

Labor Must Fight for Immigrant Rights!



AP



Reuters

Immigration “Reform”: Ramping Up Border Crackdown, Guest Worker Servitude

As soon as President Obama emerged victorious in the latest budget wars against the Republican Party, the Wall Street Democrat announced what was next on his agenda: immigration “reform.” There is more than a casual link between the two items. As the spectre of a new financial meltdown loomed, the impasse over the budget and the debt ceiling was resolved only after leading financial titans and industrialists signaled that the intransigence of the Tea Party yahoos was damaging the interests of the capitalist ruling class as a whole. Now Obama aims to push through an immigration overhaul that serves these same interests, beefing up border militarization and reinforcing the brutal exploitation of foreign-born workers as part of an onslaught against the wages and living standards of the entire working class.

Obama was a key mover behind the immigration overhaul contained in Senate bill 744 (S.744), which was drawn up by four Democrats and four Republicans and passed by a two-thirds majority in June. On top of the massive increase in “border security” and the record number of deportations under his watch, totaling some two million, S.744 mandates \$40 billion for another 20,000 Border Patrol agents and 700 more miles of fencing along the U.S.-Mexican border. The effect would be, as always, to shift the perilous routes taken by desperately impoverished Mexicans and Central Americans trying to cross over, leading to ever more deaths from drowning, dehydration and exhaustion and killings by the Border Patrol.

The border measure originated as an amendment tacked on to win the support of recalcitrant Republicans for the bill’s 13-year “path to citizenship” and its expansion of “guest worker” visas. Strewn with all-but-insurmountable legal and

Left: Demonstration in Washington, D.C., calling for passage of immigration bill with a “path to citizenship,” October 8. Right: Homeland Security agents round up immigrants in one of series of workplace raids across Phoenix, Arizona, metropolitan area, August 17.

financial obstacles, the “path” would offer the eleven million immigrants only a slim chance of a reprieve at the end of their ordeal. Nevertheless, racist reactionaries in Congress ludicrously decry the measure as an amnesty, much as they denounce Obama’s Affordable Health Care Act—at bottom, a gift to the insurance and health care corporations—as “socialism.” Against the likes of Ted Cruz, the Democrats can even play up their chutes-and-ladders path to citizenship to bolster their electoral support.

Chamber of Commerce types who throw their money at the Republicans fear not only that right-wingers in Congress will torpedo the overhaul package but that the Tea Party’s undisguised hatred of darker-skinned people, foreign-born or native, will continue to cost the party in national elections. Latino votes count large in this calculation. Even Asian Americans, who not too long ago went Republican by a slight majority, now vote overwhelmingly Democratic.

While Republican-controlled state governments in the South and Southwest have enacted draconian anti-immigrant measures, some states run by the Democrats, like California, have loosened up a few restrictions that were irrational from a bourgeois viewpoint. For example, several states have tried to join several cities in opting out of the federal Secure Communities program, under which those jailed for even the most minor offenses have their fingerprints sent to Homeland Security, on the grounds that it makes it more difficult for local law enforcement to police immigrant neighborhoods. While there may be differences in what they say and how they say it, any policy disputes between the Republicans and Democrats boil down to how best to enforce U.S. capitalist rule.

Centrally important to business inter-

ests is the Senate bill’s tinkering with the visa program for guest workers. Recruited to fill specific jobs, these workers, who mostly are paid a pittance, are relegated to a netherworld where they lack fundamental rights. In a *New York Times* (1 September) op-ed piece titled “Subcontractor Servitude,” Jennifer Gordon describes how Jamaican guest workers brought in to clean luxury hotels and condos in Florida were made to pay exorbitant recruitment fees as well as extortionate rents for the tiny apartments they were packed into and then had their paychecks repeatedly bounce. When the fed-up workers went on strike, the subcontractor they worked for threatened that if they did not return to the job, *la migra* would put them on the next plane home. According to the National Employment Law Project, more than half the jobs added during what passes for the economic recovery in the U.S. have been in low-wage sectors where subcontracting is prevalent, as it increasingly is worldwide.

This situation underscores that defense of foreign-born workers against the capitalists and their state is in the vital interests of the working class as a whole. The vast majority of immigrants are driven to the U.S. and other advanced capitalist countries as a result of the entrenched poverty imposed by imperialist subjugation of their homelands. Thus the NAFTA “free trade” treaty, which greatly strengthened U.S. economic dominance of Mexico, spurred a massive increase in emigration. The immigration laws of the capitalist state, which are centrally driven by the need to manage the flow of cheap labor, are necessarily chauvinist and repressive. The economic crisis that erupted in 2007 led to the expulsion of immigrants not only in the U.S. but throughout the capitalist world. In Greece and several other European countries, the increase in offi-

cial anti-immigrant repression has helped feed an explosive growth in fascist shock troops whose ultimate targets are the trade unions and all other working-class organizations.

We would welcome any measure that provides some actual relief from anti-immigrant oppression—something *not* on offer with S.744 or the various House bills now being hashed out. But as Marxists, we do not seek to advise the bourgeoisie on an alternative immigration policy, which would mean accepting the parameters of a system based on exploitation and oppression. Our demand is that *all* immigrants and foreign workers be entitled to immediate and full citizenship rights.

As with the fight against black oppression, which is embedded in American capitalism, the working class must actively combat the bosses’ efforts to pit the native-born against the foreign-born—a divide-and-rule tactic they have used since before the Civil War. The labor movement must fight every instance of wage and other discrimination against immigrants, oppose deportations and undertake concerted action to organize immigrant workers into the unions with full rights. Such struggles would go a long way toward promoting the understanding that the multiracial, multi-ethnic proletariat has distinct class interests—counterposed to those of the racist, chauvinist capitalist rulers—that must be politically expressed through their own class party.

The pro-capitalist union tops take the exact opposite stance, collaborating with the bosses in regulating the flow of immigrant workers in order to protect their own privileges and reinforce the chains binding workers to the Democrats. In 2007, when Bush was in the White House, Chamber of Commerce and AFL-CIO officials tried but failed to come up with an agreement on guest-worker visas. But this spring the two sides helped prepare the way for the Senate bill by working out a program that pegs the number of visas to employment needs, up to a maximum of 200,000

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The Proletarian Revolution in Russia

To mark the anniversary of the 1917 October Revolution, we print below excerpts from Louis Fraina's introduction to *The Proletarian Revolution in Russia* (1918). The book mainly consists of articles by Bolshevik leaders V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky that were written, as Fraina noted, "during the actual course of the Revolution," from the overthrow of the tsar in February to the workers' seizure of power and the birth of the Soviet state.

In 1919, Fraina and other members of a left-wing faction in the Socialist Party who were expelled for advocating Bolshevism went on to found the Communist Party of America that September. James P. Cannon, a leader of the early Communist Party and later of American Trotsky-

independent class policy and class organizations, the Soviets, constitutes the decisive feature of the Russian Revolution,—an emergence definite and sufficiently aggressive to conquer power for the revolutionary proletariat....

As the tendency of action of the Russian proletariat was adumbrated [prefigured] in previous revolutions, so its class organizations, the Soviets, are, in general features, partially, incompletely apparent in these previous revolutions in which the proletariat instinctively tried to emerge for the conquest of power.

machinery of the bourgeois state, and use it for its own purposes.

The Soviets, the Councils of Workers and Peasants, are a much higher form and definite expression of this tendency of the proletarian masses *to become the state*. Originally created as instruments of the revolution, the Soviets have become organs of government, functioning through a temporary dictatorship of the proletariat. The Soviets are revolutionary organizations of the masses; but they are more: they are forms for the creation of a new type of government, which shall supersede the

revolution, but equally the groupings upon which is based the self-government of the oncoming communist society of Socialism. And the Soviets, combining temporarily political and industrial functions, are developing the forms out of which will emerge the communist, industrial "government" of the days to come. The *tendency* of previous revolutions is the dominant *fact* of the Russian Revolution.

The proletarian revolution in Russia has revealed clearly and in definite form the methods and the purposes, the action and the "state" by means of which the proletariat can conquer power and accomplish its emancipation.

The definite success of the proletarian revolution in Russia depends not alone upon the Russian masses, but much more upon the revolutionary action of the masses in the rest of Europe. The Russian Revolution cannot accomplish that which the French Revolution accomplished—wage war upon the whole of Europe. The strength and the weakness of the proletarian revolution in Russia is precisely that the other European nations are much more highly developed economically. Revolutionary France was the most advanced nation economically in Europe (except England), and this greater economic power was a source of unparalleled political and military vigor to France, making feasible a war against all of Europe. But the proletarian revolution in Russia is vulnerable to a concerted attack of European Imperialism, because the other nations of Europe can mobilize infinitely superior economic forces; simultaneously, this situation is one favorable to the Russian Revolution, since the higher stage of economic development in the other nations prepares the conditions for supplementary revolutionary action, which alone can ultimately preserve the Russian Revolution. Monarchic Europe could not produce a revolution in accord with that in France; modern Europe can produce a proletarian revolution in accord with that in Russia. The proletarian revolution in Russia requires and struggles for the Social Revolution in Europe. The revolution of the proletariat is an international revolution. ■

By Louis Fraina

ism, remarked that Fraina in that period "did more than anybody else to explain and popularize the basic program of the Russian Bolsheviks" (*First Ten Years of American Communism* [1962]). In later years, Fraina, writing under the name Lewis Corey, renounced Communism. But as Cannon put it, "The best part of Fraina—the young part—belongs to us."

* * *

The persistence of Czarism in Russia after its historical necessity had ceased, its clinging to power after Capitalism had come into being, produced a dual political and social development. Within the shell of Czarism developed the bourgeoisie, the class of capitalists, and the proletariat,—a mature and aggressive proletariat. As the bourgeoisie developed power, the proletariat simultaneously developed its own power, while politically and officially Czarism retained ascendancy. When the shell of Czarism was burst by revolutionary action, Czarism disappeared as easily as a dream upon awakening, in violent and suggestive contrast to the painful and prolonged struggles required to overthrow the absolute monarchy in France, and in England; and the failure of the revolutionary movement in Germany in 1848. This unparalleled rapidity of accomplishment in Russia was directly and largely traceable to the development of the revolutionary proletariat.

Upon the overthrow of Czarism, the bourgeoisie and proletariat faced each other in battle array; where previous revolutions found the proletariat scattered and without decisive power, the Russian Revolution found the proletariat disciplined and inspired by traditions of revolutionary struggle, organized by the mechanism of capitalist production itself,—stronger than the bourgeoisie, and able to conquer for itself the power of the state.

This emergence of the proletariat, its



Novosti

Petrograd, 1917: Meeting at railway station calling for formation of Red Guard detachments.

