pretext of drug and/or gun possession, in Britain the cops sweep up black and Asian youth for drugs and/or knives. In both cases, the cops brutalize and kill with impunity.”

One of the main lessons to be drawn from Britain’s strict gun control is that the capitalist rulers will seize on public outrage over horrendous killings by crazed gunmen to impose further restrictions on the right of citizens to arm themselves for self-defense. Britain’s ban on assault weapons was introduced following a 1987 shooting spree in Hungerford, England, in which a lone gunman killed 16 people. Following this atrocity, semiautomatic rifles were banned and shotguns were restricted. Far more drastic was the legislation introduced in the wake of a brutal mass shooting strikingly similar to the recent one in Connecticut: in 1996 in Dunblane, Scotland, a gunman shot and killed 16 young children and their teacher. The following year, Tony Blair’s Labour government banned handguns almost entirely and boasted of having some of the toughest gun laws in the world.

Support for gun control accepts the fallacy that citizens exercising their right to bear arms represent a danger to society while reinforcing illusions in the police, who are a real and present danger to the working class and minorities. In Britain, while the public has been increasingly disarmed the repressive powers of the state have been increased. The commonly accepted image in the U.S. of British cops is that of the “unarmed bobby.” Reality



London, August 2011: Over 1,000 were arrested during riots sparked by racist cop killing of young black man in Tottenham district.

paints a different picture. Elite armed police units have demonstrated their firepower. A case in point was the cold-blooded police execution of Jean Charles de Menezes—a Brazilian immigrant and electrician who had been deemed a “terrorism” suspect—in a London Tube (subway) train in 2005. As well, under the pretext of the “war on terror,” armed police units conduct raids on Asian homes.

“Anti-gun” campaigns are in fact a license to kill, and to kill black people in particular. Mark Duggan, a young black man, was blown away by the cops in London’s Tottenham district in 2011, a racist outrage that led to riots in England’s major cities. The riots in turn were met with further rounds of state repression, including “anti-weapons” sweeps in minority neighborhoods. By American standards, the weapons seized were laughable. The arms found in one such raid included “two archaic flintlock pistols, retrofitted flare

guns and a Jesse James-style revolver,” as Anthony Faiola reported in the *Washington Post* (1 February). He noted that the cache “might be better suited to ‘Antiques Roadshow’ than inner-city ganglands.”

The primary point of “anti-weapons” sweeps is to assert the state’s right to a monopoly on violence in society. In Britain, where firearms are increasingly difficult for the public to obtain (while criminals of course can get guns), prosecutors and cops are now beating the drums about “knife violence.” Carrying knives in public in England and Wales today brings mandatory prison sentences, and just being in the company of someone armed with a blade can lead to serious charges. This campaign has been further bolstered by “anti-terror” legislation giving a blank check to the cops to stop and search. In Scotland, justice secretary Kenny MacAskill recently bragged of “a record number of stop and searches” and

how “being caught with a knife could now land you a five year prison sentence” (*BBC News*, 26 November 2012). And after knives it will no doubt be hatchets or longbows.

Britain’s draconian anti-firearms measures date from the efforts of the ruling class to disarm the population in the aftermath of the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia amid tumultuous working-class unrest at home. The background to the Firearms Act (1920) was aptly described by Joyce Lee Malcolm, author of the book *To Keep and Bear Arms: The Origins of an Anglo-American Right*. In an article “Gun Control in England: The Tarnished Gold Standard” (saf.org), Malcolm observed: “It was fear of revolution, not crime, that resulted in the first serious gun controls. In 1920 the government faced massive labor disruption, feared a Bolshevik revolution, and worried about the return of thousands of soldiers traumatized by an especially brutal war.” Actually, it was hundreds of thousands.

In Britain, the right of the citizens to bear arms was upheld by the Chartists, which arose as the first mass independent workers movement in the first half of the 19th century. The powerful left wing of the Chartists was republican, internationalist and revolutionary-minded. They asserted their right to arms and bitterly opposed the new, semi-military professional police in working-class districts across the country. Chartism was defeated and demoralized in the aftermath of the failure of the Europe-wide 1848 revolutions and the ensuing political reaction. Later came the rise of the Labour Party, which since its founding in 1900 has worked to tie the working class to the bourgeois order.

In the U.S., the Second Amendment was never about hunting or target practice but about the need for a popular militia to ward off the threat of tyranny. Today this means the right to own assault rifles and other military-grade firearms. It is the task of Marxists to unearth the revolutionary principle of the right to bear arms from underneath a mountain of liberal myths, which stem from upholding the sanctity of the capitalist state. ■

Freedom Now for Tinley Park 5!

Chicago

On January 4, a Cook County court sentenced five anti-racist militants to prison terms of three and a half to six years on “armed violence” charges that stem from the breaking up of a fascist meeting last spring. Plans to convene a “White Nationalist Economic Summit” attracted a group of the scum, some with links to the Stormfront Web site run by a former Ku Klux Klan grand dragon, to the Ashford House restaurant in the Chicago suburb of Tinley Park on May 19. Having gotten wind of this outrage, at least 18 anti-racists went to the restaurant and put an end to the “summit,” sending some of the creeps to the hospital. Shortly after, police pulled over and arrested a carload of five anti-fascists from Bloomington, Indiana—Jason Sutherlin, Cody Lee Sutherlin, Dylan Sutherlin, Alex Stuck and John Tucker—who have come to be known as the Tinley Park 5. The trouncing of the “white nationalists” was a courageous act in the interest of the working class and all the fascists’ intended victims. *Free the Tinley Park 5!*

Each of the five was initially charged with 37 felony counts, including armed violence, property damage and mob action, with bond set at \$175,000 to \$250,000 apiece. The cops and prosecutors applied continuous pressure to force them to give up names of those involved in sending

the fascists scattering, which the five have steadfastly refused to do. Unable to meet the exorbitant bonds, they spent seven months in Cook County Jail while legal proceedings dragged on. Facing the prospect of up to another year behind bars to go to a trial whose outcome they could not predict, the five accepted a non-cooperating plea bargain in which each pled guilty to three counts of armed violence in return for guarantees of time off for good behavior.

The witchhunt against the Tinley Park 5 was part and parcel of the hysteria whipped up against protesters at the NATO summit taking place that same May 19-20 weekend in downtown Chicago. With the city center turned into an armed camp, politicians, cops and the local media vilified and violence-baited the anti-NATO protesters, particularly anarchists and those participating in Black Bloc actions. Three anti-NATO protesters are still in jail after being set up by a police provocateur and charged under Illinois anti-terrorism statutes, the first time these laws were ever used (see “Defend Anti-NATO Protesters!” WV No. 1003, 25 May 2012).

It is a good thing that the fascist “summit” was dispersed and the Hitler-loving vermin were sent scurrying. The fascists are not simply carriers of a genocidal worldview but deal in race terror against black people, Jews, immigrants, gays and anyone else they perceive as “impure.” Last August, a neo-Nazi skinhead murdered six Sikhs at a temple in Wisconsin, and in July 2011 a fascist massacred 69

people at a social-democratic youth camp in Norway. In 1999, a disciple of fascist Matthew Hale went on a racist shooting rampage in Illinois and Indiana, killing a black former Northwestern University basketball coach and a Korean student and wounding nine others, including six orthodox Jews. In 2007, another Hale follower torched a black family’s home in Joliet.

The fascists pose a deadly threat to the entire labor movement and left. The capitalist rulers hold these shock troops in reserve so that in times of crisis and social struggle they can be unleashed to defend the bourgeois order. Take the example of Greece, where the fascist marauders of Golden Dawn are today carrying out daily attacks on immigrants and leftists in collusion with the capitalist cops and courts.

