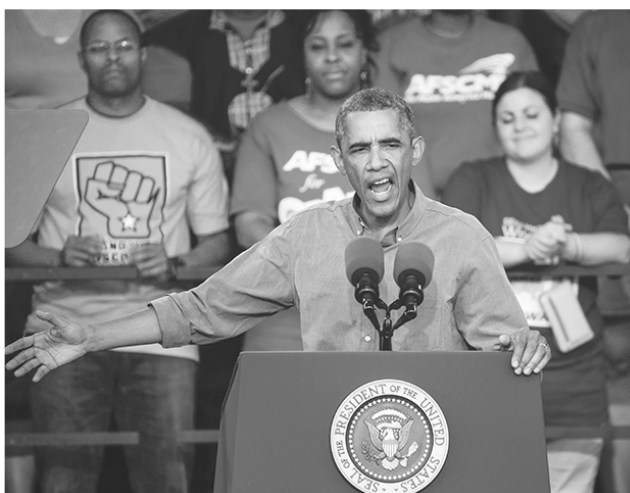


Fight Poverty Wages Through Class Struggle!

Democrats Buy Votes with Minimum-Wage Ploy



AP



EPA

President Obama cynically calls for raising minimum wage at Wisconsin Labor Day rally. September 4: Protests demanding higher wages and a union for fast-food workers in Miami (left), New York City (right) and elsewhere included civil disobedience.



Getty

On September 5, the day after thousands of fast-food workers staged rallies for higher pay and a union in some 150 cities, family and friends of Maria Fernandes gathered at her funeral service in New Jersey. The 32-year-old woman had died while catching some sleep in her car in between part-time shifts at three area Dunkin' Donuts, which all paid her the minimum wage. As was the case with Fernandes, most new employment has been in low-paying service industries like fast food, where jobs are no longer held by kids looking for a little gas money. The median age of that workforce is 28, with more than a quarter caring for dependents, 70 percent working part-time and many holding second jobs in a scramble to make ends meet. At the available starvation-level wages, employees cannot possibly pay out-of-pocket medical expenses, put aside money for their children's education or save anything for retirement.

With the net median paycheck now roughly \$27,000 a year, many American workers, who tend to vote for Democrats, are in dire straits. Well aware of this widespread suffering and faced with the prospect of losing ground to the Republicans in November, the Democrats have attempted over the past year or so to refurbish their image as the party of the working man by promoting campaigns to raise the minimum wage. In reality, the Democratic Party is simply the other main party of the U.S. capitalist exploiters.

"Refurbish" is the operative word here, as President Obama is, with justice, known for having lavished billions on the fat-cat bankers at the onset of the Great Reces-

sion while doing nothing to remedy the plague of joblessness and declining living standards that have followed in its wake. Soon after his election, Obama—with the able assistance of then-United Auto Workers president Ron Gettelfinger—bailed out the giant auto companies while forcing the union to accept tens of thousands of layoffs and sign on to a six-year no-strike pledge. The wage for most new hires was more than halved to \$14 (now \$16) an hour.

On Labor Day, President Obama cynically pontificated, "Give America a raise" while claiming that his hands are tied in this regard for the foreseeable future by the House Republicans. Taking a page from his former employer in the White House, Chicago mayor Rahm Emanuel, noteworthy for his layoffs of thousands of union teachers in the aftermath of their 2012 strike and his continuing campaign to slash their pensions, has recently raised the minimum wage for city employees working for private contractors to \$13 an hour. The Lord taketh away and then he pretends to giveth.

Whether the minimum-wage ploy will draw people to the polls is still to be determined, but it cannot be denied that the issue of hiking wages at the bottom has animated many. Most Americans, including Republican voters and self-designated conservatives in the labor force, are for it. Fast-food workers have turned out to hundreds of demonstrations over the past two years, risking their jobs in the process. Given the continued decline in wages and benefits, many workers are hoping for an improvement, however slight, in their dismal prospects.

Support to minimum wage hikes has also been promoted by many in bourgeois quarters who argue that giving people more disposable income will help stimulate the economy or reduce dependency on government subsidies and food stamps.

This year alone, the minimum wage has been increased to at least \$10.10 an hour in four states, and smaller increases have been passed in three other states. Similar campaigns are underway in South Dakota, Alaska, Arkansas and Nebraska.

Obama's nickel-and-dime proposal for \$10.10 an hour, if ever enacted, would raise the federal minimum wage from a crushing \$7.25 and give full-time workers a yearly salary of roughly \$21,000, still hardly enough to eke out an existence. The federal minimum wage has seen its real value fall by more than a quarter since its peak in 1968, when it was over \$10 in today's dollars. More "generous" measures are slated for the ballot this November in San Francisco and elsewhere, coming on the heels of the Seattle City Council passing a purported \$15 an hour minimum-wage ordinance at the beginning of the year.