The revolutionary masses of the people, during the French Revolution, particularly in Paris, organized their own forms of revolutionary struggle and government, the *sections* and the *Commune*. While the average historian dwells minutely upon the action of the various parliaments and the Clubs, the sections and the Commune of the masses were of decisive importance. These sections and the Commune were not alone instruments of revolutionary action, but usurped certain functions of government, the tendency being to place all government power in the Commune, which was simply the organized masses trying to act independently of parliamentary forms and bourgeois representatives. This tendency was expressed in a more definite form in the Paris Commune of 1871, which completely dispensed with the forms and functions of the bourgeois parliamentary state, its purpose being to unite all France by means of self-governing communes, and from which Marx derived that fundamental canon of the proletarian revolution: the proletariat can not simply lay hold of the ready-made

bourgeois political state. Instead of being amorphous "mass organizations" as were the sections and Communes in the French Revolution, the Soviets are industrial organizations uniting the functions of industry and government. In the Soviets appears the true form of government of the proletariat, based upon the producers organized in the workshops. In the workshops lies not only the power of the workers for the

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trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com

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After Union Uses Some Muscle



Striking ILA members man picket line at Port of Baltimore on October 16.

Baltimore ILA Tops Bow to Arbitrator, End Strike

On October 18, the leadership of International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) Local 333 called off a strike that had shut down most of the Port of Baltimore. Dock workers had hit the picket lines three days earlier after voting 517 to 25 to reject a take-back offer from

the stevedoring companies' bargaining agent, the Steamship Trade Association (STA). In addition to hardlining it on the new local contract—which sets wages for handling cars and break-bulk cargo as well as all work rules at the port—the STA affiliates have been repeatedly vio-

lating existing guidelines in an effort to boost profits at the cost of workers' safety.

One ploy has been to cut the size of work gangs handling containers and other cargo, putting longshoremen who already toil under deadly dangerous conditions at even greater risk from speedup. At the

same time, the STA proposed stricter penalties against workers involved in vehicle accidents—that is, firing for the third offense—at the port that conducts the highest volume of automobile trade in the country. Strikers told *Workers Vanguard* that some Baltimore terminals had unilaterally slashed pay rates for loading and unloading automobiles.

The short-lived show of union strength in Baltimore came at a time when longshoremen across the country are under the gun, not least in the Pacific Northwest where grain exporters have locked out International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) members at two terminals. With local contracts open at three other ILA ports on the East and Gulf Coasts, the Baltimore strike had the potential to ripple beyond the city. The union bureaucrats, though, bent over backward to accommodate the bosses, halting the job action after an arbitrator ruled that it violated a no-strike clause in the ILA's Maine-to-Texas master contract with the United States Maritime Alliance (USMX). In fact, they not only submitted to the "cease and desist" order, which applied to containers and some vehicle cargo, but went one better and themselves imposed a 90-day "cooling off" period on the union during which they pledged that *all* cargo would move.

Here is revealed the purpose of supposedly "independent" arbitrators, whose basic role is to stop strikes and enforce class peace, all the better for the bosses to get their way. As a measure of their so-called partnership with the employers, the pro-capitalist union tops first accede to no-strike clauses in contracts and then roll over before the arbitrators who enforce

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Ever since Veolia Transportation took over the operation of the Boston Public Schools bus fleet in July, some 700 drivers, organized in United Steel Workers (USW) Local 8751, have endured a steady stream of abuse from this vindictive employer. Trampling on the union contract negotiated by its predecessor, the new management has flouted long-established work rules, including by arbitrarily reassigning routes, and made a practice of shortchanging drivers on their paychecks when finally getting around to distributing them. Such a declaration of war on the unions is nothing new for Veolia, which is part of a multinational conglomerate with its hooks in several major industries across the globe. It is no coincidence that Bay Area Rapid Transit shelled out nearly \$400,000 to bring in Veolia's Thomas P. Hock as the chief negotiator with its unions earlier this year and had this notorious outfit run scab shuttles when union members went on strike (see article on page 12).

Boston's embattled school bus drivers, who are largely Haitian, Cape Verdean and Latino, fought back. On the morning of October 8, they reported to work at their assigned hours but refused to board their buses until management agreed to meet with the union. The bosses would have none of it: workers were ordered off company property, and the gates were locked behind them. Pickets went up at all four bus yards in protest, even though the USW district director criminally disavowed the job action. The next day, bus service resumed as Veolia sat down with representatives from Local 8751. Here the union reps presented a list of demands, beginning with "complete and total amnesty" for all members.

In response, the company served letters of suspension to Local 8751 grievance committee chairman Stevan Kirschbaum and vice president Steve Gillis. A few days later, recording secretary Andre Francois and stewards Garry Murchison and Richard Lynch were also suspended. Even as the threat of further reprisals hangs over their heads, the workforce remains unbowed. Large numbers of drivers and other supporters turned out for rallies outside the disciplinary hearing for the "School Bus Union 5" on October 23 and

Boston Job Action: No Reprisals Against School Bus Drivers!



Boston, October 8: Stevan Kirschbaum, later suspended by company, addressing drivers as buses sit idle.

28. With Veolia gunning for their jobs, the hearing is scheduled to continue. All Boston city labor should demand: *Reinstate all suspended union officials! No reprisals against bus drivers!*

The city rulers and their kept media have fanned the flames against Local 8751, with Democratic Party mayor Thomas Menino vowing to "make sure this illegal behavior has consequences." Ripping a page from the "red scare" playbook, the mayor especially wants the heads of Kirschbaum and Gillis, who are supported by the reformist Workers World Party (WWP), because they are a "rogue element" and "rabble rousers who cause trouble." In a thinly veiled attempt to stoke the city's ever-glowing embers of anti-black and anti-immigrant hostility, he also berated the workforce as "selfish people who only want to cause disruption in our city." A City Hall

aide contemptuously added that "most of these drivers did not know what was going on."

The very opposite is true: the drivers knew the score all too well. They did not fold in the face of Veolia's intransigence or the efforts of the USW regional leadership to squash the walkout. When the Local 8751 president tried to convince the drivers at the Readville bus depot to resume work with nothing to show for their protest by pleading that "we have to do it legally," he was shouted down with cries of "no!" If workers over the years had confined themselves to what the bosses deem legal, as the labor bureaucrats preach, there never would have even been unions in the first place.

The school bus drivers union traces its history back four decades to the fight to integrate Boston's public schools through busing. When these plans were defeated

by an alliance of liberals in Congress and howling mobs of racists in the streets, the floodgates were opened to a nationwide assault on school desegregation, foreshadowing the rollback of hard-won civil rights for black people nationwide. (See "As Racist Mobs Rampaged, Liberals and Reformists Knifed Busing," WV No. 921, 26 September 2008.)

At the time, the Spartacist League intervened into the struggles to defend busing as a minimal application of the elementary democratic right of black people to equality in education. We called on the integrated union movement, including the city's bus drivers, to mobilize labor/black defense of the besieged black school children. But the WWP and Socialist Workers Party acted as lackeys for black Democratic Party liberals who sought to channel outrage over the racist backlash into calls for state intervention, spreading the illusion that the same capitalist state that murderously repressed black militants could be relied on to defend black rights. Workers World is still very much into burnishing the credentials of black Democrats, such as councilman Charles Yancey, for purportedly "fighting racism and injustice in Boston" (workers.org, 2 December 2007).

Countless defeats have resulted from hitching struggles to the Democratic Party—one of the two main parties of the *class enemy*. Yancey, who accompanied union officials to Veolia offices during the lockout, later announced on his Facebook page that he "DID NOT support the actions taken by the bus drivers." He might take a different posture than the mayor, who wants to strangle Local 8751 and bring back neighborhood schools. Yet "friend of labor" Democrats are no less committed to maintaining the capitalist system of exploitation in which the roots of black oppression are lodged. Avowed socialists who are respected by their co-workers, such as Kirschbaum and Gillis, can help give militant expression to the immediate demands of a workforce. But lacking a program for the political independence of the proletariat, they cannot chart a way forward for the labor movement, much less for getting rid of the system of capitalist wage slavery altogether. ■

The following article originally appeared in Spartacist Canada No. 178 (Fall 2013), newspaper of our comrades of the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste.

In the early morning hours of July 6, 47 people burned to death in the runaway train explosion at Lac-Mégantic, Quebec. Most were enjoying an evening out at Musi-Café, a popular hangout in the centre of this industrial and tourist town of 6,000 on the southern part of the Chaudière River, near the border with Maine. Ignited by 72 unattended and shoddily designed tank cars of crude oil that rolled down a steep hill and slammed into the town, at least 30 buildings burned to the ground. Many others remain uninhabitable due to soil contamination, while drinking water was tainted by 100,000 litres of crude spilling into the river and the lake.

This tragedy was no accident. It was shaped by money-pinching cutbacks, layoffs and criminal neglect by the Montreal, Maine and Atlantic (MMA) rail company, owned by Edward Burkhardt’s Rail World of Chicago. It also arose ineluctably from the drive for profits by the huge Canadian



railway conglomerates, and was aided and abetted by the federal government’s gutting of safety regulations at the behest of these same rail bosses.

About a decade ago, Canadian Pacific [CP] abandoned or sold off unprofitable rail lines in eastern Quebec and New Brunswick to smaller companies like MMA, even though these lines are essential to get products to the Atlantic ports. With the vast expansion of North American oil production, notably in the Alberta tar sands, transport of crude oil by train has now skyrocketed: up from about 500 carloads four years ago to a projected **140,000** this year. The Lac-Mégantic death train was carrying crude from booming North Dakota for processing at the Irving refinery in Saint John, New Brunswick. In 1994, the government’s own safety officials warned that 80 percent of the rail tanker fleet was unsafe for carrying oil—yet to this day most shipments are carried in such cars, which have a history of puncturing during accidents. Meanwhile, the government has cut safety inspections across the board, claiming the companies would “self-regulate.”

The irrationality of organizing something as essential to society as railways on a for-profit basis has made the rail system a disaster waiting to happen. Last year alone saw 1,011 train accidents in Canada: nearly three a day. Ten days before the Lac-Mégantic inferno, CP management provided a classic instance of corporate arrogance and greed in insisting on running a freight train over a structurally compromised bridge in Calgary in the middle of that city’s flood disaster. The ensuing collapse led to a needless diversion of

Quebec Rail Disaster

Lac-Mégantic

Industrial

Murder



David Charron

July 6: Fireball above Lac-Mégantic, Quebec. Rail bosses’ drive for profit produces death and destruction.

emergency personnel from flood relief. CP CEO Hunter Harrison justified this act of criminal stupidity by saying that if this particular train had not run, this would amount to “jeopardizing commerce.”

At the heart of the Lac-Mégantic disaster is the naked pursuit of profit that drives the capitalist system. This system, which serves the interests of a tiny handful of businessmen and financiers, is based on the exploitation of the working class in the factories, mines and transport systems. Incapable of meeting the basic needs of the population, capitalism is a deadly threat to our health and safety. Acts of industrial mass murder such as Lac-Mégantic are written off as collateral damage, accounted for in insurance premiums with the costs fobbed off to small-town governments and the Red Cross—if you’re lucky.