As Trotskyists, we look to the organized power of the working class, standing at the head of all those targeted by the fascists, as the force that can drive this scum off the streets. We have initiated labor/black mobilizations to stop Klan provocations, including one in Springfield, Illinois, in 1994. Such mobilizations are important in helping to make the working class conscious of its historic interest and potential social power as the gravedigger of the decaying capitalist system that breeds fascism.

The Partisan Defense Committee, a legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League, has donated \$100 to the defense fund for the Tinley Park 5 and their families. Donations can be made at www.wepay.com/donations/legal-defense-fund-for-the-tinley-park-five. ■

Spartacist League/SYC Forum



August 2012: Miners Strikes Shake Neo-Apartheid South Africa

- Down With ANC/SACP/COSATU Capitalist Alliance!
- For a Black-Centered Workers Government!

CHICAGO

Saturday, March 9, 4 p.m.

University of Illinois at Chicago, African-American Cultural Center Gallery
830 S. Halsted St., Addams Hall, Room 207
For info: (312) 563-0441 • chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net

Young Spartacus

Canadian Government's War on Science, Native Peoples

We reprint below a presentation given by comrade Nevin Morrison of the Trotskyist League of Canada/Ligue Trotskyiste du Canada at a 20 September 2012 Spartacus Youth Club class in Vancouver. It was originally published in Spartacist Canada No. 175 (Winter 2012/2013).

SPARTACIST CANADA

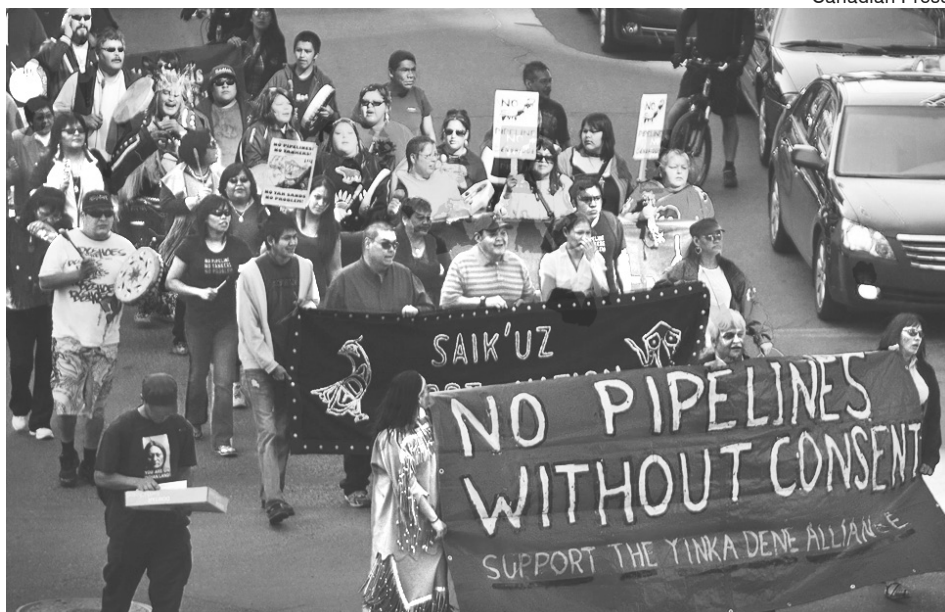
This class has been billed as a talk about Marxism versus religion, but more broadly I want to deal with Marxism and science, so I'll start by talking about some of the current attacks on science and scientific research. In Canada, these have recently targetted climate science, as the government campaigns to make Canada an "energy superpower," including through massive polluting and trampling on the rights of Native peoples. Our approach to these questions is based on what Marxists call *dialectical materialism*, as opposed to the *idealism* of religion and of other political viewpoints. This may seem abstract, but we'll see that in fact it is key to understanding how Marxism addresses the injustice and oppression that permeate capitalist society.

So far, [Prime Minister Stephen] Harper's Conservatives have tried to be discreet about their ties to various religious, anti-science nuts in order to not scare off moderate votes. This party is riddled with Christian fundamentalists who need to be kept on a short leash to avoid embarrassing comments on abortion, homosexuality, evolution, other religious and ethnic groups, and who knows what else. But the religious right has reason to feel they have their guy in power.

One of Harper's first acts was to axe even the inadequate national childcare program negotiated by the previous government, forcing more women to stay at home or leave their children with relatives. Harper has cut funding to numerous social services impacting women, and the Tories' "foreign aid" plan for maternal health in underdeveloped countries denies funding for abortion, something reminiscent of George Bush's cutting of condom distribution under USAID. Most recently, in an attempt to open the door to



Above: Scientists protest government cuts to research at "Death of Evidence" rally on Parliament Hill, Ottawa, July 2012. Below: Native people protest Northern Gateway pipeline project, Calgary, May 2011.



new attacks on abortion rights, Conservative MP [Member of Parliament] Stephen Woodworth put forward a motion in parliament aimed at "reviewing" the definition of when human life begins.

The oil companies have to be pretty

happy with Harper too, after he backed out of Canada's commitment to the Kyoto Protocol which, while of dubious benefit to the environment, could have seriously reduced the competitiveness of Alberta's massive oil sands developments with their staggering carbon emissions. The government has sought to push forward massive pipeline projects, especially Enbridge's Northern Gateway, through shortcutting the review process for new developments. The Harper Tories have also attempted to steamroll opposition—mainly that of environmentalists and Native peoples, though frankly at least in B.C. [British Columbia] the pipelines aren't very popular with anyone—by tarring them as foreign-funded radicals. The government has committed extra cash to auditing environmental charities to discourage political activity, while they've had the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] spying on the Yinka Dene Alliance, a coalition of B.C. Natives opposing the pipelines.

Harper & Co. have further sought to undercut opposition by muzzling government scientists and dismantling government-funded research that has helped to establish the reality of global warming and continues to monitor carbon emissions. This July more than 1,000 scientists and supporters held a protest on Parliament Hill, exposing cuts to basic research with a mock funeral for the "death of evidence." Targets for government cuts have also

included programs that don't fit with the Conservative social agenda, such as Vancouver's Insite safe injection site [which provides legal injection booths and health services for drug users], despite extensive research proving its benefits. At the same time, the Tories have abolished the long-form census, which provided demographic data to support various social programs, replacing it with a voluntary survey which statisticians warn will not provide representative data.

The broader context for all this reactionary, anti-scientific nonsense here and elsewhere is the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. For more than seven decades, despite the bureaucratic degeneration that came with the rise of Stalinism, the Soviet workers state stood as a living testament to the possibility of humanity taking control of its fate, free from the pernicious oversight of any God or religious authorities. Since its destruction, religious backwardness and superstition have been on the rise not just in the former Soviet Union but internationally. In the United States, for example, a recent survey found that 51 percent of adults believe God created humans in their present form within the last 10,000 years. In Canada it's 22 percent, which is bad enough!

Marxism and Religion

Where did religion come from? Many millennia ago, as hunters and gatherers at the mercy of the forces of nature, we needed a system of explanations for natural occurrences. We came up with mysticism and religion to explain the world, give the individual a role in it and provide consolation. While it may still make some people feel better, mystical explanations are no longer needed for natural phenomena. Indeed, compared to modern science, religion has no more explanatory power than theories of UFOs and space aliens. We would do well today to emulate the French mathematician and scientist Laplace who, asked by Napoleon why he left out any mention of God from his book on celestial physics, proudly answered, "I had no need of this hypothesis."

With the rise of class-divided society, religion took on the additional role of propping up the ruling class. It promoted the "divine right" of kings and consoled peasants and workers about their miserable struggle for existence by promising a better life in the next world—"pie in the sky when you die." As the revolutionary leader V.I. Lenin observed, "impotence of the exploited classes in their struggle against the exploiters just as inevitably gives rise to the belief in a better life after death as impotence of the savage in his battle with nature gives rise to belief in gods, devils, miracles, and the like" ("Socialism and Religion," 1905).