Obviously, we are for increases in the minimum wage. But it should be recognized that what has been and is being offered is woefully inadequate. What is really needed is an all-out mobilization of the working class to fight for sharply higher wages as well as for access to free, quality medical care and full pensions for all. History has shown that the gains of working people and the oppressed—including better wages and basic democratic protections—were won through determined class struggle and battles in the street. However, for decades the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy has caved in to the wage-slashing attacks of the bosses, helping to drive down everyone's wages. Meanwhile, they continue to throw millions into Democratic Party coffers.

The drive for profits is the motor force of the capitalist system and results in the increasing immiseration of the working masses at one pole and the increasing wealth of the owners of the means of pro-

duction at the other. The general trend is to "reward" workers for their productive activity by paying them barely enough to be able to return to the job the next day, while the bosses get all the rest. But given their central role in production, workers can bring the flow of profits to a grinding halt. As such, the proletariat is the only force with the collective social power and objective interest to overthrow the bourgeois masters. Until that happens, the tendency of the capitalists to sink wages will always be reasserted with a vengeance whenever working-class struggle ebbs.

"Socialists" Shortchange Working Class

Latching on to the minimum-wage increases being pushed by Democrats, Kshama Sawant of Socialist Alternative (SAIt), who ran openly as a socialist, made the issue a central focus of her successful election campaign to the Seattle city council last year. Underscoring the actual liberal content of Sawant's platform, this demand was also taken up in the 2013 campaign of Democrat Ed Murray for mayor of Seattle. Since the passage of the ordinance, Sawant and her cothinkers have hyped it as a "historic moment" and the outcome of a "real fighting voice in City Hall." The lesson, according to SAIt,

continued on page 10

REVOLUTIONARY TEAMSTERS

THE MINNEAPOLIS
TRUCKERS' STRIKES OF 1934

~ Bryan D. Palmer ~

A Review and Commentary...6



Water Shutoffs Detroit Tells Poor: Drop Dead

Like vultures swooping down, the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) and city administration have shut off water service to tens of thousands of “delinquent” customers, i.e., the poor. Here is yet another graphic display of the capitalist rulers’ contempt for the majority black and impoverished residents of this crumbling urban wasteland. No access to water means no hydration, no sanitation, no bathing. Denying a basic necessity of life to the population of a city where 40 percent live below the poverty line further sinks the masses into misery. Meanwhile, corporate swindlers like GM, owing huge arrears on their service bills, have an uninterrupted flow of water.

The Detroit water shutoffs are part of the city’s financial restructuring plan, which has the DWSD and private investors seeing the glass at least half full. The goal is to cut down debt while securing a sweet spot for the bondholders, further jack up rates—which have more than doubled over the last decade—and contract out the work to cheaper, non-union labor. Working people and the poor have been footing the bill for the gutting of Detroit by the banks and auto giants for too long. Now they are held hostage to the ruin and robbery brought by the largest municipal bankruptcy in U.S. history, which is backed by Wall Street and the Obama administration.

The Motor City was transformed from the epicenter of the auto industry and a stronghold of unionized black labor into a scrapyard. As tycoon transplants and high-rolling venture capitalists demolish blighted properties and get subsidies

to construct new downtown enterprise, the black population is deemed expendable and unworthy of investment. Poor neighborhoods are vacant dystopias, with houses buried under foreclosures, with streetlights and public transit in collapse. City workers’ pensions have been looted and social services slashed. The once-combative labor movement there is now just a legacy, as union leaders proved their subservience to the bosses through decades of concessions and givebacks. Today, workers and retirees depend on the charity work of volunteers distributing water bottles or collecting rainwater. Dripping with race and class hatred, the well-stuffed rulers tell poor Detroit: Let them drink champagne.

As if the supply of water weren’t abundant, Detroit was built on a river and lies between two of the five Great Lakes, which together feed 84 percent of the continent’s surface fresh water. Those who own the means of production turn natural resources into gold for themselves while parceling out peanuts for the rest. Meanwhile, the actual infrastructure is left to rot, with water mains over 70 years old in full need of repair. One of the largest municipally owned water systems is now under threat of privatization.

Opposing the private takeover of the DWSD are its workers organized in AFSCME Local 207. In July, union members overwhelmingly rejected management’s contract proposal that would have effectively eliminated the existing workforce by hiring “at will” employees and wiping out job protections and benefits. AFSCME workers have denounced the

Detroit Free Press



In July, Detroit resident shares water with neighbor whose water was shut off.

criminal water shutoffs, and many have seen their service terminated as well. To carry out the shutoffs, the department last year enlisted the private demolition company Homrich, pledging over \$5 million for the job.