Ed Burkhardt and the Destruction of Public Railways

Edward Burkhardt is now deservedly hated throughout Quebec. Initially, the MMA chairman said baldly that he felt no responsibility for the tragedy. Then he hinted at “sabotage” and blamed firefighters in the nearby town of Nantes, where the train started its uncontrolled descent shortly after one of the badly maintained locomotives caught fire. Finally, he blamed and suspended the engineer, Tom Harding, who, as per company policy, had secured the train for the night and was resting in a local hotel when the tragedy occurred.

This further infuriated the people of Lac-Mégantic, who overwhelmingly refused to blame the overworked Anglo Québécois train operator. As one francophone resident put it when Burkhardt visited the town: “He accuses the little guy who is following company orders.” The mother of a waitress killed at Musi-Café denounced the MMA chair as “a reckless man” who “played—and he is still playing—with people’s lives.” A man who lost

three relatives said angrily: “I wanted to see the assassin with my own eyes.”

As a further slap in the face, MMA proceeded to lay off about 80 workers, including 19 in Quebec. Daniel Roy, Quebec director of the Steelworkers union, which organizes MMA workers, reacted: “We were having trouble doing the work we had to do with the numbers we had.... Now with 19 less, people are worried about safety. “I’ll tell you that there’s a lot of worker anger towards the company right now.” —*Toronto Sun*, 17 July

Having refused to pay a red cent toward the recovery efforts—which will cost upwards of \$200 million—MMA has now secured its assets through bankruptcy protection in the U.S. and Canada.

In its ten-year history, this small rail company has set records for accidents and derailments among North American railways. Its rails and signage are so poorly maintained that residents can tell where the CP line ends and MMA starts on the south shore of Montreal. The tracks are so damaged that MMA ordered its operators to slow down to as little as five miles an hour on sections of the line between Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu and Lac-Mégantic! And this is only a small part of the picture for Burkhardt and Rail World, who specialize in “rescuing” rail lines abandoned by governments and bigger railways and then further driving down safety and work conditions.

In 1996, when Burkhardt headed Wisconsin Central, one of his trains carrying flammable materials derailed in Weyauwega, Wisconsin, causing the evacuation of the entire town for 16 days. The crash was caused by a broken switch-point rail that the company had not properly maintained. A year later, a worker in Fond du Lac, also in Wisconsin, was killed when a Wisconsin Central freight train crashed into a factory. Burkhardt went on to head privatized Tranz Rail in New Zealand,

which became notorious for its appalling safety and workplace injury record. He bought up four newly privatized rail companies in Britain, setting up the English, Welsh & Scottish Railway and moving to slash the workforce by nearly 40 percent. He also led the privatized Australian Transport Network and, under Rail World, took over former government-owned lines in Estonia, Poland and Ukraine.

Everywhere, this character has used the same methods of slashing wages and safety measures, with predictable results. Burkhardt is particularly notorious for pushing for one-man crews on freight trains. Kevin Moore, chairman of the union that represents MMA workers in Maine, underlined the obvious: “He thinks when you have two people in the cabin, the second person could be a distraction.... I’ve never seen that. The second person has always been a benefit, not a distraction” (*Globe and Mail*, 21 July). The Tory government in Ottawa obligingly approved one-man operation for MMA’s trains in Canada.

While MMA and Rail World are particularly vicious in imposing such measures, they are not an aberration. The Canadian rail bosses’ neglect of basic maintenance and safety produces fatality after fatality. The broader toll of industrial death and injury is astronomical. In Ontario, one worker dies from a workplace accident on average every day. Countrywide, about 1,000 workplace deaths are reported annually. The picture is even starker in poor, semicolonial countries: a single factory collapse in Bangladesh earlier this year killed over 1,100 workers [see “Capitalist Profit Drive Kills,” *WV* No. 1023, 3 May]. Everywhere, industrial murder is the direct product of the giant capitalist corporations’ drive for ever greater profits.

Expropriate the Railways! For a Planned Socialist Economy!

Key to the beginnings of industrialization and used as a tool of “nation-building” in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the history of railway operation in Canada is laid down on a bed of profiteering, corruption, racism and death. In British Columbia [B.C.], at least 600 Chinese migrant labourers, denied any rights and sent on the most dangerous jobs, died in the construction of Canadian Pacific’s rail line. Trains buried in avalanches, falling into rivers and other tragedies marked the early years of Canadian rail operations. With the aging of the railways, continued neglect in maintenance and staff cutbacks, avoidable tragedies have continued to this day.

CP and the older Grand Trunk Railway in Eastern Canada (later folded into Canadian National) were born of greed and corruption. John A. Macdonald, the first prime minister, was famously driven from office over bribes taken from rail magnates, only to be re-elected later on. To compensate for their “risks,” Canadian Pacific’s owners were given thousands of acres of valuable land where no railways were ever built, ensuring enormous profits for generations of capitalist investors.

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Lac-Mégantic Industrial Murder

Fireball above Lac-Mégantic, Quebec. Rail bosses' drive for profit produces death and destruction.

Des imputeurs pseudo-trotskyistes font la promotion d'un pamphlet antibolchévique

Le démocratisme bourgeois contre la révolution d'Octobre

Critique du livre d'Alexander Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks in Power* PAGE 4

Marxisme et parlementarisme bourgeois

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John Bellamy Foster & Co.: “Ecosocialism” Against Marxism



Carrie Ann Naumoff

Left: John Bellamy Foster (standing third from left) at Occupy Wall Street encampment in NYC’s Zuccotti Park, October 2011. Right: Rally outside May 16 Regents meeting in Sacramento calls for University of California to divest from fossil fuel companies.

Part One of this article appeared in WV No. 1032 (18 October).

PART TWO

In *Marx’s Ecology*, John Bellamy Foster contends that green ideologues mistakenly ascribe to Karl Marx positions he did not in fact hold, including that Marx “had an extremely optimistic, cornucopian view of the conditions that would exist in post-capitalist society due to the development of the forces of production under capitalism.” Foster goes on to state: “In this interpretation Marx relied so much on the assumption of abundance in his vision of a future society that ecological considerations such as the scarcity of natural resources and external limits to production have vanished.”

Focused as he is on transforming Marx into a proto-environmentalist, Foster completely misses the mark in assessing what these critics got wrong. Marx did maintain that a future communist society would be based on the elimination of economic scarcity. But he certainly did *not* think that the forces of production developed under capitalism were sufficient for this purpose. Quite the contrary!

The transition to communism requires a planned, socialized economy to facilitate the development and application of new technologies and thus raise the level of labor productivity *far above that inherited from capitalism*. It is simply outside Foster’s framework that a future socialist society would utilize the most advanced technology in order to redress environmental degradation. But that’s not all; he falsely attributes a similar pessimism to Marx, who, he writes, “demonstrates a deep concern for issues of ecological limits and sustainability.”

In polemical writing, what is omitted is often just as important as what is explicitly discussed, if not more so. By far the best-known exposition in Marx’s writings of the transition from the overthrow of capitalism to a fully communist society is in the 1875 *Critique of the Gotha Programme*. Yet despite two passing references to this work in the 250-plus pages of *Marx’s Ecology*, the relevant passages are not taken into consideration.

In the *Critique*, Marx explained that in the initial phase of a socialist society “bourgeois right” would still persist. In other words, the means of consumption allocated

to individuals would be proportional to the quantity and quality of their labor:

“The individual producer receives back from society—after the deductions have been made—exactly what he gives to it.... He receives a certificate from society that he has furnished such and such an amount of labour (after deducting his labour for the common funds), and with this certificate he draws from the social stock of means of consumption as much as the same amount of labour costs. The same amount of labour which he has given to society in one form he receives back in another.”

Marx proceeds to describe the conditions enabling society to transcend the principle “to each according to his labor”:

“In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labour, and thereby also the antithesis between mental and physical labour, has vanished; after labour has become not only a means of life but life’s prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of common wealth flow more abundantly—only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs!”

In this work, Marx also indicates how the productivity of labor is to be increased during the transition period. He criticizes the Lassalleian program, which holds that the entire social product will be available for the consumption of the direct producers. Instead, a portion of it must

be deducted for other purposes, not least the “expansion of production,” that is, the construction and utilization of additional means of production embodying the most advanced (labor-saving) technology.

How can Foster reconcile the Marxist vision of a communist society, in which material resources are freely available to all, with his own contention that the *existing* level of production and consumption is rapidly destroying the environmental basis for human life? He can do so only by projecting an eco-socialist society in which “to each according to his needs” is *substantially less* than “to each according to his labor” in today’s advanced capitalist countries! This program was spelled out by Foster at a gathering of Occupy protesters in New York City in 2011. As reported in *Monthly Review* online (MRZine.org, 29 October 2011), he implored his audience:

“Move away from a system directed at profits, production, and accumulation, i.e., economic growth, and toward a sustainable steady-state economy. This would mean reducing or eliminating unnecessary and wasteful consumption and reordering society—from commodity production and consumption as its primary goal, to sustainable human development. This could only occur in conjunction with a move towards substantive equality.”

What Foster is projecting is a reactionary utopia—the equality of poverty on a global scale. A “steady-state economy” would condemn the hundreds of millions of people in Third World countries to con-

tinued impoverishment. This vision of the future is like a right-wing caricature of communism—what used to be derided as “barracks socialism,” similar to the condition of uniform equality imposed on conscripts in an army.

Nonetheless, some left-wing activists may respond sympathetically to Foster’s argument that working people in the U.S. and other “rich” capitalist countries have to accept a lower standard of living to avert a supposedly looming ecological catastrophe. Yet they are virulently hostile to the right-wing ideologues of the Tea Party, who contend that the American people have to reduce their expenditure on consumption, especially in the case of social programs, to avert a supposedly looming fiscal catastrophe. That Foster denounces capitalism while the Tea Party types extol the “free market” system does not make his program less reactionary, only more seductive.

Capitalism Is Not a “Treadmill of Production”

The basic argument in Foster’s *Ecology Against Capitalism* can be stated briefly. Capitalists seek to maximize profits. They therefore produce more and more commodities that embody surplus value, which is extracted through the exploitation of labor. The expansion of production in turn causes the ever-worsening degradation of the environment. Foster writes:

“Capitalist economies are geared first and foremost to the growth of profits, and hence to economic growth at virtually any cost—including the exploitation and misery of the vast majority of the world’s population. This rush to grow generally means rapid absorption of energy and materials and the dumping of more and more wastes into the environment—hence widening environmental degradation.”