With the Protestant Reformation of the 1500s and 1600s and the Enlightenment in the century that followed, the domain of religion was trimmed back quite a bit in the interests of the emerging class of merchants and capitalists, the *bourgeoisie*. As a prop to the aristocracy and as the world's largest landlord, the Catholic church got in the way of bourgeois aspirations, and natural science became a weapon for the bourgeoisie in this struggle.

The rationalist, scientific ideology of the Enlightenment challenged all existing authority and suited the purposes

Spartacus Youth Club Class Series

VANCOUVER

Thursday, February 28, 7 p.m.

Down With Tories' War on Women's Rights!

For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

UBC, Irving Barber Learning Centre Room 460

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

NEW YORK

Tuesday, March 5, 7 p.m.

Marxism and the Fight for Women's Liberation

CCNY, NAC Room 1/211
138th St. and Amsterdam Ave.

Information and readings: (212) 267-1025 • nysl@tiac.net

CHICAGO

Wednesday, March 6, 7 p.m.

Russia, 1917: How the Working Class Took Power

University of Chicago, Reynolds Club
5706 South University
Information and readings:
(312) 563-0441 • chicagosyc@sbcglobal.net

TORONTO

Wednesday, March 13, 6:30 p.m.

**For Free Abortion on Demand!
Women's Oppression and Revolutionary Marxism**

University of Toronto
Sidney Smith Hall, Room 2115
100 St. George Street

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

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

of the rising bourgeoisie in its struggle against the old regime. Of course, more than ideology was needed to overthrow the kings and priests. It took bourgeois-democratic revolutions in countries such as England and France to clear the road for the development of the capitalist system. The emergence of industry in turn demanded the further advancement of science, which to this day serves the bourgeoisie by increasing efficiency of production and discovering new ways of exploiting natural resources, not to mention people.

The parts of the world that had not undergone this modernization were sooner or later overrun by the ones that did. With the rise of imperialist capitalism, America, Japan and a handful of European countries came to exploit and hold back the development of entire continents, where many elements of pre-capitalist traditions and religious obscurantism continue today. This can be seen particularly in the oppression of women through the veil, dowry, “honour killings” and so on. Many of our opponents, even those claiming to be Marxist such as the International Socialists, falsely invoke “anti-imperialism” to embrace Islam in an opportunist adaptation to retrograde, non-working-class forces. We genuine Marxists oppose all religion as, in Karl Marx’s words, “the opium of the people,” and look to the example of the Bolsheviks who, in making the Russian Revolution, worked to win women in particular and workers and peasants in general away from religion to a liberating and scientific worldview.

Armed with socialist ideas and a scientific outlook, the class-conscious, urban working class will be able to throw aside religious prejudices and prescriptions and struggle for a better life here on earth. As Marxists, we fight for the separation of church and state—a basic, though unfortunately always partial, gain of the revolutions which formed modern capitalism. You can see its partial nature, for example, in the existence of a government-funded Catholic school system in many parts of Canada. We fight for universal, free, *secular* education.

We consider religion to be a private matter in relation to the state. No one should receive any special privileges or punishment for their religious beliefs or lack thereof. The state should not interfere in religious matters, just as the church should stay out of civil affairs. Marriage and divorce, for example, should be simple civil matters.

To break the hold of religion, the conditions must be created to replace it. The masses must be educated in historical materialism, the workings of nature and society, and the role of religion. But the issue can only be fundamentally addressed once the working class has swept away the capitalist profit system. We can look to the example of the Bolsheviks in Russia after the workers revolution of 1917, when they sought to undermine religion through education campaigns while weakening the church through the complete separation of church and state. Institutions like education and marriage were removed from the clutches of the priests and church property was appropriated for social use. It was necessary to deal with the higher clergy who openly supported the White Army in trying to overthrow the workers government in the Civil War. But the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky did not outlaw religion, which would only have created martyrs and driven more backward layers of the population into the arms of the priests.

Marxism and Science

Why does the working class need science? In one sense, for the same reasons the capitalists do. Socialism will never be built on the basis of primitive technology at a lower level than capitalism. To provide for the needs of all, it must be more efficient than capitalism. The over-

throw of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of a state-owned economy, key prerequisites for socialism, are powerful tools to this end. Witness even the highly bureaucratic Chinese workers state, which has greatly outperformed the capitalist world in economic growth. But the only road to the all-round economic and social advance for all of humanity lies through world socialist revolution. An international socialist economy would require far greater energy production than capitalism just to begin modernizing the Third World, where billions live in desperate poverty. As Lenin angularly put it, communism is soviet power plus electrification.

Marxism itself is a methodology of social science—a means to understand society and history, as well as to act on

heretofore, his ‘being’ by his ‘knowing’” (*Anti-Dühring*, 1878). This allows us to find the source of the world’s injustice and oppression not in bad ideas or a few bad people, but in the economic relations and the political system that has grown out of those relations.

Origins of Our Species and Society

Marx considered Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution essential to a materialist view of the world. After reading Darwin’s work, he wrote that it “is most important and suits my purpose in that it provides a basis in natural science for the historical class struggle” (“Marx to Ferdinand Lassalle,” 16 January 1861). Darwin’s theory was the key to understanding not only the origin of species and our species in



Beard

Karl Marx



Dietz Verlag Berlin

Friedrich Engels

“To abolish religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is to demand their *real* happiness. The demand to give up illusions about the existing state of affairs is the *demand to give up a state of affairs which needs illusions.*”

—Karl Marx, “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law: Introduction” (1843-44)

it. It is based on dialectical materialism. As one of the readings for this class explained, materialism recognizes “that the world exists in reality; it was not created within the realm of the human mind.” And dialectics signifies “that the essence of our world (indeed our universe) is matter in motion. All things exist not in stasis but in a process of development. An analogy is the difference between a still photograph and a motion picture” (“In Defense of Marxism and Science,” *Workers Vanguard* No. 971, 7 January 2011).

This may seem rather obvious—that the world exists and changes—but from birth we are led to accept that the social structures and norms in this class-divided society are basically static: some people own the factories and others work in them, some rule and others are ruled, by right, sometimes with God brought in to bless the whole arrangement. With dialectical materialism, as Friedrich Engels explained, “a method [was] found of explaining man’s ‘knowing’ by his ‘being,’ instead of, as

particular, but also the rise of civilizations. In his excellent short essay entitled “The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man,” Engels argues that, contrary to the views of his day, the development of the human brain was driven by tool use and the development of speech was driven by social labour, i.e., the need to work together.

The Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky extended this aspect of Engels’ work in the 1920s and ’30s with experiments demonstrating the centrality of tool use to learning and showing that language in particular is socially constructed. Evolution creates the capacity for individual development, as in other species, and a high degree of flexibility. From that starting point, the human mind and even the physical brain are shaped largely by social processes occurring after birth. Scientists elsewhere have begun to catch up in recent decades with evidence of neuroplasticity in children, the shaping of the brain itself by learning. As Marx observed, “It is not

the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness” (*A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 1859).

The capitalist ruling class and its ideologues have taken every opportunity to divide workers and the oppressed with claims for the supposed genetic or biological superiority of one race, colour or gender over another, thereby sabotaging prospects for uniting against their rule. See, for example, the pseudo-scientific studies of Philippe Rushton and of Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray. In fact, the categories of race and gender are constructs of class society that are implanted in us from the culture that surrounds us. While some differences in abilities may exist in early childhood (such as a differential in spatial relations versus language skills between genders), humans are much more the same than they are different. Racist, anti-woman pseudo-science exists for the purposes of a capitalist class that reviles racial and ethnic minorities and fosters chauvinism in order to divide the working class.