Water has long been a prickly issue between Detroit and DWSD’s customers in the mostly white suburbs, who depend on the supply but bristle at the thought of their payments going to service black city dwellers. With a recent deal proposing the creation of a Regional Water Authority, three outlying counties could exert some control over the water fountain that they resent sharing. The plan was promoted by Democratic Party Detroit mayor Mike Duggan, whose aim is to keep the bankruptcy proceedings apace. That’s also why Duggan, needing to save face, issued

a temporary pause in the mass shutoffs last month after public outrage, protest and international condemnation.

At demonstrations in Detroit, protesters have chanted: “The banks got paid off, we got shut off!” Residential water should be provided free of charge. The privation of those at the bottom of society is not a question of unfair circumstances. It is the very nature of a system ruled by an exploiting class with an unquenchable thirst for profit. In order for the many resources of this society to be used for the benefit of all, the working class must seize the means of production from the tiny elite at the top. Sweeping away capitalist rule and replacing it with a workers government will lay the basis to eliminate scarcity and usher in a society of material abundance. ■

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WORKERS VANGUARD

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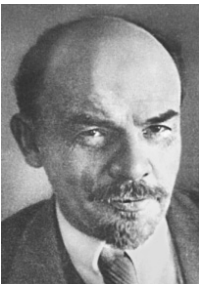
Spartacist Leaflet, August 20



TROTSKY

Cops Are Enemies of Workers

The 1934 Trotskyist-led Minneapolis Teamsters strikes made the city a union town and laid the basis for forging the Teamsters into a powerful industrial union. To win, the truckers and their allies had to face down the cabal of business owners known as the Citizens Alliance backed by the cops, their deputies and the National Guard. In the following excerpt from his account of those struggles, Farrell Dobbs, a striking worker



LENIN

won to Trotskyism, generalized from that experience to explain the role of the police.

Under capitalism the main police function is to break strikes and to repress other forms of protest against the policies of the ruling class. Any civic usefulness other forms of police activity may have, like controlling traffic and summoning ambulances, is strictly incidental to the primary repressive function. Personal inclinations of individual cops do not alter this basic role of the police. All must comply with ruling-class dictates. As a result, police repression becomes one of the most naked forms through which capitalism subordinates human rights to the demands of private property. If the cops sometimes falter in their antisocial tasks, it is simply because they—like the guns they use—are subject to rust when not engaged in the deadly function for which they are primarily trained.

—Farrell Dobbs, *Teamster Rebellion* (1972)

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Elections 2014: Twenty Years of Neo-Apartheid Misery



South African president Jacob Zuma (above on right) shares a joke with Cyril Ramaphosa at ANC national conference, 18 December 2012. Ramaphosa, miners union leader turned wealthy tycoon, played key role in preparing August 2012 Marikana massacre of striking miners (right).



The following article originally appeared in Spartacist South Africa No. 11 (Winter 2014). In June, the bitterly fought mineworkers strike referred to below won a substantial wage increase (see “Victory for South African Platinum Miners,” WV No. 1049, 11 July). The prior month, the bourgeois-nationalist African National Congress (ANC) had won the elections, in no small part due to the political support of the reformist South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

The SACP leaders have long justified their alliance and interpenetration with the ANC as an application of the Menshevik/Stalinist schema of “two-stage revolution”: the “national democratic revolution” now and socialism in the sweet by-and-by. As the article below notes, “The ‘national democratic programme’ of political alliance with bourgeois-nationalist forces has never laid the basis for socialism; it has always subordinated the working class to the class enemy and laid the basis for reaction. This is the lesson to be learned from the long history of bloody defeats for the working class.” The massacre of striking South African platinum miners at Marikana in 2012 is just the latest example of how the actual “second stage” is the bourgeois nationalists’ slaughtering of workers.

SPARTACIST SOUTH AFRICA

The May general elections brought to mind Karl Marx’s observation that the essence of bourgeois democracy is for the oppressed to decide every few years “which particular representative of the oppressing class shall represent and repress them in parliament” (V.I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*). The ANC tops wasted no time making clear that they would use their victory at the polls to kick the workers and oppressed even harder in the teeth. Jacob Zuma declared

CORRECTIONS

In Part Two of “Then and Now” (WV No. 1051, 5 September), we wrote that 29 Socialist Workers Party leaders and Minneapolis Teamsters officials were convicted and jailed under the Smith Act for opposing World War II. In fact, of the 29 charged, 18 were imprisoned. The article “Quebec Liberals Prepare Austerity Onslaught” (WV No. 1049, 11 July) wrongly stated that the last Parti Québécois government set up the “anti-corruption” Charbonneau commission. Actually, the previous Liberal government did so, in 2011.

the party’s 62 percent majority a “green light” to push ahead with the neo-liberal attacks outlined in the National Development Plan (NDP), while secretary general Gwede Mantashe and other ANC leaders promptly convened a press conference to solemnly vow that they would “quickly restore investor confidence” (*Business Day*, 12 May).