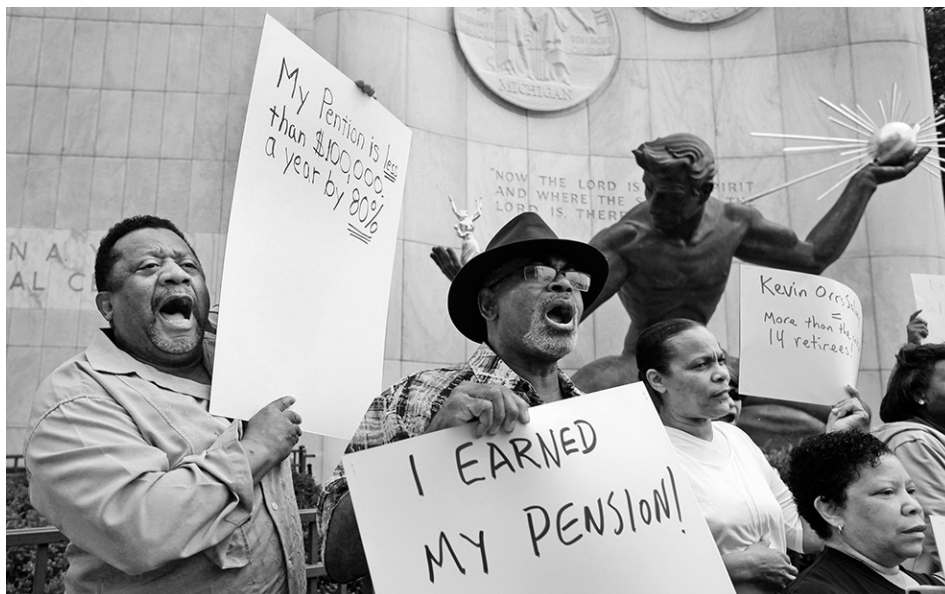
Why is it, then, that throughout the history of capitalism there have been periods in which production and the employment of labor contract and consequently the volume of profits decreases? For example, between 2005 and 2009 the gross (before tax) profits of U.S. corporations declined by 10 percent, from \$1.610 to \$1.456 trillion. Profits in manufacturing fell especially steeply, from \$247 to \$125 billion.

The answer is that capitalists seek to maximize not the volume of profits but rather the rate of profit, or return on capital. Using Marxist terminology, this

continued on page 6



gofossilfree.org



Reuters

Detroit, August 5: Retired AFSCME members protest cuts to pensions, one of the austerity measures taken amid city’s bankruptcy.

Foster & Co....

(continued from page 5)

rate is the ratio of surplus value over the value of the means of production (plant and equipment) necessary to set labor into motion at the prevailing level of productivity. The rate of profit is the *main regulator* of capitalist production in both its expansion and contraction phases.

During a period of expansion, the rate of profit tends to fall. Increased demand for labor pushes up wage rates. The effects of increasing labor productivity through investment in new technologies gradually diminish. Increased investment drives up the market price of capital goods. Financial speculation further inflates the market value of capital, contributing to much faster increases in the price of corporate stocks compared to the earnings of the underlying firms.

At a certain point, capitalists therefore cut back on new investment. The overall economy then enters a period of contraction. As Marx explained in Volume III of *Capital*:

“Not too much wealth is produced. But at times too much wealth is produced in its capitalistic, self-contradictory forms. “The limitations of the capitalist mode of production come to the surface: “(1) In that the development of the productive power of labour creates out of the falling rate of profit a law which at a certain point comes into antagonistic conflict with this development and must be overcome constantly through crises. “(2) In that the expansion or contraction of production are determined by...profit and the proportion of this profit to the employed capital, thus by a definite rate of profit, rather than by the relation of production to social requirements, i.e., to the requirements of socially developed human beings.”

Keynesian Economics in Pseudo-Marxist Garb

In *The Endless Crisis*, Foster purports to provide a Marxist analysis of the post-2008 global economic downturn and, more generally, the contradictions of present-day capitalism. While using some Marxist terminology, his analysis actually corresponds to the main current of liberal reformism in the U.S. associated with the doctrines and policies of the late British economist John Maynard Keynes. Foster maintains that the income of the lower classes is insufficient to purchase the output of goods under capitalism. He writes: “The system is confronted with insufficient effective demand—with barriers to consumption leading eventually to barriers to investment. Growing excess capacity serves to shut off new capital formation, since corporations are not eager to invest in new plant and equipment when substantial portions of their existing capacity are idle.”

In the terminology of bourgeois economics, this view can be categorized as an “underconsumptionist” theory of cyclical downturns.

In outlining his argument, Foster makes no reference to the rate of profit. As we have seen, during a period of expansion this tends to fall. Therefore, capitalists can sell the increased volume of commodities only at a price reflecting a lower rate of profit. From the capitalists’ standpoint, this condition appears to be one of “over-production” or “over-capacity.” They cut back on new investment, plunging the



Getty

12 November 2012: Two weeks after Superstorm Sandy, residents of the Rockaways, New York, line up in dark for donated food. Weeks went by before power was restored.

economy into a period of contraction until a higher rate of profit is restored by factors prevailing during the downturn—wage rates tend to fall, likewise the market value of capital.

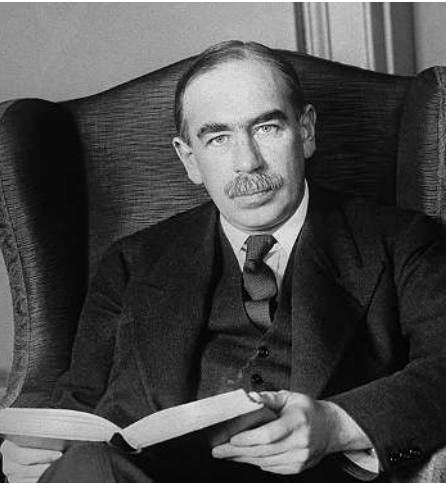
The theory that the basic cause of cyclical downturns is a dearth of consumer demand relative to productive capacity did not originate in the era of monopolistic capitalism. The crux of this theory can be traced back to certain leading exponents of classical British bourgeois economic doctrines in the early 19th century, notably Thomas Malthus. Anticipating Foster by two centuries, Malthus argued: “No power of consumption on the part of the labouring classes can ever alone furnish an encouragement to the employment of capital” (quoted in Mark Blaug, *Economic Theory in Retrospect* [Cambridge University, 1997]).

In Volume III of *Capital*, Marx rejected all underconsumptionist/over-productionist theories then current. He stated:

“There are not too many necessities of life produced, in proportion to the existing population. Quite the reverse. Too little is produced to decently and humanely satisfy the wants of the great mass.... “Too many means of labour and necessities of life are produced at times to permit of their serving as means for the exploitation of labourers at a certain rate of profit.”

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, the underconsumptionist theory was revived and popularized by Keynes, who claimed Malthus as an intellectual forerunner. The root cause of the contraction of production was, according to this doctrine, a lack of “effective demand.” Keynes and his followers advocated that the shortfall in effective demand be made up by increased government spending on public works and social programs beneficial to working people (e.g., unemployment insurance, old-age pensions, socialized medicine, income transfers to the poor). This old-line Keynesian program is propagated in the U.S. today by the liberal economist Paul Krugman in his *New York Times* columns. If, as Foster (in line with Keynes and Krugman) contends, the cause of the economic downturn is a lack of effective demand, then expanded deficit spending would be effective in restoring production to full

capacity, with full employment of labor. However, throughout the capitalist world, government policies are moving in just the opposite direction. Fiscal austerity is the order of the day from Obama’s America to Cameron’s Britain, Merkel’s Germany and the entire euro zone. Krugman explains the drive for fiscal austerity as a triumph of right-wing ideology over economic good sense. In a piece in the *New York Review of Books* (6 June) titled “How the Case for Austerity Has Crumbled,” he asserts: “The case for austerity was and is one that many powerful people want to believe, leading them to seize on anything that looks like a justification.” In fact, fiscal austerity does serve the interests of the capitalist class. Cuts to government-provided social programs reduce the overhead costs of production



Bettmann

British economist John Maynard Keynes, 1929.

broadly defined and therefore contribute to a higher rate of profit. It is crucial for the working masses to wage class struggle to beat back this austerity offensive. In the course of such struggles, workers must be won to the understanding that the tendency toward immiseration of the proletariat will be ended only with the expropriation of the expropriators through socialist revolution.

Climate Change in Perspective

As Marxist opponents of the capitalist order, our role is not to serve as economic advisers to the bourgeoisie. Rather, we strive to educate the working class about its historic interest in sweeping away capitalism and establishing its own class rule. The reformist “socialists” are die-hard opponents of this program. With the destruction of the Soviet Union—a catastrophe that was hailed by the International Socialist Organization (ISO) and many others—they have increasingly junked even a hypocritical posture toward the goal of getting rid of capitalism. And now they have latched on to the cause of “climate justice” to urge the capitalist exploiters to moderate their behavior. As ISO climate-change guru Chris Williams baldly put it: “Uniting social and ecological demands into one unified movement independent of mainstream politicians has the power to change state policy at

the national level” (*Socialist Worker*, 26 June). This is the calling card of the System Change Not Climate Change (SCNCC) coalition, in which the ISO is a driving force.

It is true that the Earth as a whole today is hotter than it was a century ago, and human activity—e.g., the combustion of fossil fuels—is largely responsible for the growing atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. One authoritative scientific review noted: “Through his worldwide industrial civilization, Man is unwittingly conducting a vast geophysical experiment. Within a few generations he is burning the fossil fuels that slowly accumulated in the earth over the past 500 million years. The CO2 produced by this combustion is being injected into the atmosphere; about half of it remains there.” It continues: “The climatic changes that may be produced by the increased CO2 content could be deleterious from the point of view of human beings.” This report, “Restoring the Quality of Our Environment,” was submitted to the Johnson administration in 1965.

The experiment continues to this day. For environmentalists, the answer is to cut industrial civilization down to size and keep fossil fuels in the ground. For Marxists, it is to replace the unwitting conduct with conscious and informed planning. One must also keep in mind that the ultimate impact of the current warming trend, which encompasses a wide range of possibilities and could vary significantly from place to place, is not much more definitively known today than it was a half century ago.

The eco-socialists, though, hold aloft the most calamitous projections as scientific gospel. At the Left Forum held in New York City this June, several speakers referred to climate change as the worst crisis humanity has ever faced. Foster’s comments at its closing plenary were titled “The Epochal Crisis.” *Nation* writer Christian Parenti even invoked the runaway greenhouse effect that transformed Venus into the hottest planet in the solar system. Far from a clarion call to uproot production for private profit, such fear-mongering has one purpose: to sell various schemes for rolling back the use of hydrocarbons under capitalism.

Current climate change may or may not pose a sustained, long-term threat to human society. As long as the capitalist masters call the shots, it truly is a roll of the dice. Environmental degradation is just one of a host of problems, many far more pressing, linked to the workings of the capitalist system: unemployment and extreme poverty, mass starvation, imperialist military adventures and conquest, the reinforcing of social backwardness (interethnic bloodletting, the subjugation of women in the family, etc.), to name a few. Without a doubt, the gravest threat to mankind is the nuclear arsenal in the hands of the U.S. imperialist overlords. Even a regional nuclear war, say between India and Pakistan, could wipe out many millions of people while making the Earth a colder, hungrier planet.