In a later work, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884), Engels goes on to analyze the rise of civilization. In brief, he argues that the development of agriculture from the previous hunter-gatherer societies created a surplus product beyond what was needed for subsistence, thus freeing part of the population for other pursuits. The question is then posed, who gets the surplus? From that point on, the history of all societies becomes, as Marx and Engels famously declared in the *Communist Manifesto*, the history of class struggles. Throughout history, slaves have fought with their masters, serfs with their lords, workers with their bosses, to decide who will get that surplus. Institutions of force—ultimately the state—were created to shore up the ruling class. At the same time, the family, which subordinates women to men, developed to ensure the inheritance of private property.

As the mode of production has changed from hunting and gathering to slavery, feudalism and ultimately capitalism, wars and revolutions have brought corresponding changes in the ruling class and its state. The product of all of this development has been a world capitalist system based on nation states, which grew explosively to exploit markets and resources around the globe, and has since begun to stagnate and decay.

Marxism and Environmentalism

It is a common misconception that capitalism is synonymous with consumerism and the limitless expansion of wealth through technology. Also common, especially among environmentalists, is the view that the problem with capitalism is an unsustainable “First World lifestyle” of big cars, big houses and the like; thus,

continued on page 8

Editorial Note

FRSO: Curiouser and Curiouser

Readers of *Young Spartacus* may recall our article “Freedom Road Socialist Organization: Democrats’ Loyal Maoists” (WV No. 1004, 8 June 2012), in which we nailed the New York-based FRSO for, among other things, its outright support to Obama in the 2008 elections. That article inspired some spirited cyberspace exchanges between FRSO honcho Eric Odell and various others, not including ourselves. Odell “clarified” in a 14 June 2012 posting that: “I don’t think it’s correct to say that the FRSO ‘in the main’ supported Obama. I think the majority of individuals on the National Executive Committee at the time did, but within the organization

as a whole people were all over the place on the question.” So, “just” the leadership (Odell was on the NEC as of June 2012) and the press of the FRSO, then, called for the election of Obama as the imperialist Commander-in-Chief. In fact, the FRSO was so pleased with Obama’s win that it counseled its readers to: “Savor the Victory, Get Right to Work” (freedomroad.org, 11 November 2008).

Publicly, the FRSO never responded to our polemic, and we frankly never expected them to. But recently, while a member of our YSp editorial team was wading through the FRSO’s Web site in search of coverage of the 2012 elections, she was struck by the

lack of it. (We did notice that their former comrades of the Midwest-based FRSO/*Fight Back!* remained consistent in their support to Obama, urging “It is better to vote against Romney, especially in swing states” [fightbacknews.org, 12 August 2012].)

With no line article, how could the masses (or the FRSO membership) know what to do on election day? Why did the FRSO go from its 2008 hailing of “Obama’s Americanism” as a “more favorable terrain for the struggles of the working class and the oppressed” to...no line in 2012? Will the FRSO enlighten us? Inquiring minds want to know. ■

Science...

(continued from page 7)

they typically advocate the education of consumers to want less. The fact is that for countless millions of workers and oppressed people, the “First World lifestyle” is simply poverty. And why should anyone be against the best possible living standards for all? The capitalist system, despite all its triumphant rhetoric about “progress,” is actually a brake on development because the profit motive inherently condemns production to chaos.

Environmentalism can only take society backwards. Unable to look beyond the capitalist framework, its promoters are left with only liberal, idealist and even reactionary answers like corporate social responsibility and lowering the aspirations of the Third World masses, i.e., reinforcing their oppression. The more radical environmentalists glorify Native American and other hunter-gatherer and early agricultural societies as supposedly a sustainable alternative to industrialization and capitalism. Some even advocate a reversion to pre-industrial “labour-intensive technologies” to provide jobs and supposedly reduce resource consumption. The hunter-gatherer is romanticized as living close to nature, understanding it and acting to preserve it.

Of course, hunter-gatherers did live close to nature—and suffered from hunger and short lifespans. Moreover, such societies were perfectly capable of causing

techniques to ensure the well-being of our species.

What limitations exist to the future expansion of material production, and the concrete nature of such limits, cannot be accurately judged within the framework of the capitalist system. We do know that even current technology is more than adequate to provide food and shelter for everyone. Yet, as famine plagues many countries, farmers are still paid not to grow food because higher prices mean higher profits. The environmental preoccupation with “consumerism” notwithstanding, the major problems of capitalism are not overproduction and overconsumption but rather *under*production and *under*consumption. We need to produce more to meet human needs, but capitalism will only produce for those who can afford to pay for it.

To look at the capitalists’ squandering of natural resources and degradation of the environment in the interests of profit, one could easily conclude—as most ecologists do—that advanced industrial technology is inherently destructive. But technological considerations do not exist apart from class society. The organization of industrial production under capitalism necessarily leads to the degradation of the environment because the capitalist firms are motivated solely by maximizing profits. It’s not that corporate presidents and CEOs are necessarily malicious people who hate clean air and water. Their job, though, is to make money for their owners and shareholders—that’s what businesses

oppressed. It only shows the irrationality of capitalism that such an inefficient and expensive energy source as the oil sands is made viable by monopolistic restrictions on supply inflating prices. The route, which has been chosen to save money, winds through extremely inhospitable terrain to a port which can be accessed only through narrow shipping channels subject to major storms, even though safer—but more expensive—routes are possible. Along with the environmental risk comes the contempt for the life and safety of workers that is the norm in capitalist industry, as the BP Gulf of Mexico disaster of 2010 showed once again.

Capitalist corporations are more than willing to take such risks for the payoff of billions of dollars in profits in their pockets. For the rest of us, the payoff from this pipeline is not so attractive: only a handful of permanent new jobs, higher gas prices and a tiny share to Native groups with claims on territory along the pipeline route. This project is not a dirty and dangerous exception to the norm of the capitalist market, as many of its opponents would claim, but goes to the *modus operandi* of the capitalist system: production for profit. Capitalists only respond to human needs, protect against pollution and so on where these happen to coincide with the drive for profit.

And capitalism definitely cannot guarantee Native rights. As we note in our *Programmatic Theses*,

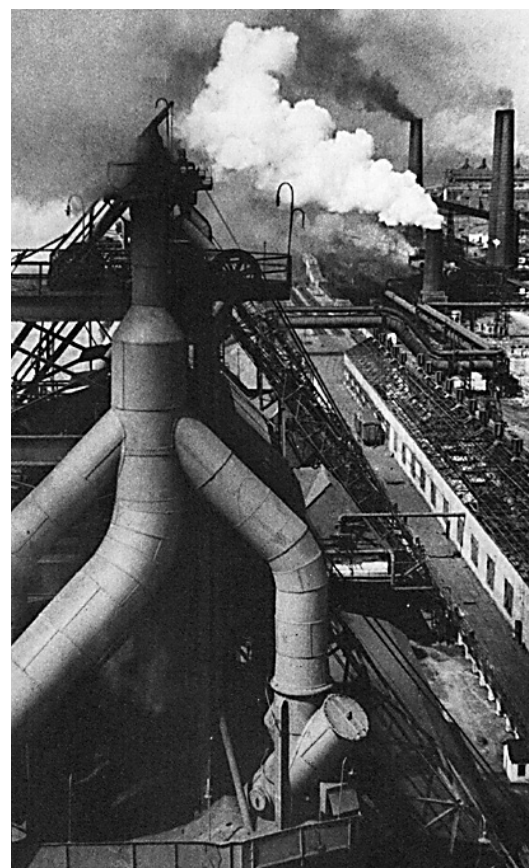
“The Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste demands that whatever residual rights Native peoples have been able to maintain, whether through treaty agreements or otherwise, be respected. In some cases, treaty rights and land claims run up against socially useful developments like railways, hydroelectric projects and oil pipelines. The aboriginal peoples should receive generous compensation for any deprivation of land or disruption of activity, based on completely consensual agreement. Only a workers government will guarantee these conditions.”