the SACP and COSATU bureaucracies have taken over as the enforcers of racist capitalist rule. Their bloodiest crime to date in this role was the August 2012 massacre of 34 black mineworkers in Marikana, who were on strike against the London-listed platinum giant Lonmin. At the time, there was a lot of hypocritical hand-wringing from the bourgeois media,

National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) leader Cyril Ramaphosa, who was a member of the Lonmin board of directors at the time. In e-mails to Lonmin’s chief commercial officer, Albert Jamieson, Ramaphosa reported on 15 August 2012 about the appeals he had made to mining minister Susan Shabangu and police minister Nathi Mthethwa for government intervention against the wildcat strike. One outcome was that a meeting of Zuma’s cabinet was held the same day, where Ramaphosa had urged Shabangu to brief the president and “get [Mthethwa] to act in a more pointed way” (“Deja Vu and Dirty Tricks at Lonmin,” 25 May, bdlive.co.za). Less than 24 hours later, the Lonmin strikers were gunned down in cold blood by Zuma’s and Mthethwa’s cop thugs. Several months later, Ramaphosa was rewarded by the bourgeois ANC when he was elected deputy president of the party at its December 2012 congress in Mangaung; after the 2014 elections, he was also made deputy president of the country.

Such is the role of the executive of the capitalist state, which, as Marx and Engels pointed out over 160 years ago, “is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie” (*Communist Manifesto*, 1848). This is never going to be changed through elections or parliament. It will take a thoroughgoing socialist revolution, smashing the repressive machinery of the capitalist state and replacing it with the dictatorship of the proletariat, to get a government that will represent the interests of the working class and the vast majority who are today oppressed—a **black-centred workers government**.

We Trotskyists of Spartacist/South Africa, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), oppose running as candidates for executive offices of the capitalist state (president, mayor, etc.) as a matter of principle. Participating in elections to parliament, on the other hand, can serve as a platform for putting forward a revolutionary programme and helping the working class to overcome illusions in bourgeois democracy. However, in the recent elections there was no basis for even the most critical electoral support to any of the parties running, as none of them even remotely represented the interests of the working class. This continues our principled stance of never giving an ounce of political support to the ANC or the Tripartite Alliance, including in the 1994 elections, when the International Communist League declared:

“A vote for the ANC—including its Communist Party members and affiliated trade-union leaders of COSATU—

continued on page 4

Forge a Leninist-Trotskyist Vanguard Party!



Striking platinum miners rally near Lonmin’s Marikana mine, April 29. Five-month strike resulted in victory for the 70,000 workers.

Just a few days later, police reinforcements rolled into the platinum belt and the army was put on standby, in an effort to squash the mineworkers strike being led by the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU). Despite all the bourgeois hype about “twenty years of freedom,” “the South African miracle,” etc., the platinum strike—where the mineworkers are fighting a literally life-and-death struggle for a living wage of R12,500 [\$1,143 per month]—is a reminder of how little has changed. The apartheid system of rigid, legally enforced white minority rule may be gone, but South Africa remains a racist hellhole where the vast majority of blacks remain at the bottom, brutally oppressed and exploited for the benefit of the filthy rich capitalist rulers, who are still mainly white.

One difference is that now the ANC and its Tripartite Alliance partners from

government ministers, preachers and the like. To placate public outrage over the killings and refurbish the image of the bloody bourgeois state, President Jacob Zuma appointed the Farlam Commission of Inquiry to hold public hearings investigating the causes that led to the Marikana massacre. But now the blood has dried, and even the most minimal, lying pretext of state “accountability” is being discarded. A few weeks after the May 2014 elections, the government announced that it was changing the commission’s “terms of reference”...to remove any investigation into its own responsibility!

At the same time, more details have emerged of the direct involvement of all levels of the executive of the bourgeois state in preparing the Marikana massacre, as well as their collusion with the Lonmin bosses. One report gives further details of the role played by former

South Africa...

(continued from page 3)

is a vote to perpetuate the racist oppression and superexploitation of the black, coloured (mixed-race) and Indian toilers in a different political form. The workers and all the oppressed must be mobilized independently of the capitalist masters.”

—“South Africa Elections: ANC’s Deal with Apartheid Bosses,” WV No. 598, 15 April 1994

No Choice for Workers, Oppressed

There was not much surprising about the outcome of this year’s elections. While the ANC’s share of the vote continued to decline (as did the overall voter turnout), they still won the kind of majority that bourgeois ruling parties in most countries only dream about. Despite the massive anger at the base of society over the failure to deliver the “better life for all” that was promised in 1994 and the atrocities, scandals, corruption and contempt the Tripartite Alliance tops display for the poor, much of the black majority still feels a strong identification with the “party of liberation,” at least when it comes time to vote. There are also still widespread illusions in bourgeois electoralism, as a result of centuries of white minority rule and black disenfranchisement. And there does not appear to be a viable alternative to the ANC.