To elevate climate change above all else is a convenient excuse for joining hands with the bourgeoisie—the very class behind *all* these crimes. Counting carbon as a measure of progressive policy is its corollary. For the 800,000 years preceding recorded human history, the atmospheric carbon dioxide level never exceeded 300 parts per million (ppm); today it is around 400 ppm. By comparison, in the Jurassic period when the dinosaurs reigned supreme, the concentration was likely in the neighborhood of 2,000 ppm. According to Foster:

“We need to go down to 350 parts per million, which means very big social transformations on a scale that would be considered revolutionary by anybody in society today—transformation of our whole society quite fundamentally. We have to aim at that, and we have to demand that of our society. Forget about capitalism, forget about whether the system can do it. Don’t let that be your barometer. Say this is necessary for the planet, for human survival, for justice, for environmental justice, and we just have to do it.” —MRZine.org (30 October 2008)

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One of the more active climate-justice groups based in the U.S. today is named 350.org. Despite the popularity of this numerology, decades of scientific probing of the extremely complex climate system have yet to pinpoint a carbon threshold that, if surpassed, would trigger an insoluble crisis.

By the carbon barometer, Superstorm Sandy was a blessing in disguise when it turned out the lights in the Northeast U.S., as is the Great Recession that has brought empty pockets to countless working people around the world. Likewise, capitalist Germany should be widely lauded for the more than 20 percent drop in its carbon dioxide emissions over the last two decades. Today, a quarter of the country's total energy on average comes from so-called renewable sources—and nearly half on especially sunny days. But it still has a ways to go to match the per capita “carbon footprint” of France, where nuclear fission is the primary source of energy. These two mainstays of the imperialist European Union have in recent years squeezed the working class of Europe dry and put dependent countries like Greece through the wringer.

Some eco-socialist activists might blanch at the more distasteful implications of judging everything by carbon content. But support to reduced living standards is a part of that framework. A case in point is the carbon tax. By the ISO's estimation, proposed legislation from Senators Barbara Boxer and Bernie Sanders that would impose a carbon fee on fossil fuel enterprises at the source (the mine, wellhead or port of entry) in order to fund renewable energy and similar technology “points in the right direction.” The bill proposes to return some of the revenues to consumers to offset the higher prices that would result when companies pass on the cost of the tax to the public. Even so, this dividend would not cover the difference, bringing an increase in the cost of living for working people and the poor. Meanwhile, the corporations producing energy, no matter the source, will keep on rolling in money. No less an interested party than ExxonMobil has recently announced support for “a well-designed, revenue-neutral carbon tax.”

We are far from indifferent to climate change, whatever its timetable and consequences. But our primary concern is human civilization, and we are implacably hostile to its greatest enemy: the U.S. capitalist ruling class. Nothing good will come from advising these plunderers of the world on how to best generate energy. Instead, the proletariat must expropriate capitalist industry and put it at the service of society as a whole.

As we wrote in Part One of “Capitalism and Global Warming” (WV No. 965, 24 September 2010):

“When the workers of the world rule, energy will be generated and used in the most rational, efficient and safe manner possible, including by developing new energy sources. We do not rule out in advance the use of fossil fuels or any other energy source—nuclear, hydroelectric, solar, wind, etc. Simply to promote modernization and all-round development in the Third World, where today billions are locked in desperate poverty, would almost certainly involve *far greater* energy production on a global scale.”

Even if fossil fuels have not been completely phased out, a world liberated from the profit motive will have many arrows in its quiver to exert a positive influence on the climate. For example, a concerted effort could be undertaken to retool energy production and other industries and transform their operations to minimize greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate the impact of warming.

Fossil Fuels and Pressure Politics

The politics of the ISO's eco-socialist gaggle boil down to run-of-the-mill environmentalism. The “system change, not climate change” slogan was appropriated from the direct-action wing of the environmental movement. First popularized at the December 2009 protests outside the United Nations climate talks in Copenhagen, it is purposely ambiguous in order to draw in the greatest number of activ-



April 3: 350.org protest against Keystone XL pipeline outside Obama fundraiser in San Francisco.

ists under its banner. In the green milieu, the proposed “system change” runs the full gamut of environmentalist remedies, from curbing economic growth and discouraging the “culture of consumption” to “leaving fossil fuels in the ground” and abandoning automobiles.

The SCNCC has opted to focus its activity on “the struggle for a fossil fuel-free world,” that is, pressuring the capitalist Democratic Party to wean the U.S. economy off of hydrocarbons. To much fanfare, President Barack Obama in June unveiled his “climate action plan” to curb greenhouse gas emissions, which included ordering the Environmental Protection Agency to work out new standards to limit the carbon dioxide dumped into the atmosphere by coal-fired power plants. In response, Republicans in Congress and industry magnates decried the supposed “war on coal” and warned of higher electricity costs for the mass of the population. Unions such as the United Mine Workers were angry that the plan did not

without its own risks. Both the mining and processing of rare-earth metals for solar panels, and the very process of their manufacture, produce tremendous amounts of toxic sludge and contaminants that have poisoned water supplies, while the chemicals involved in making the panels pose additional hazards to workers.

A current hobbyhorse of the eco-socialists is the northern leg of the 1,700-mile Keystone XL pipeline, which would carry oil from the Alberta tar sands in Canada to the U.S. Gulf Coast. President Obama has yet to grant approval for the section crossing the border. Supporters of Keystone consider the project key to U.S. imperialism achieving “energy independence” from Near Eastern oil; environmentalists portray it as a doomsday device.

A February anti-Keystone rally in Washington, D.C., organized by the Sierra Club and 350.org attracted tens of thousands of protesters. The week before, the ISO's *Socialist Worker* (12 February) held



31 January 2007: Mexico City protest against rising price of tortillas. Increased production of corn ethanol biofuels helped trigger a global food crisis.

even give lip service to the hardship and suffering in store for coal miners, utility workers and their families.

Although many mainstream environmentalists were jubilant, the SCNCC did not “celebrate President Obama's speech.” In a July 4 statement titled “We Need a Real Plan for the Planet,” the SCNCC lamented that the proposed measures “do not go nearly far enough” and counseled the White House: “Instead of an ‘all of the above’ energy policy, we should direct massive and exclusive funding toward renewable energy sources like wind and solar.”

To argue that one source of energy is more sensible than another under the profit-driven capitalist system and its anarchic relations of production is playing with fire. Touted as a means to reduce carbon emissions, the U.S. corn ethanol biofuels racket provoked a shortfall in the food grain harvest five years ago, helping trigger a global food crisis. Solar is not

out hope that this “historic event” would “send a message to the Obama administration that the time has come for real action on environmental issues.” The White House welcomes such messages, as the Commander-in-Chief made clear in his June speech on climate change: “What we need in this fight are citizens who will stand up, and speak up, and compel us to do what this moment demands.” And there you have it: the presidential seal of approval on the latest “grassroots movement.”

As to the Keystone XL pipeline, there is no reason for Marxists to either support or oppose it. In general, oil pipelines serve a socially useful function of transporting fuel. But cutting corners to boost profit margins—the name of the game for the energy barons—is deadly business. Some Native Americans oppose the pipeline out of legitimate concern that a spill would contaminate water sources that supply

their reservations. By all accounts, shoddy construction, poor welds and substandard materials are features of the existing Keystone pipeline. What's needed are fighting unions that can exert control over safety standards and practices (see “Lac-Mégantic Industrial Murder,” page 4).

Our position on the Keystone XL pipeline reflects a norm for matters relating to bourgeois energy policy. But it is not universal. In the case of the Northern Gateway pipeline, which is to run from Alberta to the British Columbia coast, our Canadian comrades rightly oppose the project, although not due to the arithmetic of greenhouse gas numbers or other environmental considerations. Rather, the proposed construction brazenly flouts the land rights of the Native peoples who are the predominant population in the remote regions that the pipeline would traverse.

Going Green on Wall Street

To the delight of the eco-socialist crowd, a gimmicky “Do the Math” speaking tour by 350.org founder Bill McKibben last year popularized calls for divesting from coal, oil and gas producers. The divestment effort has since spread to over 300 campuses around the country and found a hearing among a range of city mayors. To date, six campuses and 18 U.S. cities, including Seattle and San Francisco, have pledged to liquidate holdings in such companies.

In its article “Divest to Save the Planet” (*Socialist Worker*, 13 March), the ISO enthuses: “The struggle for divestment is part of a shift among activists away from calls for lifestyle changes and marks a new focus on the systemic nature of climate change.” In fact, this “struggle” consists of the very same strategy of moral suasion, only now directed at campus administrations and city governments. In the name of “movement building,” the ISO & Co. have thrown in their lot with a corporate-funded effort to greenwash capitalist exploitation.

The divestment campaign was orchestrated in consultation with the “progressive” Wall Street investor group Ceres. This standard-bearer of green capitalism has recently garnered support from nearly 700 companies, including General Motors and Microsoft, for a declaration that “climate change is one of America's greatest economic opportunities of the 21st century.” Among its suggestions to fund managers is to move money into natural resources and infrastructure in “emerging markets”—i.e., promoting imperialist capital penetration into and control over the semicolonial world. Small wonder that McKibben was given a place of honor at the 2013 Ceres Conference, which drew the likes of JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America, Citi, Con Edison, Bloomberg, Sprint and Ford.

Amid a recent spate of criticisms of McKibben within the green milieu, the ISO's Williams rushed to his defense in a three-part commentary titled “Questions for the Movement” (*socialistworker.org*, 24-26 September). Although mainly preoccupied with rationalizing the active participation of ostensible socialists in selling capitalist investment strategies (the answer has something to do with “the internal dynamics of social movements”), Williams does allow that “McKibben continues to vacillate as to whether Barack Obama and the Democratic Party can be part of the climate solution.” He then proceeds to lament the six years of “hot air of no real consequence” coming from the White House, whose current occupant urged in his June speech: “Invest. Divest. Remind folks there's no contradiction between a sound environment and strong economic growth.”

It was not so long ago that Williams himself was full of hope for Obama. In the “Real Solutions Right Now” chapter of his book *Ecology and Socialism* (Haymarket, 2010), Williams sketched “a government action plan on the environment” and offered: “A program such as this could even get couched as ‘a Green New Deal for the Twenty-First Century—good for the planet, good for people, good for profits.’”

continued on page 8

Foster & Co....

(continued from page 7)

These proposals could *theoretically* be carried out under capitalist social relations through governmental regulation, particularly by a proactive and forward-thinking Obama administration” (emphasis in original). Reflexively, Williams adds, “Reforms that are theoretically possible under capitalism won’t be made because they ‘make sense,’ but because the politicians are forced to implement them.”

That’s the ISO (and other reformists) in a nutshell: seeking to pressure the capitalist government through the agency of the Democratic Party. Or, as in the ISO’s SCNCC activity, embracing Green Party politicians to the same effect. The fact that its Green Party allies eschew even paper-thin pretensions to socialism never mattered much to the ISO, which has even run candidates on the ticket of this bourgeois party.

“Green” Jobs and the Labor Movement

Green radicalism grew out of the New Left’s counterculture wing, which was deeply hostile to Marxism and the organized labor movement. These environmental activists advocated a dismantling of modern industrial society while expressing nothing but disdain for the working class. One prominent outfit was Earth First!, which at its 1980 founding pledged, “No compromise in defense of Mother Earth!” Its efforts included driving spikes into trees to break chain saws, a practice that put the lives and limbs of lumberjacks at risk. In road blockades outside pulp mills, eco-radicals would confront truckers and chant: “There are no jobs on a dead planet!”