—“Who We Are, and What We Fight For” (1998)

Pipelines are indeed necessary to transport fuel. In this case, however, we solidarize with the Native peoples of the area, who are vehemently opposed to the Northern Gateway project and rightly maintain that such a development must be negotiated, not imposed. We are also not indifferent to its other deleterious effects. As Marxists, our opposition of course differs from that of the environmentalists, who are skeptical at best toward any oil-related projects. We also condemn the China-bashing of many opponents of the pipeline, for instance John Bennet, the Executive Director of the Sierra Club Canada, who rants about “oil for the Chinese” and demands an “Energy Plan for Canadians” (rabble.ca, 25 July). For its part, the Yinka Dene Alliance, whose outlook differs vastly from both the Beijing Stalinists’ and our own, captured the hypocrisy of the bourgeois outcry over “human rights” abuses in China by issuing a letter to President Hu Jintao in February that called on him to chastise Canadian rulers for their brutal oppression of Natives.

The Need for Workers Revolution

So what does a Marxist alternative offer? Certainly not a decrease in technology or production, but a total transformation in the use to which it is put. The key is production for social use rather than private profit—much of the world’s population does not have their basic needs met, not from any scarcity of materials or labour, but because they don’t have the money to pay. An increase in the application of the science we have and the development of new technology will liberate our productive capacity and eliminate



Anatoly Skurikhin

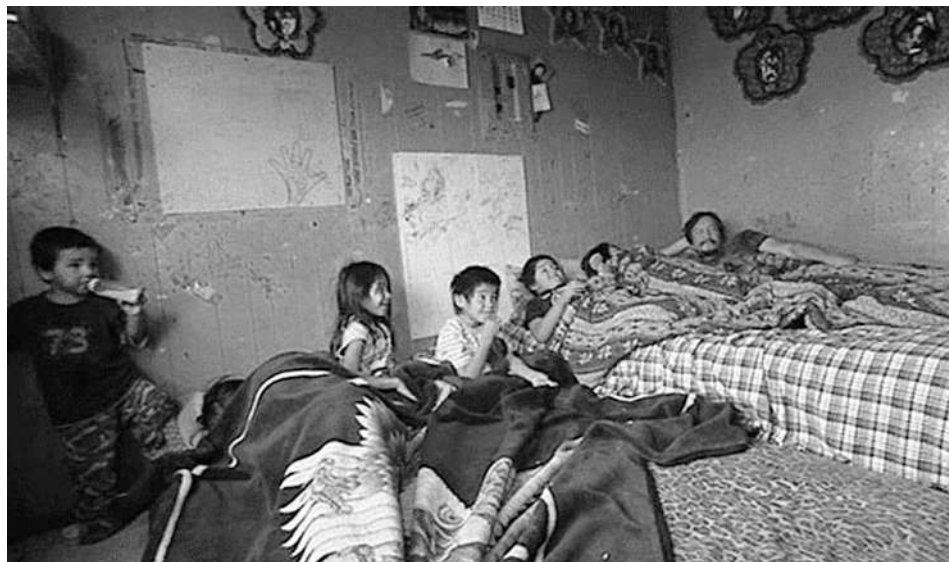
Magnitogorsk iron and steel complex, USSR, 1932. Emerging out of deep backwardness, Soviet Union became industrial powerhouse despite Stalinist misrule.

economic scarcity, laying the basis for the disappearance of classes and the withering away of the state. Such a qualitative development of the world’s productive forces for the benefit of all can only be achieved in an internationally planned, socialist economy.

The qualitative superiority of a collectivized, planned economy over capitalist anarchy was demonstrated in practice by the historical experience of the Soviet Union. Even given the tremendous bureaucratic distortions due to the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy, the USSR was able to construct an advanced industrial economy almost from the ground up. And they did it twice—after the Civil War of 1918-20 and again after the massive destruction of World War II. What made this possible was the 1917 Russian Revolution, which took the factories and other means of production out of the hands of the capitalist class.

The Russian Revolution demonstrated in practice the ability of the working class to take state power and construct a modern industrial society in which workers had access to medicine, science, education and culture. As one example of such accomplishments, the Soviet Union instituted a system of polytechnical education to allow students to receive not just training in a trade, which you might get if you are lucky in a capitalist country, but a well-rounded academic and technical education. Such an approach, on the basis of the higher industrial productivity of an international socialist society compared to capitalism, can begin to overcome the division between manual and intellectual labour, agricultural and industrial labour. As Friedrich Engels put it, “productive labour, instead of being a means of subjugating men, will become a means of their emancipation, by offering each individual the opportunity to develop all his faculties, physical and mental, in all directions and exercise them to the full—in which, therefore, productive labour will become a pleasure instead of being a burden” (*Anti-Dühring*).

The revolutionary Marxist solution to degradation of the environment has as its necessary precondition workers socialist revolutions in the advanced capitalist countries of North America, West Europe and Japan. To the contrary, the environmentalist framework accepts the inviolability of capitalist class rule, with production driven by profit and wealth monopolized by a tiny bourgeois ruling class. The solutions environmentalism offers are either reactionary, back-



CBC

Native people live in abject poverty on overcrowded reserve in Pikangikum, northwestern Ontario.

deforestation, soil erosion, animal extinctions and all-round misuse of resources. Lower population densities made such behaviour perhaps more viable than it is today. At modern levels of population densities, we need centralized economic planning, scientific knowledge and the most advanced industrial and agricultural

are for. Cleaning up pollution and minimizing waste does not increase profits. This is the logic of capitalism at its most basic.

The Northern Gateway pipeline project is a prime example of how this capitalist drive for profit goes up against the interests and needs of workers and the

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Kill List...

(continued from page 1)

‘baseball cards’ and decrees in total secrecy who should die. The power of accuser, prosecutor, judge, jury, and executioner are all consolidated in this one man, and those powers are exercised in the dark.” It is not even necessary for the intended victims to be charged as terrorists or for there to be a shred of evidence against them. Anyone deemed an “associate” of a “terrorist” can end up on the kill list, with the authorities even spared the trouble of having to concoct an imminent threat.

Greenwald expresses righteous anger at Democrats’ falling into line behind Obama’s shredding of such Constitutional protections as the Fifth Amendment’s guarantee of due process. He chastises “obsequious lawyers telling their Party’s leader that he is (of course) free to do exactly that which he wants to do, in exactly the same way that Bush got John Yoo to tell him that torture was not torture, and that even if it were, it was legal.” No mystery to this. The Democrats have been just as diligent as the Republicans in using the “war on terror” to augment the repressive powers of the capitalist state because the aim of both parties is to operate that state machinery against the working class, minorities and the poor, at home and abroad.

The White Paper offers some legal basis for the kill list in the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF), which Congress passed with exactly one dissenting vote in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. The Justice Department document reaffirms the global sweep of the “war on terror,” stating that “none of the three branches of the U.S. Government has identified a strict geographical limit on the permissible scope of the AUMF’s authorization.” Under Obama, U.S. forces continue to kill and maim in wars, drone strikes and special operations from Central Asia to the Horn of Africa, while the administration cranks up the war on the rights of the U.S. population.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the Center for Constitutional Rights filed suit against the Obama government in 2010, challenging the placement of Anwar al-Awlaki on government kill lists before his death. A federal district court dismissed the case on the grounds that the issue of targeting for assassination was a “political question” to be taken up by the executive branch. The ACLU has now filed another suit charging that the killings of the al-Awlakis and Samir Khan violated the Constitutional guarantee against the deprivation of life



Reuters

without due process of law. Its February 6 statement on the new suit notes that “the government counts all military-age males in a strike zone as combatants unless there is explicit intelligence posthumously proving them innocent.” (An “innocent” corpse is still a corpse.)