The lack of an alternative for the oppressed was starkly revealed by the decision of the shack-dwellers’ movement Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM) to support the neo-liberal, racist Democratic Alliance (DA) in this year’s elections. AbM justified this by arguing that it would somehow serve to protect its members from the ANC and the government, which has viciously repressed them, including killing landless activists during protests. The idea that politically supporting the DA is an answer to this repression is truly perverse and a sign of desperation. For years now, the DA has carried out some of the most vicious, racist repression of the black and coloured poor—squatters, panhandlers, farmworkers, striking municipal workers—as the ruling party in Cape Town and the Western Cape. Despite trying to polish its image and woo petty-bourgeois black voters, it is still obvious to most that the DA stands for white privilege (as does the ANC, in fact; the ANC is simply more effective at disguising this fact with nationalism). The DA was unable to gain more than 6% of the votes from black people, even while increasing its overall total to more than 20%.

The opposition party much more likely to attract the support of the oppressed, including sections of the working class, is the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), which got a little more than 6% of the national vote. According to one report, the ANC’s vote in Rustenburg municipality, where many platinum miners and their families live, fell from almost 75% in 2009 to 57% in 2014. The EFF was the main beneficiary, getting 20% of the vote (“Is the EFF the Calm Before a Real Leftist Storm?”, *Mail & Guardian* online, 16 May). There are real illusions in the bourgeois-populist EFF, and particularly its “commander in chief” Julius Malema, among mineworkers. The EFF has tried to present itself as the “friend” of the striking mineworkers, including holding its launch as a party in Marikana and recently making two donations, of R50,000 each, to the AMCU strike fund. The leadership of the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU), to which AMCU is affiliated, has helped promote these illusions, endorsing the EFF along with the Pan Africanist Congress in the elections.

But the EFF’s posture as a “friend” of the workers, like its occasional use of “Marxist-Leninist” verbiage, is totally phony. While seeking to profit from the legitimate anger of black workers through populist demagoguery, the EFF is a bourgeois formation both in terms of its programme and social composition. It is fundamentally hostile to the workers movement.

The EFF calls to expropriate the white-



AFF

June 3: Residents of Lwandle, outside Cape Town, look on as their homes are razed by the Western Cape government.

owned land and nationalise the mines, banks and other large enterprises—calls that clearly resonate with workers and the poor. But a few months before the elections, Malema and other EFF leaders met with representatives of American, British and South African investors in Alexandra township to specifically reassure them about these demands. As Malema explained after the meeting: “Our elections manifesto came up and we told them that we are not talking about wholesale takeover but 60% of ownership more or less. We are uncompromising on state ownership and participation. The percentages we are prepared to discuss when we reach the appropriate point” (bdlive.co.za, 4 March). This would simply mean that the bourgeois state becomes a partner in directly exploiting the workers.

The EFF’s perspective is to emulate capitalist regimes like those in Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan, where they see “state-aided industrialisation,” supported by tariffs and other measures to protect national industry, as key parts of developing a national bourgeoisie with some degree of independence from imperialism. Whether or not there is any chance of replicating such capitalist economic policies in South Africa, it is a fundamentally anti-working-class agenda. To take just one of these “models,” the capitalist regime in South Korea is known for regularly and viciously attacking the trade unions and leftists. This is the domestic counterpart to its counterrevolutionary alliance with U.S. imperialism against the North Korean deformed workers state. As for “nationalisation” and “state-aided industrialisation,” in December 2013 the Seoul regime pulled out all the stops to smash the longest rail strike in the country’s history, which 8,700 workers had launched to stop a move towards privatisation of the state-owned company KORAIL (see “Defend South Korean Rail Union!” WV No. 1037, 10 January).

Counterposed to bourgeois “nationalisation” schemes, we fight for a black-centred workers government that will expropriate the mines, banks and industry without compensation. Seizing the mine shafts, machinery and mountains of finance capital that the mining bosses have heaped up through more than a century of superexploitation of mainly black labour will be a necessary step in liberation from neo-apartheid capitalist oppression. The fact that most of this capital—not to mention the owners of the biggest mining companies—is now in London, New York and other banking centres, underscores the need to link this struggle to the fight for workers power in the imperialist countries. The populist nationalism pushed by the EFF is an obstacle to this revolutionary internationalist perspective.

Grumbles of Discontent from the Bourgeoisie

The ANC and Tripartite Alliance tops have performed invaluable services for the Randlords and their imperialist big brothers by achieving some relative stability for South African capitalism in the 1990s, ramming through the dictates of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, and many other things. But although the ANC continues to enjoy the backing of the key sections of the bourgeoisie (and most likely a large

majority of the capitalists’ political donations, which are kept secret), the racist rulers still find plenty to complain about.