This sentiment, if not the slogan itself, is today given a “worker friendly” spin by some green apostles looking for converts in the labor bureaucracy. In a September 8 letter to AFL-CIO head Richard Trumka on the eve of the union federation’s convention, 350.org and over 60 like-minded groups pleaded: “We must shift from Jobs vs. Environment, to Jobs for the Environment.” The “Green New Deal” promulgated by the ISO’s Williams and other SCNCC eco-socialists is cut of the same cloth. Its purpose is to mask the fact that they would have jobs slashed in entire industries, even as they seek more employment in favored areas.

Extracting and processing fossil fuels is dangerous work. But a “green job” is not inherently preferable. Reflecting fears within the American ruling class that it stands to lose out in innovation and



Earth First! Humboldt

7 August 2012: Earth First! primitivists block logging truck in California.

cutting-edge manufacturing to China, the Obama administration has devoted tens of billions of dollars of stimulus money to renewable energy and projects to increase energy efficiency. As a result, employment in the solar industry and the rest of the “green economy” has steadily climbed. Poor wages, benefits and working conditions prevail in these industries, with wages at many solar panel and wind turbine plants below the national average for manufacturing. Few of the workers are unionized.

One group of 62 black workers on the front lines of the “green economy” filed a racial discrimination lawsuit in 2008 against their employer, a General Electric subsidiary. The work team traveled the country, changing air filters that capture toxic particulates at power plants and other industrial sites. They were forced to work extra hours, denied adequate protection from the dangerous matter they handled and heaped with racist abuse. If the crew tried to take a break when the heat or soot became unbearable, they were derided as lazy “n-----s” and threatened with firing.

Making a “Green New Deal” with America’s bourgeois masters will do nothing to reverse the devastation of working people. Rather, it will take hard class struggle against the rapacious exploiters, including a vigorous campaign by labor to organize the mass of unorganized workers in the “green economy” and elsewhere in industry.

For International Proletarian Revolution!

If “capitalism is killing the planet,” as the SCNCC proclaims, then the ISO and its associates are doing their small part to set up the hit. We value the wonders of the natural world; however, we do not deify nature. Marxists approach the issue of climate change from the standpoint of its potential impact on human society, not preserving some imaginary natural order. Indeed, the climate, with or without humans, is constantly changing, some-

times more rapidly, sometimes less so.

From the dawn of man, our ancestors have left an imprint on the natural world, as it has on mankind. In his book *Plows, Plagues, and Petroleum* (Princeton, 2005), climate scientist William Ruddiman notes:

“Advocates for the environment often frame their positions with high-minded, preachy appeals to Jean Jacques Rousseau’s notion of the ‘noble savage,’ the concept of a primitive but wise people who once lived lightly on the land and in complete harmony with the environment. They contrast this supposedly once-pristine world with the evils of heavy industrial development during the last two centuries. They portray industrial development as the first, and only, real human assault on nature....

“The concept of a pristine natural world is a myth: preindustrial cultures had long had a major impact on the environment.”

Basically, it all started with agriculture.

Although John Bellamy Foster does not openly invoke the “noble savage,” in his version of socialist society “it will be necessary for us to live lightly on the Earth,” as he commented some years back. But precisely what separates humans out from other animals is our capacity to perform work and transform the world around us to serve our ends. In the 1883 Introduction to *Dialectics of Nature*, Friedrich Engels cogently observed: “Man alone has succeeded in impressing his stamp on nature, not only by shifting the plant and animal world from one place to another, but also by so altering the aspect and climate of his dwelling place, and even the plants and animals themselves, that the consequences of his activity can disappear only with the general extinction of the terrestrial globe.”

Nature certainly would not reciprocate if mankind were to suddenly “live lightly.” Disease and pestilence, droughts and wildfires, floods and tsunamis, hurricanes and tornadoes, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, meteor showers and gamma-ray bursts: all these features of life on Earth and more would remain. A human society that scales back technological development

in the name of protecting the environment will be placed at nature’s mercy.

The way forward is a qualitative development of the world’s productive forces in an international federation of workers states. Only then can scarcity be eliminated—the precondition for the disappearance of classes and the withering away of the state. With the mass of the population no longer struggling day-to-day to survive and with modern technique, science, culture and education available to all, there would be an explosion in human creativity. Man’s stewardship of the Earth would grow by leaps and bounds.

When production is planned and directed at satisfying human need and not the profit motive, environmental considerations can be given their proper due. The vast expansion in knowledge, technologies and resources will put mankind in position to anticipate and prepare for whatever curveballs the natural world throws at it. Increasing abundance would also eliminate the material factors—and backward social values, such as those expounded by religions—that fuel population growth. No longer will poor peasants and agricultural workers be compelled to have more children in order to ensure enough manpower to work the land. The division between town and country as well as economic dependence on the family will be overcome.

To bring about a communist society, the rule of capital must first be broken, in this country and beyond. Engels elaborated in *Anti-Dühring* (1878): “To accomplish this act of universal emancipation is the historical mission of the modern proletariat. To thoroughly comprehend the historical conditions and thus the very nature of this act, to impart to the now oppressed class a full knowledge of the conditions and of the meaning of the momentous act it is called upon to accomplish, this is the task of the theoretical expression of the proletarian movement, scientific socialism.” ■

Quebec...

(continued from page 4)

The federal government has always doled out grants and enacted policies which guaranteed that money would keep flowing to the rail barons. But provincial and municipal governments have dirty hands as well. In B.C., the highly believable corruption allegations surrounding the sale of government-owned B.C. Rail by the Gordon Campbell Liberals in the early 2000s have not been refuted. As for the Quebec government, its Caisse de Dépôt investment fund invested a cool seven million dollars in (now practically worthless) shares of MMA alone!

From the perspective of the working class, central responsibility for allowing the unending cutbacks, layoffs and criminal indifference to safety pushed by the bosses lies with the trade-union bureaucracy, which has in the main accepted such measures without a fight. Often hiding behind government intervention (railway strikes are usually legislated back to work rapidly), and working with their allies in the social-democratic NDP [New Democratic Party], the union tops work to promote “labour peace” and the national interests of Canadian capitalism. What’s required is a perspective of hard class struggle against the railway bosses and the government that stands



Reuters

Port Coquitlam, British Columbia: Teamsters picket Canadian Pacific rail yard. May 2012 strike by 4,800 workers shut down CP rail operations for seven days.

behind them, including by rallying the labour movement when necessary to defy back-to-work laws. A single winning Canada-wide rail strike would do vastly more for safety than tens of thousands of pages of Transportation Safety Board recommendations!

Various petty-bourgeois environmentalists, echoed by self-styled “ecosocial-

ists,” have sought to divert anger over the Lac-Mégantic disaster into campaigns against the transport of fossil fuels. The idea that a modern industrial society could currently do without oil and gas is a utopian fantasy, whose actual consequences would be retrograde for workers and the poor. Everything from food production to construction, transportation and man-

ufacturing industries requires vast quantities of energy. Oil and gas need to be transported, whether by pipelines, trains, trucks or otherwise. The crucial issue for the working class is that this be done *safely*. That requires strong union power in all the industries concerned, including union safety committees able to shut down operations at any point.

Ultimately, the safe and productive use of natural resources for the benefit of the entire human race can only be ensured once the bourgeois rulers are overthrown. As our comrades of the Spartacist League/U.S. wrote following the massive British Petroleum oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, in which eleven oil workers (and many cleanup employees) died and which caused irreparable environmental damage:

“Industrial murder and environmental devastation are endemic to the workings of the capitalist system. Only when the working class rips industry from the hands of the capitalists and establishes a planned socialist economy on a world scale will the enormous resources of the planet be put to use for all of humanity. When the workers rule, technology and productive resources will be expanded to overcome scarcity and provide a decent life for all. The fight for a socialist future requires forging revolutionary workers parties that will lead all the exploited and oppressed in proletarian revolution.”

—“Gulf Coast Disaster: Capitalist Profit Drive Kills,” WV No. 961, 2 July 2010 ■

Abortion...

(continued from page 12)

to terminate her pregnancy at whatever time, in whatever way, and for whatever reason she alone chooses. With this we do not agree.”

To make crystal clear what the court meant, the ruling referenced the case *Buck v. Bell*. That 1927 decision endorsed the racist, anti-poor eugenics theories that states used to justify sterilization of men and women. Tens of thousands were sterilized across the country in the 20th century, often on the specious grounds of “imbecility.” California, which sterilized more people than any other state, has overturned its eugenics laws, like other states. Yet it has been exposed for having recently sterilized female prisoners.

The majority ruling in *Roe v. Wade* specified measures that could be taken by states to regulate abortions after the first trimester, among them:

“Requirements as to the qualifications of the person who is to perform the abortion; as to the licensure of that person; as to the facility in which the procedure is to be performed, that is, whether it must be a hospital or may be a clinic or some other place of less-than-hospital status; as to the licensing of the facility; and the like.”

That list has become, in the hands of the anti-abortionists, a veritable “How To” Guide for restricting women’s right to abortion.

The legislative assault on abortion rights by Republican-controlled state governments in recent years has been even more effective in rolling back abortion rights than the bombings and assassinations carried out by anti-abortion terrorists in the



Spartacist League joined 2,000 others in defending abortion clinics in Washington, D.C., against anti-abortion terrorists of Operation Rescue, January 1992.

the anti-abortionist strategy is to get a test case before the Supreme Court in hopes of overturning the *Roe* ruling.

While opposing such laws like the one in Texas, the Democratic Party does not even pretend to fight for anything beyond preserving *Roe v. Wade*, which legalized abortion but did not make it generally available. Like all aspects of health care, access to abortion reflects the class divisions and racial discrimination that are inherent in U.S. capitalist society. Over two-thirds of the women who have abortions are poor, and black and Hispanic women are more than twice as likely as white women to experience unwanted pregnancies and to have abortions. What was and is needed is mass

tal, especially the Democrats, undermines this and every other necessary struggle.

Religious Bigots Target Women’s Rights

Directly after Tiller’s murder, a “fetal pain” law was crafted specifically to drive Dr. Carhart out of business and out of the state of Nebraska. Such laws are based on a cynical hoax. The idea that pain can be felt by a fetus at 20 weeks after gestation has been dismissed by every reputable medical association that has commented on the issue. The passage of that 2010 bill was a watershed victory for the anti-abortionists. Twelve more states have since passed similar legislation.

After Tiller shows the lead-up to the passage of the Nebraska bill and the travails of the Carharts as they tried to relocate afterward. They moved to Maryland, where the law allows late-term abortions under certain conditions, but the anti-abortionists there protested Dr. Carhart’s arrival. They even organized a picket of the middle school attended by the clinic landlord’s daughter.

A similar “fetal pain” measure is on a November municipal ballot in Albuquerque, New Mexico. That city has been specifically targeted in an attempt to close down the clinic where Dr. Robinson and Dr. Sella work, as seen in the film. The push for its passage has been accompanied by an increase in intimidation. On the weekend of August 10, “Survivors of the Abortion Holocaust” held a “training camp” in Albuquerque during which an abortion doctor’s house was besieged, trapping his family inside.