Some of Obama’s liberal critics ask that he at least go through the motions of getting prior approval before launching his “targeted” killings. One option they offer is to establish a special court for such purposes, akin to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) courts for wiretapping applications. Trumpeted as a check on the nation’s secret police, FISA has never been anything more than a rubber stamp. From 1979 to 2011, it denied all of *eleven* of nearly *32,000* wiretap applications. The bottom line for Obama is not only that the White House must have the power to order U.S. citizens killed but that the documents explaining the “legal” rationale for this power must be classified, i.e., concealed. While some liberal critics bemoan Obama’s lack of transparency in this matter, their concerns do not extend to his legions of non-American victims.

Remote-Control Murder

Guantánamo is not closed, but Obama is taking few prisoners. Over the last three years, his administration has carried out at least 239 covert drone strikes. The Air Force now trains more unmanned-systems operators than it does fighter and bomber pilots combined. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism estimates that CIA strikes in Pakistan between 2004 and 2013 have resulted in 3,468 deaths. In Somalia, the Bureau reports, up to 57 people described as civilians have been killed and in Yemen as many as 178. The key architect of the



Facebook

Rubble in Yemen from U.S. drone strike that killed 16-year-old U.S. citizen Abdulrahman al-Awlaki (inset) and six others on 14 October 2011.

drone murder scheme is John Brennan, who is slated to be chief of the CIA, which directs many of the drone strikes. Brennan’s résumé, spanning a 25-year CIA career, includes working as a top agency official during the torture interrogations carried out under the Bush administration.

On MSNBC’s *Up with Chris Hayes* last year, Jeremy Scahill described the village of al-Majalah in Yemen after the first strike there authorized by Obama. With 35 women and children killed, the



Department of Defense

Rendition flight of U.S. “war on terror” captives.

U.S. tried to palm it off as the work of the Yemeni government. But, as Scahill said, “We know from the Wikileaks cables that David Petraeus conspired with the president of Yemen to lie to the world about who did that bombing. It’s murder—it’s *mass* murder—when you say, ‘We are going to bomb this area’ because we believe a terrorist is there” (*Huffington Post*, 3 June 2012).

An editorial in the liberal *Nation* (6 June 2012) stated: “The drone strikes are inciting even more anti-American hatred in troubled places like Yemen as well as Pakistan.... It is hard to argue that they are making us safer when, for every suspect killed, one or more newly embittered militants emerge to take his place.” In other words, the *Nation* feels that Obama has broken his only real 2008 campaign promise, which was to be a more effective chief executive for blood-drenched U.S. imperialism. The carnage wreaked by the Obama administration gives the verdict on the reformists—International Socialist Organization, Workers World Party, Party for Socialism and Liberation, et al.—who pushed pro-Democratic “anybody but Bush” politics in protests over the Iraq war and cheered Bush’s replacement as a supposedly more benign Commander-in-Chief.

In “9/11 in Retrospect” (*Foreign Affairs*, September-October 2011), Melvyn P. Leffler laid out that the Obama administration’s strategy has been in continuity with that of the Bush administration and, in fact, others going back to the dawn of the 20th century. The September 11 attacks, this bourgeois historian writes, “did not change the world or transform the long-term trajectory of U.S. grand strategy.” Rather, the U.S. “quest for supremacy” as well as “its preference for an open door

and free markets, its concern with military supremacy, its readiness to act unilaterally when deemed necessary...all these remained, and remain, unchanged.”

Wars, invasions, torture, executions, massacres of civilians, deployment of mercenaries, covert operations: all are integral to capitalism in its imperialist epoch, i.e., in its (prolonged) death agony. We wrote in “U.S. Imperialism’s Torture, Inc.” (*WV* No. 826, 14 May 2004):

“Capitalist society was born in blood; modern imperialism continues the brutal practices of mass murder, torture and humiliation that accompany exploitation of labor and the ceaseless struggle between competing imperialist forces to dominate the world. From the Belgian Congo killing fields of King Leopold and the massacres in the Philippines by U.S. troops in the early days of its imperialist expansion to the first concentration camps, created by the Spanish in Cuba and a little later used by the British in South Africa in the Boer War, to Japanese imperialist atrocities in China and Nazi Germany’s Holocaust, imperialism has created a world in constant, cruel convulsions.”

Decaying Capitalism and the Imperial Presidency

The Obama administration’s assertion of the power to assassinate U.S. citizens is a dangerous but entirely logical extension of the police-state powers assumed by the

New York Times Disappears Bradley Manning

The following February 13 letter by Ray Bishop, Workers Vanguard editor, was sent to the Public Editor of the New York Times, Margaret Sullivan, following the publication of her article “Keeping Secrets” (9 February).

You applaud the *Times*’ decision to finally report the location of a U.S. drone base in Saudi Arabia while bemoaning how long it took the *Times* to approve releasing the information, which had been kept secret at the government’s request. Maureen Dowd’s column (“I’m Begging, Don’t Hack the Hacks”) printed the same day objects to the policy of drone attacks while raising alarm over Chinese hackers breaking into government and media computer systems. In neither piece was any mention made of Bradley Manning, who has suffered enormous abuse and faces a possible life sentence if a military court finds him guilty of releasing a trove of classified documents to WikiLeaks. That material shed welcome light on U.S. diplomatic schemes and wartime atrocities

in Iraq and Afghanistan. The omission of his case is simply cowardice on the part of the *Times*, which you had earlier taken to task for ignoring the bulk of Manning’s pretrial hearing in December.

You acknowledge that the policy of the *Times* is to keep information from the public when Washington officials make the case that such news would threaten “national security.” The other side of that coin is that, following the September 11, 2001 attacks, then-*Times* reporter Judith Miller recounted tales of Saddam Hussein’s nonexistent “weapons of mass destruction” (the pretext for the U.S. invasion of Iraq). By contrast, making the documents available to WikiLeaks—which were subsequently published in part by the *Times*—was an act of truth-telling. If indeed it was Bradley Manning who released the videos, reports and cables, he provided a valuable service to humanity and now deserves the support of all who oppose the barbarity and machinations revealed in them.

Immigration...

(continued from page 1)

necessary by the Tea Party types, on the southern border of Fortress America.

If a compromise immigration bill is achieved, it will undoubtedly contain the main elements of the “pathway to citizenship” put forth by Obama. In this scheme, undocumented immigrants would be required to register with the government, submit biometric data, pass criminal background and national security checks and pay fees and penalties before becoming eligible for a provisional legal status. If cleared, they then would have to wait until the existing legal immigration backlogs are cleared before joining the line for lawful permanent residency (a “green card”), and ultimately U.S. citizenship. The line proposed might as well stretch to infinity. Some Mexicans who have applied for legal residency have been waiting decades for their requests to be granted. Now some Republicans are up in arms because Obama proposes to reduce the wait to a mere eight years!

When announcing his latest scheme, the president said it was time to end a situation where eleven million undocumented immigrants “live their lives in the shadows.” Indeed, he wants them out of the shadows and under the ever-watchful gaze of the capitalist state, all the better to regulate the flow of low-wage labor. Undocumented immigrants, mostly from Mexico and other parts of Latin America, toil at some of the most backbreaking and dangerous jobs in this country. It is a testament to their militancy and class consciousness that a sizable number of these workers are often involved in union organizing battles, which in California signed up 100,000 new workers last year, bucking the continued nationwide slide in union membership. The labor movement must demand that *all* immigrants have immediate and full citizenship rights and must fight against every instance of discrimination, calling for no deportations.