A pre-election editorial by *The Economist* is representative of these complaints. While acknowledging all the ANC has done for the white rulers—especially the “miraculously smooth” transition from apartheid to neo-apartheid—this mouthpiece of imperialist finance capital complains that not enough has been done to push through “tricky reforms” (code for attacks on labour, such as making it easier for bosses to hire and fire workers, cracking down harder on strikes, etc.) and that pervasive corruption is undermining the government’s legitimacy and cutting into capitalist profits. Since they know that their ideal ruling party, the DA, is not a realistic alternative until it can make some inroads with black voters, their hope in conclusion is that the ANC “reinvents itself or splits” (“Time to Ditch Mandela’s Party,” *The Economist*, 3 May).

At bottom, the bourgeois complaints are not simply, or even primarily, about issues of economic policy. More worrying to the capitalist rulers are the rising levels of social unrest, especially some of the highest levels of strike activity seen in decades in mining and other key sectors of the economy. With the world economy still in a downturn, South Africa appears

Gallo

Bourgeois-populist Economic Freedom Fighters leader Julius Malema (left) meets with reactionary tribalist Inkatha Freedom Party head Mangosuthu Buthelezi in Durban, January 20.



to be entering a recession after negative growth in the first quarter of 2014. Calls for “decisive action” to break the AMCU-led platinum strike (the longest strike in the history of the country) were growing louder by the day, as well as more generally calls to “discipline” the unions.

For 20 years, the Tripartite Alliance nationalist popular front has been the key mechanism for administering neo-apartheid capitalism. As representatives of the Alliance, the reformist leaders of the largest working-class organisations—the SACP and COSATU—act to discipline their working-class base on behalf of the bourgeoisie, and in return the reformist bureaucracy benefitted materially from a cosy relationship with the government and bosses. But increasingly, the governing needs of the bourgeoisie are shifting in favour of outright repression rather than co-optation of the trade unions. Especially since the 2012 wave of wildcat strikes in the mines and the collapse of NUM in the platinum belt, key representatives of the bourgeoisie are doubtful of the reformist tops’ continued ability to rein in worker

militancy, and believe the time has come for the state to take a more confrontational approach with the unions.

Some bourgeois commentators see the impetus for such a shift coming from the split that the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) is threatening to lead from the Tripartite Alliance. For example, Peter Attard Montalto of the Japanese financial group Nomura dismissed what he called the “Sandton consensus”—the view that the ANC would respond to such a split with more “left” populism. Instead, Montalto argues, “There is a higher probability of the rump of the ANC left after a workers’ party emerges moving further to the right, securing capital and ownership in a more traditional free-market sense, liberalising labour laws in recognition that its past job creation efforts were unsuccessful. You could potentially have a more investor-friendly ANC going into 2019” (*Mail & Guardian* online, 9 May).

Whether the various scenarios churned out by the bourgeois think tanks turn out to be more or less accurate, one thing is clear: the bourgeoisie is getting ready for a turbulent period ahead. It is urgently necessary for the working class to prepare for this, which is primarily a *political* question that requires drawing the lessons from the past betrayals at the hands of the Tripartite Alliance as well as the history of the international class struggle. Chief among these lessons is the need for the complete political and organisational independence of the working class from all bourgeois forces. The looming possibility of a NUMSA-led split from the Tripartite Alliance sharply poses the question of working class independence versus “new” popular-front betrayals.

The “NUMSA Moment”: Recycling Popular Frontism

In December 2013, a NUMSA special congress decided to withdraw support for the ANC in the elections, and also to call on COSATU to leave the Tripartite Alliance. After the elections, the NUMSA central committee re-affirmed that it would take the lead in establishing a “United Front”

as an alternative to the Alliance, and look into establishing a “Movement for Socialism” as some kind of political party to take the place of the SACP. These moves have enraged the ANC tops and their close allies in the COSATU bureaucracy on the one hand, while at the same time raising the hopes of a lot of worker militants at the base of COSATU.

Ending the Alliance with the ANC would certainly be a necessary and important step toward working-class independence. But on its own, simply leaving the Alliance is not enough as it merely raises the question of *what will replace it*. And while there are certainly hopes among the NUMSA base for a militant workers party, the programme of the *leadership* is directly counterposed to a class-struggle perspective and committed to perpetuating the same treacherous, class-collaborationist policies of the past under different labels.

The NUMSA tops are very clear that they don’t reject collaboration with bourgeois parties and participation in bourgeois government coalitions as a matter of principle (indeed, while withdrawing

support from the ANC in this year’s elections, they stopped short of *opposing* a vote to this bourgeois party on the basis of class principles). What they are calling a “United Front” is in fact a call for a new *popular front*—an alliance of working class organisations with bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces on the basis of a *common programme* that is inevitably bourgeois. In NUMSA’s case, the new “United Front” is to be modeled on the United Democratic Front (UDF) of the 1980s and based centrally on the Freedom Charter. The NUMSA bureaucrats have made it clear that they are open to discussions with Malema’s EFF, including assuring that these bourgeois-populist demagogues would be invited to participate in a “Socialism Conference” they are planning.