Another prong of the anti-abortionists’ pitchfork is the campaign for “fetal rights” laws. These have been adopted by some states as a means to persecute pregnant women for activities that are often harmless to the woman and the fetus, e.g., smoking marijuana. In recent years, hundreds of women across the country have been detained, arrested or forced to accept medical procedures in the name of “fetal protection.” The president of the anti-abortion outfit Operation Rescue has gloated: “We win every time we establish the precedent that the unborn child in the womb is a unique human individual.”

As Marxist materialists, we reject the idealist notion—ultimately derived from religion—that a fetus is a human with a “soul.” Since a fetus and the mother are biologically united during pregnancy, all attempts to endow the fetus with rights come at the expense of those of the mother.

The religious reaction and family-values bigotry that have come to dominate the general social climate in this country make it much harder, especially for teenagers, to avoid pregnancy and to obtain an abortion. Sex education is either woe-ful or a pack of lies. Parental notification rules for teen abortions are another hurdle. Teen access to contraception is often restricted. Two years ago, the Obama administration blocked easy access by young women under the age of 17 to the

morning-after pill, subsequently reversing itself under pressure. The net result is that the U.S. teen pregnancy rate is one of the highest in the developed world, more than twice as high as that in Canada and five times that in Sweden.

After Tiller compellingly relates the stories of individual women who sought late-term abortions. Some had wanted to be pregnant until they learned of severe fetal abnormalities. Others could not find the time or money to make arrangements for abortions before the deadline in their states. One woman had to wait for her tax rebate. One teenager was terrified of telling her religious parents. An older woman had light periods and a negative pregnancy test and so did not know that she was pregnant. In the film, Dr. Robinson rejects the idea that a woman has to have a good story to justify her abortion. She notes that her only criterion is medical safety because women “are the world’s expert on their own lives.”

The Family: Key Institution of Women’s Oppression

The *Roe* ruling took place against the backdrop of broad social struggles in the U.S. From the civil rights movement to the anti-Vietnam war movement, wide sections of the population were demanding significant social and political changes. The capitalist rulers felt pressure to grant some reforms. The apex of the gains for women won in this period was the *Roe* ruling, which has been under legislative attack ever since.

In the 1980s, Ronald Reagan packed the Supreme Court with conservatives in order to reverse the gains of the social struggles of the 1960s and early ’70s. A 1992 court decision left *Roe* in place but granted extra rights to states to extend waiting periods for abortions and enforce parental consent for teenagers. In the words of the chief justice at the time, that ruling made *Roe* “a sort of judicial Potemkin Village.” These assaults have continued to this day under both Republican and Democratic administrations.

The deep-seated oppression of women is rooted in the institution of the family, which arose with the advent of private property as a mechanism for passing property from one generation to the next—the monogamous wife ensures the paternity of the heirs. A major role of the family is to instill respect for authority and act as a conservatizing force. Together with religion, the family serves to instill a morality that proscribes anything that deviates from the ideal of one man on top of one woman for life.

The war on abortion rights, a battering ram for general social and political reaction, has gone along with a broader offensive against democratic rights and workers gains. With its hands on the wheels of production, the working class objectively has the social power to mobilize the struggle needed to defend its own interests and those of all the oppressed, including women. But given the high level of religiosity in this country, anti-abortion prejudices strongly influence much of the working class. With the dearth of social struggle today and its impact on political consciousness, it is even more difficult to win workers to the understanding that abortion must be defended not only as a “women’s issue” but also an essential democratic right, the loss of which would redound against *all* working people.

We seek to forge a revolutionary party that will fight for all the oppressed layers in society and render the proletariat conscious of its role as gravedigger of the capitalist system. Such a party will be modeled on the Bolshevik Party of V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, who led the October 1917 Revolution in Russia. Only through a victorious workers revolution can society be liberated from the profit system and private property and be reconstructed on socialist foundations. This will lay the basis for the full equality of women and the replacement of the family with socialized care of children and household duties. That is the meaning of our call: For women’s liberation through socialist revolution!■



September 2012: Protesters outside meeting of Virginia Board of Health, which was pressured by state attorney general Ken Cuccinelli to impose building regulations for hospitals on women’s health care facilities.

1990s. Over the past three years, abortion providers have been forced to shut down at the fastest rate since the time of *Roe v. Wade*. According to a survey by the *Huffington Post*, since 2010 at least 54 clinics have closed down or stopped providing abortion services. Today, fully 97 percent of rural counties in the country have no abortion services whatsoever.

In the face of this reactionary offensive, it is not difficult for Democrats to be viewed as defenders of abortion rights. Texas state senator Wendy Davis became a nationwide sensation by mounting a filibuster that delayed passage of an omnibus anti-abortion bill. The bill contains almost every one of the attacks on abortion rights that have been adopted by various states in recent years. It bans abortion after 20 weeks due to supposed “fetal pain”; requires abortion doctors to have hospital admitting privileges; prohibits doctors from phoning prescriptions to pharmacies, thus making women visit a clinic for medication doses in early-term abortions; requires clinics to upgrade their buildings to meet the standards for ambulatory care centers (i.e., they must make medically irrelevant but expensive changes that will put some clinics out of business). On October 28, a federal judge ruled the part of the Texas law concerning admitting privileges to be unconstitutional. Part of

struggle to ensure that poor and working women have unrestricted access to abortion. For the rights to abortion and contraception to mean anything, the services must be free.

Bourgeois feminists have never intended to launch such a struggle because their framework is limited to seeking legal reforms through the agency of the Democrats. Despite their pro-choice rhetoric, Democrats have in fact helped restrict access to abortion for working and poor women. Soon after the *Roe* decision, it came under attack by Democratic president Jimmy Carter, who signed the Hyde Amendment eliminating abortion coverage under Medicaid, which all but deprived poor women of the service. The Hyde Amendment has been renewed every year since, regardless of which party sits in the White House.

We say the state has no right to interfere in the reproductive or sexual lives of women and call for free abortion on demand. The fight for abortion rights must be part of a broader struggle for free, quality health care for all. Decent health care is a burning need for all working people, with employers in recent years gutting the health plans that unionized workers had won in the struggles of earlier decades. But the fealty of the labor bureaucrats to the parties of capi-

BART...

(continued from page 12)

between Oakland and San Francisco. But this operation went down with the severed bodies of the two scabs killed on the tracks. Their lies exposed, the BART bosses settled for an agreement that wasn't the total rout they were aiming for. While hardly a victory for the workers, they did not go back with their tails between their legs to be subjected to the untrammelled dictates of management. Nor do many workers think they will get much better under their current union misleaders. *What is vital now is for union militants to draw the lessons from this strike to prepare for future battles.*

The Partnership of Capital and Labor Is a Lie!

Writing about the 1936 West Coast Maritime strike, American Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon observed:

"A good deal is said about strike 'strategy'—and that has its uses within certain clearly defined limits—but when you get down to cases this strike, like every other strike, is simply a bullheaded struggle between two forces whose interests are in constant and irreconcilable conflict. The partnership of capital and labor is a lie. The immediate issue in every case is decided by the relative strength of the opposing forces at the moment. The only strike strategy worth a tinker's dam is the strategy that begins with this conception."

—"The Maritime Strike,"
28 November 1936 from
Notebook of an Agitator (1958)

No such conception guided the strategy of the BART union leaders. On the contrary, they peddle the myth of a "BART family," the workers and the bosses all in it together to make the system work. The class line is so foreign to the bureaucrats that they organized to mourn the death of the BART track engineer and contractor who were killed doing scab duty for management.

Pointing to the \$100 million in cuts to wages, benefits and working conditions that they dealt away in 2009 to bail management out of a supposed budget shortfall, the BART union leaders this time argued that it was only fair for the workers to be rewarded for their sacrifice. But it doesn't work that way. This system is based on production for profit, and even though it

Stop Prosecution of ATU Militant!

The following letter was sent by the Partisan Defense Committee on October 28 to the Alameda County District Attorney.

The Partisan Defense Committee strongly protests the criminal charge filed by the District Attorney's office against ATU 1555 union member George Figueroa, BART employee.

While working in Oakland as a BART station agent on June 8, Figueroa was physically accosted by an angry patron. As required by BART policy Figueroa, who sustained injury, filed an incident report for management, and also filed a report with BART police.

In the service of BART management's public position that the unions'

concerns over safety problems at BART were a "fake issue" during contract negotiations, management sought criminal misdemeanor charges against Figueroa for allegedly making a "false report of a crime to a police officer."

While assisting in preparing union picket line teams on the eve of the July 1 strike, Brother Figueroa was targeted by management because he is an outspoken union activist.

This bogus charge against him is all part of the attempt by BART management to intimidate transit union members during their recent labor strikes.

We demand: Drop the charge against George Figueroa now!

is supposedly a "public service" BART works on the same principle. Increasing their profits means driving down the cost of labor. Under capitalism, this is a constant and ongoing war, in "good times" as well as bad. The only thing that alters that calculus is class struggle, i.e., when workers withdraw their labor and cut off the flow of profits, mobilizing their allies behind them.

The BART bosses came into negotiations prepared for war. A notorious union-buster, Thomas Hock of Veolia Transportation, was brought in at the price of some \$400,000 to head the negotiations. Hock and Veolia have a vicious anti-union record stretching from Los Angeles, Las Vegas and Arizona to Boston and further across the globe. As an ATU leader in Arizona—where bus drivers waged a six-day strike against Veolia in Tempe and Phoenix—put it: "If Hock can bust a union, he will." But instead of preparing the ranks for battle, as the clock ran down on the contract expiration at the end of June, the leaders of ATU Local 1555 went looking for allies in the camp of the capitalist class enemy, appealing to California's Democratic Party governor Jerry Brown to impose a 60-day "cooling off" period.

Four days into the first strike at the beginning of July, Brown pressed the union tops to call off the strike. They happily obliged, ordering their members back to work. Returning to the negotiating table, SEIU leader Roxanne Sanchez warned that if management didn't agree to a deal "we will be prepared for the bloodiest, longest strike since the 1970s."

The massive labor battles in the Bay Area at that time are indeed instructive in demonstrating both the power of labor and the treachery of the trade-union bureaucrats. In San Francisco in 1974, a strike that began with SEIU city workers spread to hospitals and closed the city sewage treatment plant. At the height of these strike actions, workers in San Francisco's MUNI system, AC Transit and BART shut down all public transit within and to the city. Two years later in 1976, MUNI workers again halted the buses for over a month in solidarity with a strike by city craft workers. The determination and militancy of the workers from the city unions and MUNI to longshore was such that the Central Labor Council voted to prepare for a general strike.

But the union bureaucrats folded under pressure from the SF Democratic Party administration of "progressive" mayor

George Moscone, preferring defeat to unleashing the unions in an all-out battle against the city's rulers. They were "rewarded" when Moscone unleashed a barrage of anti-union propositions. Today, Democratic Party politicians who were heavily bankrolled by the unions are leading the charge for legislation outlawing transit strikes. Here again is the bitter fruit of the bureaucrats' prostration before the Democrats, promoting a party that no less than the Republicans represents the bosses' interests.