Field Hands, Scientists and Students

Not a few immigrants fled their homelands to escape grinding poverty and brutal repression resulting from U.S. imperialist plunder. At the same time, the capitalist rulers will always attempt to tap new sources of cheaper labor, particularly immigrants from less-developed countries. The *Wall Street Journal* (1 February) recently pumped for a guest worker program that “would allow low-skilled immigrants to legally fill temporary labor demands, and it is absolutely necessary if we are to avoid a future flood of illegal immigrants.” The central focus of the current proposals is on creating a large pool of completely vulnerable immigrants who will be policed utilizing every bit of biometric and other data available and made to pay large sums of money for the privi-

lege of working for a pittance with no job protection, no assured immigration status and no right to any kind of welfare. This offering is bread and water rationing—in fact, a kind of indentured servitude.

As a result, some older undocumented immigrants look with fondness on the presidency of Ronald Reagan, who signed legislation that granted permanent residency to some three million undocumented immigrants, raising some real possibility of their becoming citizens. Since then, the decay of American capitalist society has advanced considerably. Such largesse will not be granted at a time when there are legions of the unemployed and an all-sided anti-labor offensive is driving down wages, even for unionized workers, to near Wal-Mart levels.

In recent weeks, leaders of high-tech industries have flooded Washington to push for comprehensive legislation, propelled by a belief that they will only obtain the substantial increase in temporary visas for skilled labor that they require if Congress passes such a bill. Their quest is primarily a comment on the deterioration of American society and its public education system. Ever fewer high school graduates possess the academic skills, let alone monetary resources, necessary for the intensive university training that produces scientists, engineers and mathematicians. Many U.S. manufacturers have concerns similar to their counterparts’ at Google and Intel. With the unions here on their knees and costs elsewhere rising, Caterpillar and other industrial giants are relocating plants from outside the country to the “low-wage” U.S., only to have their research and development staff from China and India waiting years for a green card.

American universities, which still provide some of the best education available in these fields, have been increasingly populated with foreign graduate students, especially from China. However, it has become difficult for these students to obtain a visa to stay in the country after graduation. Meanwhile, the Stalinist bureaucracy in Beijing is putting up money to make it more attractive for those with advanced degrees to return to the Chinese deformed workers state. A more farsighted section of the U.S. bourgeoisie is now expressing concern that it might some day lose its “edge on innovation.”

Last year, immigrant college students, many of them undocumented, marched, staged sit-ins and even outed themselves to the authorities to draw attention to immigration reform, in particular to the Dream Act, which stalled in Congress in 2010 despite Obama’s support for the measure. This plan, also favored by the reformist International Socialist Organization (ISO), would allow immigrant youth to apply for permanent residency if they attend college—an improbable option for the vast majority—or serve in the armed forces for two years. Thus, most of these youth are left with the grotesque prospect

wrought with the active complicity of the pro-capitalist, “America first” trade-union bureaucracy, which has presided over the vast decline in union membership and rarely engages in action against the bosses’ one-sided class war.

The economic decline of the U.S. in recent decades has been accompanied by unchallenged military superiority abroad, to which the existence of the Soviet Union had stood as a counterweight until its counterrevolutionary destruction in 1991-92. That dominance is something that no wing of the U.S. ruling class will concede voluntarily, just as it will never concede its ability to answer with massive repression any genuine challenge to its rule “at home.” Power must be *wrested* from the blood-soaked rulers as the Bolshevik-led workers in Russia wrested power from the bourgeois rulers in October 1917, smashing the existing state apparatus and replacing it with the dictatorship of the proletariat.

From the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the counterrevolutionary slaughters in Korea and Indochina to



Immigrant rights activists rally outside White House two days after Obama’s re-election, calling on him to keep his promises on immigration reform.

of joining the imperialist military that has slaughtered millions in its invasions of foreign lands as other branches of the same capitalist state kill, imprison and deport those who may be their relatives. We say: No to the Dream Act!

The ISO seeks to tinker with the terms of anti-immigrant repression, calling for more “bold” protests “to force a change in the pro-business priorities for immigration legislation—and to win a proposal that’s worthy of the term ‘reform’” (socialistworker.org, 31 January). These shameless reformists offer nothing other than to dress up U.S. capitalism, as if a fair immigration policy shorn of “pro-business priorities” is possible under an inherently unjust system rooted in the exploitation of the many by the few. We do not advise the bourgeoisie on its priorities. Our aim is to instill in the multiracial working class the importance of defending immigrants and fighting every manifestation of oppression as part of preparing it for the necessary revolutionary battle to end capitalist rule.

For a Class-Struggle Perspective!

Marching in lockstep with the government’s campaign against undocumented workers are the union tops. These labor traitors not only are now actively collaborating with the Chamber of Commerce in hammering out the details of a guest worker program but also have embraced e-Verify, a government database of everyone legally permitted to work in the U.S. AFL-CIO head Richard Trumka baldly states that e-Verify is “part of the system we’ve proposed.”

At hundreds of workplaces across the country, mass firings of immigrant workers have followed audits of Social Security numbers using the e-Verify database (“desktop raids”). This cornerstone of Obama’s immigration policy, dishonestly billed as “employer enforcement,” has time and again helped employers get rid of labor activists and head off unionization drives. Immigrant families are ravaged, as the breadwinners are thrown out of their

the neocolonial wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. imperialists have repeatedly demonstrated that they are the biggest force of organized terror on the planet. Having long outlived any progressive role, the capitalist system must be overturned

jobs with few prospects for new employment, not to mention a much higher risk of deportation.

The venal union bureaucrats are thus lining up against the basic class interests of the proletariat. For these staunch supporters of the political parties of the class enemy, above all the Democrats, these latest betrayals are simply a continuation of a general policy of appeasement of the capitalist rulers that has resulted in the withering of union power. Battered by a wave of attacks on public workers, union membership fell to 11.3 percent of the workforce last year, the lowest rate since 1916.

Revitalizing the labor movement will require hard class struggle, including on behalf of all those ground down by capitalism. Immigrant workers, often from places with a rich history of social and class struggle, will have a vital role to play. It is through uniting black, white and immigrant workers in struggle against their common class enemy that the working class can surmount the racial and ethnic divisions long sown by the exploiters to divide and weaken labor. But when it comes to an appetite for struggle for the unity and integrity of the working class against chauvinism and racism, the union bureaucrats are decidedly anorexic.

The anti-immigrant campaign has served to deflect attention from the fact that the “Great Recession,” which has brought widespread job loss and misery, is the direct product of the capitalist profit system. A program for the mobilization of working-class unity against capitalist exploitation and oppression requires that the current labor misleaders be replaced by a new generation of class-struggle militants. It will take this kind of leadership to sever labor’s ties to the Democratic Party and promote the building of a revolutionary workers party committed to overturning the imperialist order through socialist revolution. This is the only road to ending the exploitation of man by man, as well as all forms of oppression. ■

the FBI staged raids against leftists in the Midwest and elsewhere in 2010 on the grounds that their support for Palestinian nationalists and Latin American guerrillas constituted “material support to terrorism.”

The lack of class and social struggle has emboldened the capitalist rulers in their sidestepping of Constitutional niceties as well as their slaughter abroad. But make no mistake: The bourgeoisie is determined to build up its powers of repression so that they can be used to put down any perceived threat to its rule and profits.