The Freedom Charter is a bourgeois-populist programme premised on maintaining capitalism and seeking merely to make possible “the development of a prosperous Non-European bourgeois class” (“In Our Lifetime” by Nelson Mandela, 1956). The UDF was the popular front of the 1980s through which the militant, pro-socialist black working-class base of COSATU and the SACP were shackled to bourgeois nationalism and subordinated to the ANC. The outcome of this popular front—which the NUMSA tops hope to re-create—is precisely the neo-apartheid capitalist system we have today, a cruel betrayal of the black masses’ aspirations for freedom.

The NUMSA tops’ class collaboration was also seen in their use of the bourgeois courts against their COSATU rivals to get Zwelinzima Vavi reinstated as COSATU general secretary. This unprincipled maneuvering further encourages direct intervention by the bourgeois state and bourgeois parties, which can only help to further the trade unions’ subordination to the capitalist exploiters. Immediately after Vavi’s re-instatement, this opening was used by the ANC, which sent in a task team headed by Cyril Ramaphosa to force the warring factions to toe the line and call a truce for the elections. As part of this deal, Vavi went out on the campaign trail on May Day to herd the workers as voting cattle for the ANC.

Their maneuvering on behalf of Vavi may very well have backfired for the NUMSA tops. Once he was back in office and hopeful of renewed offers of influence within the ANC, Vavi decided he no longer needed their backing or that of the other eight COSATU affiliates that took his case to court, and announced that he would not support their new court case to force COSATU president S’dumo Dlamini to call a special congress. This was after he had rejected NUMSA’s call that he refrain from campaigning for the ANC. According to some reports, Vavi also spurned appeals from NUMSA to become the leader of the new “workers party” they hope to launch.

Besides assisting the bourgeoisie and its courts to keep the unions under their thumb, all this unprincipled maneuvering only serves to demoralise those sections of the working class that are looking for alternatives to the Alliance, and breed cynicism. What’s needed instead is a principled political fight to cohere a class-struggle opposition to the sellout tops in both factions of the COSATU bureaucracy. A key demand for this struggle is the complete independence of the trade unions from the bourgeois state.

The various groups that make up the pseudo-socialist left are all tailing the NUMSA bureaucracy. With varying degrees of criticism, they all hail the “NUMSA Moment”—the name coined for the NUMSA tops’ efforts to create a “new” popular front on the basis of the Freedom Charter and launch a reformist workers party to replace the SACP. This is not surprising, since most of these pseudo-socialist groups had previously supported the ANC and Tripartite Alliance as long as they were still relatively popular. After turning away from open support for the Alliance in recent years, they turned to forming various “movements” on the basis of lowest-common-denominator politics. What all of these lash-ups inevitably had



May 2014: Election posters in Cape Town township. SACP invokes memory of late ANC leader Nelson Mandela, known as Madiba, to bolster support for ANC-led capitalist government.

in common was the aim to pressurise the bourgeois Tripartite Alliance government.

A good example is the Democratic Socialist Movement, section of the Committee for a Workers’ International, which last year launched the Workers and Socialist Party (WASP) as a supposed step toward a “mass” (reformist) workers party—and above all to contest the 2014 elections. In their year-long election campaign, WASP made a series of desperate attempts to chase after “the masses” through opportunist, unprincipled maneuverers. First they approached Malema’s EFF for an election bloc; then they pleaded pathetically for the NUMSA tops to “lead us,” including supporting their use of the bourgeois courts; they tried to curry favour with dissident AMCU shop stewards by holding a strikebreaking press conference to counsel against the strike on the eve of the strike; finally, they announced Moses Mayekiso—a former NUMSA leader, who more recently tried (apparently unsuccessfully) to make a career as a bourgeois politician with the right-wing ANC split COPE—as their presidential candidate. In the end, all these opportunist crimes didn’t pay too well: WASP managed only about 8,300 votes, or 0.05% of the total, in the national elections.

Programme for Black Proletarian Power

With key sections of the working class questioning their continued political loyalty to the ANC and the Tripartite Alliance, and the ongoing militant class struggles in the mines, there are important openings for the forging of a revolutionary vanguard party. But this outcome is not guaranteed, and trade-union militancy alone will not be enough. To prevent that militancy from being channeled into another dead end of class collaboration or bourgeois populism, the decisive question is *programme*. The working class needs a programme that reflects its independent class interests and leading, revolutionary role. Not just a programme to struggle for better wages and working conditions from the capitalists, but a programme to seize power from the capitalists and run the economy in the interests of the majority.