On the other side of the coin, the 1974-76 strikes showed the power of labor that lies in its solidarity, collective organization and above all the ability to shut down production, transportation and other operations. For all Sanchez's bluster, such a fighting unity of the workers was not to be seen during the BART strike. Far from it. Throughout the strike, the ATU and SEIU maintained separate picket lines rather than mobilizing their forces together in mass pickets to hit the bosses where it would hurt.

They had ready allies in the 1,500 overwhelmingly black East Bay bus drivers and mechanics at AC Transit, who have twice now overwhelmingly voted down sellout deals made by their union leadership. Had BART workers picketed AC Transit bus barns, this could have brought these workers out, shutting down another key lifeline in the Bay Area's integrated transit system. That would have meant defying the bosses' laws. There would be no unions at all in this country if workers hadn't waged pitched battles against the bosses and their government, cops and courts. In contrast to this history, in the midst of the BART strike the AC Transit union tops in ATU Local 192 readily bowed before the imposition of a 60-day cooling off period. The AC Transit workers now face going it alone.

As we wrote after the BART union leaders called off the July strike: "The unions are elementary defense organizations of the working class against unbridled exploitation. The purpose of union leadership should be to lead their ranks in struggle. Instead, the union bureaucrats act like labor-management consultants keeping labor 'peace' while begging for a few crumbs" ("Union Tops Call Off BART Strike," WV No. 1027,

Baltimore...

(continued from page 3)

them. When workplace disputes break out into open struggle between workers and the bosses, which side prevails is determined by their relative strength. Contracts merely constitute truces in the class war, and the main weapon that workers have is strike action. Wielding labor's power in

defiance of anti-labor laws and injunctions is what built the unions in this country.

Such a perspective is anathema to the labor bureaucrats, who subordinate the unions to the profitability of American capitalism and the political fortunes of the Democratic Party. Twice in the last year, the ILA tops scuttled the possibility of parallel strike action with the ILWU, leaving the West Coast longshore union to fend for itself. The first time was a gift to

Obama in the run-up to last year's elections. With the old master contract set to expire the same day as the ILWU master grain agreement, ILA head Harold Daggett extended it in September 2012 "for the good of our Country and Our President."

At the same time that Daggett talked tough when it came to the master contract, the ILA tops were preparing to give ground on speedup and safety in the local contracts. The bosses first went after the union where it is strongest, in the Port of New York and New Jersey. An "anti-corruption" campaign by the Waterfront Commission of New York Harbor was rolled out against "no-show jobs" and union shop stewards said to be compensated for every hour of the day. In April, the New York Shipping Association succeeded in pushing through an agreement that introduced smaller gang sizes and unprecedented productivity commitments by the union tops.

In Norfolk, Virginia, the local contract was voted down twice before Daggett and USMX chief Dave Adam showed up to ram the deal down the throats of the union membership. The ILA locals still negotiating contracts, including Charleston and Philadelphia, had the rug pulled out from under them when the ILA International signed the master contract with its no-strike clause in August. Their position is further weakened by the acquiescence to the arbitrator's ruling in Baltimore.

It is a boon to the bosses that pay rates for handling much of the cargo not shipped in containers, as well as gang sizes and other work rules for all cargo, are negotiated locally rather than in the master contract. In the spirit of drumming up more business for the employers at their home ports, ILA local leaders have long engaged

in fierce competition that pits workers at different ports against each other jockeying for jobs. In 1999, the ILA granted a charter to Local 2066 in Baltimore, a group of longshoremen seeking to draw steel cargo lost to other ports back up the Chesapeake Bay by promising to work for less than Local 333. Such rivalry is poison to the unity and integrity of the ILA and has helped fuel the growth of non-union outfits. Its corollary on the global playing field is the ILA tops' patriotic salute to American capitalism, which can only undermine international workers solidarity.

When the widening of the Panama Canal is completed, similar competition with ports worked by the ILWU may well sharpen. The ILWU's recent exit from the AFL-CIO leaves the dock unions on both coasts more vulnerable to attempts to divide and conquer. Like the ILWU, the ILA is an increasingly isolated union outpost on the waterfront. The continued existence of the two as powerful industrial unions demands hard class struggle to organize the vast numbers of unorganized workers along the cargo chain, such as the heavily immigrant port truckers and warehouse workers.

In undertaking this fight, the unions will have to become champions of immigrant and black rights. This potential is shown in many port cities in the South, where ILA locals are an anchor for the black population and can provide a springboard for organizing across the region. Out of such battles to revitalize labor, a new leadership of the unions must emerge that strives not only to repel the attacks of the capitalist exploiters but to forge the workers party needed to end their rule once and for all. ■

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- Los AngelesBox 29574, Los Feliz Sta., Los Angeles, CA 90029, (213) 380-8239
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- New YorkBox 3381, Church St. Sta., New York, NY 10008, (212) 267-1025
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Public Office: 1st and 3rd Sat. of every month, 1-4 p.m., and by appointment, 299 Broadway, Suite 318
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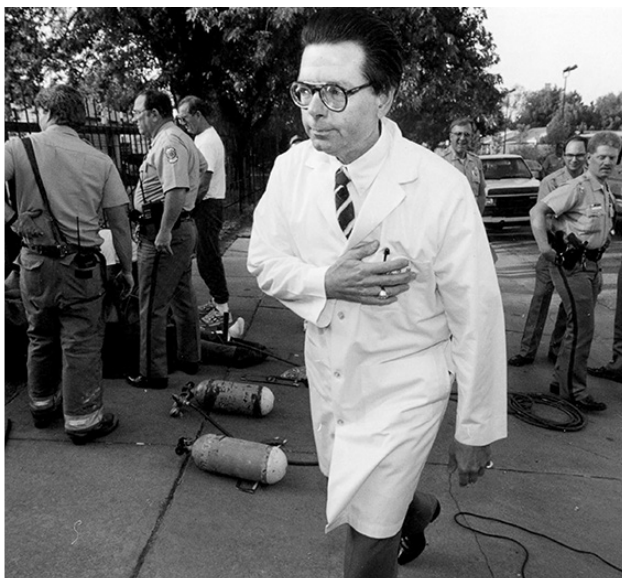
WORKERS VANGUARD

As Legal Attacks Mount

Film Honors Heroic Abortion Providers



Oscilloscope Laboratories



Hernandez/Wichita Eagle

As seen in *After Tiller*, Dr. Susan Robinson in her Albuquerque, New Mexico, abortion clinic. Inset: Dr. George Tiller outside his Wichita, Kansas, clinic in 1992. On 31 May 2009, an anti-abortion vigilante gunned down Dr. Tiller.

“We’ve been at war since *Roe v. Wade* was passed, except there’s only been one side that’s been fighting this war.” That defiant statement was made by Dr. LeRoy Carhart in the recently released documentary film *After Tiller*. A former lieutenant

colonel in the Air Force, Dr. Carhart is one of only four doctors left in this country who openly provide late-term (third-trimester) abortions. *After Tiller*, by filmmakers Martha Shane and Lana Wilson, introduces us as well to Drs. Warren Hern,

Susan Robinson and Shelley Sella. They all knew and worked with pre-eminent abortion provider Dr. George Tiller, who was assassinated in his church on a Sunday morning in 2009. The film portrays the doctors’ compassion for their patients

and steely determination to stand up to the anti-abortion bigots who hound them and threaten their lives.

Most abortions take place in the first trimester when the procedure is relatively simple and can often be achieved with medication alone. Less than 1 percent of abortions in the U.S. take place in the third trimester, when the procedure is much more complicated. But this is not the reason why so few doctors are trained or willing to perform this procedure. Third-trimester abortion is prohibited in all but nine states, and late-term abortion providers have been vilified, terrorized and murdered. Dr. Tiller faced massive legal and extralegal harassment for over 35 years for the abortion services he provided women, including late in pregnancy.

Dr. Tiller was the eighth person killed in murderous attacks on abortion providers since the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court ruling struck down anti-abortion laws. *After Tiller* makes it abundantly evident that Tiller’s four colleagues, who have likewise faced years of harassment and threats, are well aware that they, too, could be picked off at any moment. Carhart and his wife recall the arson attack on their property that was carried out in the early 1990s, not long after Carhart had started performing abortions in Bellevue, Nebraska. His daughter was hounded out of her home, and for years Carhart fought anti-abortionists seeking the eviction of his general surgery practice.

The *Roe v. Wade* ruling represented a precious gain for women’s political and social rights, but from the beginning it was limited and partial. *After Tiller* underlines the fact that the 1973 Supreme Court ruling specifically granted states the right to outlaw abortions in the third trimester of pregnancy—“after viability,” in the words of the court. The majority decision written by Judge Harry Blackmun upheld the states’ right to interfere in the personal decisions of women, stating that some “argue that the woman’s right is absolute and that she is entitled

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Bosses Kill Own Scabs

BART Strike Ends with Blood on Tracks

The second Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) strike in the last four months ended late October 21 with the leaders of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1021 and Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1555 announcing that they had a deal with management. Their 2,400 members were told to take down their picket lines and return to work without even knowing the terms of the agreement, much less getting to vote on it. For her part, BART general manager Grace Crunican announced that “this offer is more than we wanted to pay.” Indeed, the aim of the BART bosses was to force the unions into total submission to their “last, best, final offer,” if not to bust them entirely.

They didn’t succeed. But no credit is due to the misleaders of the BART unions, who went far more than half way down the road to meet management’s demands for concessions. The very first day of the four-day strike, a joint statement by the ATU and SEIU tops offered to get the trains back up and running, noting their “100 percent” agreement with the bosses’

demands that union members start shelling out pension contributions from their wages and up their health care payments more than a third. They further offered to submit management’s demands for unilateral authority over crucial workplace rules on

scheduling, discipline and other issues to binding arbitration, i.e., to the agents of the capitalist state. The BART bosses weren’t budging. They wanted the unions to crawl back under management’s terms. But in the end they were foiled by their own vicious

arrogance and literally deadly stupidity.

It all blew up in the early afternoon of the second day of the strike when two of management’s own scabs working on the tracks were run over and killed by a BART train operated by scab trainees. It was practice for operating a skeletal strikebreaking service. Initially, the transit bosses simply lied through their teeth. Denying that this was a practice run, they said the train was simply being moved to another yard to have graffiti cleaned off and that it was being run automatically, not for training. These lies were exposed by an investigator from the National Transportation Safety Board who reported that the train was carrying six BART employees “for training and maintenance purposes.” Two of them shared time in the driver’s seat, backed by an “experienced trainer,” while the train was being run automatically, traveling at 60 to 70 miles per hour.

Before the strike, it was widely acknowledged that the BART bosses had plans to set up such a strikebreaking operation

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WV Photo

October 18:
Amalgamated
Transit Union
Local 1555
picket line at
El Cerrito del
Norte BART
station.