The working class cannot advance its struggle against exploitation without also defending democratic rights and opposing every instance of imperialist barbarism carried out by its own ruling class. The tiny class of obscenely rich capitalist exploiters rules over a society marked by decaying infrastructure, joblessness, low wages for most of those who have jobs, abject urban and rural poverty, massive incarceration particularly of black and Latino men and women, and an education system where quality is increasingly the preserve of the wealthy. This social destruction has been

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UC, State Assembly Crack Down on Pro-Palestinian Protest

Zionist Witchhunt on California Campuses

LOS ANGELES—House Resolution 35 (H.R. 35), passed in the lower house of the California legislature last August, is another step in the campaign to smear, censor and set up for persecution student activists who protest the crimes of the Israeli state. H.R. 35 upholds the age-old slander that any criticism of Israel equals anti-Semitism. Furthermore, it terrorist-baits student groups, alleging they “encourage support for terrorist organizations” and “openly advocate terrorism against Israel and the Jewish people.” Even while it does not make new law, this resolution by the California State Assembly retrospectively commends past attacks by the University of California (UC) administration against Palestinian rights advocates, while urging the prohibition of even the tamest protests that students are undertaking or may attempt in the future.

H.R. 35 approvingly cites language from the European Union—an imperialist-dominated alliance for the exploitation of Europe’s working class—as a model for slandering pro-Palestinian protesters. The resolution embraces the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights’ working definition of anti-Semitism as “certain language or behavior [that] demonizes and delegitimizes Israel.” It specifically refers to “anti-Semitic discourse...to falsely describe Israel,” “including that Israel is a racist, apartheid, or Nazi state, that Israel is guilty of heinous crimes against humanity such as ethnic cleansing and genocide.”

Thus the bill aims to suppress the truth: the Zionist state is guilty of heinous crimes against humanity. Recall the Israeli-organized 1982 massacre of some 2,000 Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon; the 2010 massacre of nine activists onboard the *Mavi Marmara* ship carrying humanitarian aid for the virtual concentration camp of the Gaza Strip; Israel’s bloody November 2012 offensive against Gaza, where more than 1,000 air strikes reduced homes to rubble and slaughtered 162 men, women and children. On an “ordinary”

Young Spartacus

day, Palestinians are subjected to hunger, unemployment, humiliation, fear and forced confinement behind a separation wall. *Defend the Palestinians! All Israeli troops and settlers out of the Occupied Territories now! Down with the starvation blockade of Gaza!*

The passage of this provocative bill did not go unopposed. Notably, the UC Berkeley graduate student assembly voted over-

The bill absurdly tries to portray an atmosphere of widespread anti-Semitism on California campuses. The truth is that Arabs, Muslims and pro-Palestinian activists of all backgrounds—including Jewish students who are anti-Zionist—are the ones under the gun. When UC Irvine student protesters stood up during a February 2010 speech by Israeli ambassador and war criminal Michael Oren, correctly



Capps/Daily Californian

Pro-Palestinian students stage “mock checkpoint” on Sproul Plaza, UC Berkeley, 28 February 2012. Federal officials have launched investigation of campus protests against Israel’s oppression of Palestinian Arabs.

whelmingly to condemn H.R. 35 in a resolution passed last November. Jewish Voice for Peace also condemned the bill in a 29 August 2012 statement. H.R. 35 is aimed explicitly against the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) activists, but it also represents a threat to the entire left, as it gives campus administrations the green light to censor and repress political activity. *Down with H.R. 35!*

calling him an “accomplice to genocide,” they were arrested and sentenced to three years’ informal probation, community service and fines. Appeals are still ongoing. (See “Overturn the Convictions of the Irvine 11!” WV No. 995, 3 February 2012.) The administration also extended its witchhunt to the Muslim Student Union, suspending the group at UC Irvine.

Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP)

groups on UC campuses have received death threats, including a 2008 e-mail that reads, “The day the world finally nukes all you subhuman sand monkeys will be a day to rejoice.... Die.” In the spring of 2012, UC Davis students sought the administration’s protection after Zionist supporters of StandWithUs (SWU) used pepper spray against pro-Palestinian protesters. In response, UC president Mark Yudof sided with SWU and equated the political speech of Palestinian rights advocates with racist attacks. These are just a few of the incidents cited in the “Letter to University of California President Advising Him of Need to Protect Pro-Palestinian Speech on Campus” (Center for Constitutional Rights, 3 December 2012).

For years during the annual “Israeli Apartheid Week,” the SJP at UC Berkeley has set up “mock checkpoints” to protest the very real ones that harass, detain and terrorize Palestinians daily. With college students playing the role of soldiers and wielding toy guns, this simulation of Palestinian reality deeply disturbed the local Zionists, who mobilized to ban such political theater as well as other SJP events. In 2011, Jessica Felber—a paid employee of the Hasbara Fellowships program that trains students on how to oppose pro-Palestinian activism—filed a lawsuit against UC. In it she claimed that criticism of Israel is “anti-Semitic” and that allowing such speech abets a “hostile environment” for Jewish students. Although the charges against the university were dismissed, Felber’s lawyers filed another complaint with the Office for Civil Rights in the U.S. Department of Education. This “investigation” is ongoing.

Abolish the Administration!

While contesting Felber’s accusations, the UC administration threw its weight behind the Zionist witchhunt, utilizing its “President’s Advisory Council on Campus Climate, Culture, & Inclusion” that produced a July 2012 “Campus Climate

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Pro-Israel Furor at Brooklyn College

A gang of rabid Zionists waged an unsuccessful campaign to shut down a February 7 Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) forum at Brooklyn College (BC), which featured liberal academic Judith Butler and Palestinian BDS spokesman Omar Barghouti. Alan Der-showitz, who infamously championed the use of torture as part of the “war on terror,” and Democratic state assemblyman Dov Hikind, an avowed former member of the fascist Jewish Defense League, took the lead in this provocation. At a press conference with Hikind and others, city council member David Greenfield slandered the timid, liberal BDS campaign as a “hate-filled, anti-Semitic, pro-terrorist movement.” After the event, the Anti-Defamation League published an

ad in the *New York Times* (8 February) that read, “In its support for the ‘right of return’ for refugees, they [the BDS activists] are advocating...the destruction of the Jewish state through demography.”

In a January 29 letter to BC president Karen L. Gould, ten prominent New York City politicians demanded that the event be cancelled and/or official sponsorship revoked. The letter also suggested that the city council might withhold future funding to Brooklyn College—where the student population is nearly 20 percent Jewish. Two days later, 19 “progressive” politicians (including Democratic mayoral contenders Christine Quinn, John Liu, Bill de Blasio and Bill Thompson) also demanded that BC revoke its sponsorship of the event. President Gould

refused to cancel the BDS forum. At the same time, according to BC Tanger Hillel’s Web site, Gould issued a statement that did not utter a word of opposition to the slanders made against BDS and said, “We deeply value our Israeli partners and would not endorse any action that would imperil the State of Israel.”

NYC mayor Michael Bloomberg—a vocal supporter of Israel who presides over the NYPD’s anti-Muslim spying program—sided with Gould and essentially ordered his minions on the city council to back off. The humbled politicians retracted their demand in a sycophantic February 6 letter to Gould. Chemi Shalev opined in the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* (9 February) that the campaign to shut down the Brooklyn College

event left the Zionists looking “inflated and melodramatic” and “unhinged.” Shalev also lamented that this was a “PR coup” for the BDS activists.

The forum drew a huge audience and gained national and international publicity. Outside the event, Zionists faced off against a group of demonstrators that included supporters of the reformist International Socialist Organization and a group of orthodox Jews against Israel. Supporters of the New York Spartacus Youth Club and the Spartacist League sold *Workers Vanguard* to the crowd lined up outside and held signs reading “Down With the Zionist Witchhunt at Brooklyn College! Defend the Palestinians!” and “For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!”