The NUMSA tops’ programme is clear: they hope for a return to the days of the Congress Alliance before the end of apartheid, to the ANC of Mandela and Tambo and the SACP of Chris Hani and Joe Slovo. These are some of the key architects of the neo-apartheid order, including Slovo’s “sunset clauses” for continuing white privileges [after 1994]. At the core of NUMSA’s “new” proposals today is a desire to return to the supposedly “revolutionary” programme of Stalinist “two-stage revolution,” which in South Africa has always gone by the name “national democratic revolution.” This was spelled out explicitly in a recent statement by NUMSA general secretary Irvin Jim: “Our call for a United Front of the working class and a Movement for Socialism is precisely a defence of the national democratic programme, the Freedom Charter, which remains the only programme that is capable of laying the basis for socialist transformation of South African society” (numsa.org.za, 20 May).

The “national democratic programme” of political alliance with bourgeois-nationalist forces has *never* laid the basis for socialism; it has *always* subordinated the working class to the class enemy and laid the basis for reaction. This is the lesson to be learned from the long history of bloody defeats for the working class. From the slaughter of tens of thousands of communists and workers in Shanghai in 1927 at the hands of former “ally” Chiang Kai-shek, to the Marikana massacre in 2012—the “second stage” is always the bourgeois nationalists turning on and slaughtering workers and communists once they have used them to climb to power.

South Africa today is living proof that national liberation and the other gains that were promised to the masses by the “national democratic revolution” cannot be achieved within a capitalist framework. They can only be achieved through the dictatorship of the proletariat, which will inescapably place on the order of the day not only democratic but also socialist tasks, and will at the same time provide a mighty impulse to the international socialist revolution. To prevail against imperialist hostility and open the way for an all-sided economic and social development in Southern Africa and the rest of the continent, requires the extension of the revolution to the imperialist centres and establishment of an international, planned socialist economy. This is the essence of Leon Trotsky’s perspective of permanent revolution, which was powerfully confirmed by the 1917 Russian October Revolution.

The SACP leaders are rightly reviled by many militant workers today—including members of the SACP itself—for their craven support to the ANC tops and Zuma in particular. But it is not enough to simply reject the SACP tops’ current policies. It is crucial for advanced workers to also learn to consciously reject the SACP’s reformist *programme* (including what is today peddled by Irvin Jim and the NUMSA bureaucracy) in favour of the genuine communism practiced by the Bolshevik Party under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky—the revolutionary internationalist programme that was trampled underfoot by the Stalinists and replaced by its opposite. Conditions in South Africa today are crying out for the formation of a party of the Bolshevik type—an uncompromising party based on the independence of the working class from the bourgeoisie, fighting for proletarian leadership of the toiling masses, and acting as a revolutionary tribune of the people to oppose every manifestation of capitalist oppression.

This is the kind of party that Spartacist/South Africa is trying to build. We have consistently opposed, on principle, any political support to the ANC or any other bourgeois parties and from the beginning denounced the post-1994 neo-apartheid system, administered by the Tripartite Alliance government, as a betrayal of the struggle for black freedom. Today, it is necessary to assimilate the lessons of these bitter betrayals as a necessary part of the work of building the revolutionary vanguard party needed to get rid of this racist system of capitalist exploitation. Toward that end, we raise the following:

1. Break with the bourgeois Tripartite Alliance! For political independence of the proletariat from *all* bourgeois parties—ANC, EFF, PAC, AZAPO, DA, Agang, etc.
2. No reliance on the state that massacred the Marikana strikers. Cops and security guards out of the unions! The capitalist courts have no place in disputes of the workers movement. Labour must clean its own house!
3. Down with labour brokers! The unions must fight for full, permanent jobs for all contract and temporary workers and for equal pay for equal work. Organise the unorganised!
4. For integrated, multiethnic defence guards based on the trade unions to fight against anti-immigrant attacks and defend working-class communities against vigilantism. Labour must fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants and oppose deportations.
5. Down with the Traditional Courts Bill and *all* special powers and privileges of the chieftancy! These are particularly oppressive to black women, who are triply oppressed under neo-apartheid. For access to free, safe abortion and birth control on demand, as part of free, high-quality health care for all. Oppose oppressive, backward traditional practices like polygamy, *lobola* [bride price] and *ukuthwala* [marriage by capture].
6. For a massive public works programme, at union wages and conditions, to maintain and expand roads, build hospitals, schools, housing, etc. For free, quality health care for all! For free education, open admissions, and a state-paid living stipend through to the university level! Smash “e-tolls” [road tolls]—for free, safe, mass public transport!
7. For a 30-hour workweek with no loss in pay to distribute the available jobs among all who need work and combat unemployment at the expense of the capitalists. For massive wage increases to close the apartheid wage gap, and a sliding scale of wages to keep pace with the skyrocketing costs of living. For a class-struggle leadership in the unions!
8. New October Revolutions—not the Freedom Charter—are the only way forward to national liberation of the black majority. For a black-centred workers government, part of a socialist federation of Southern Africa, that fights for international workers rule and an international planned socialist economy. Expropriate the bourgeoisie—from Jo’burg, to London, to Wall Street!
9. Forge a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party as a section of a reformed Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution. ■

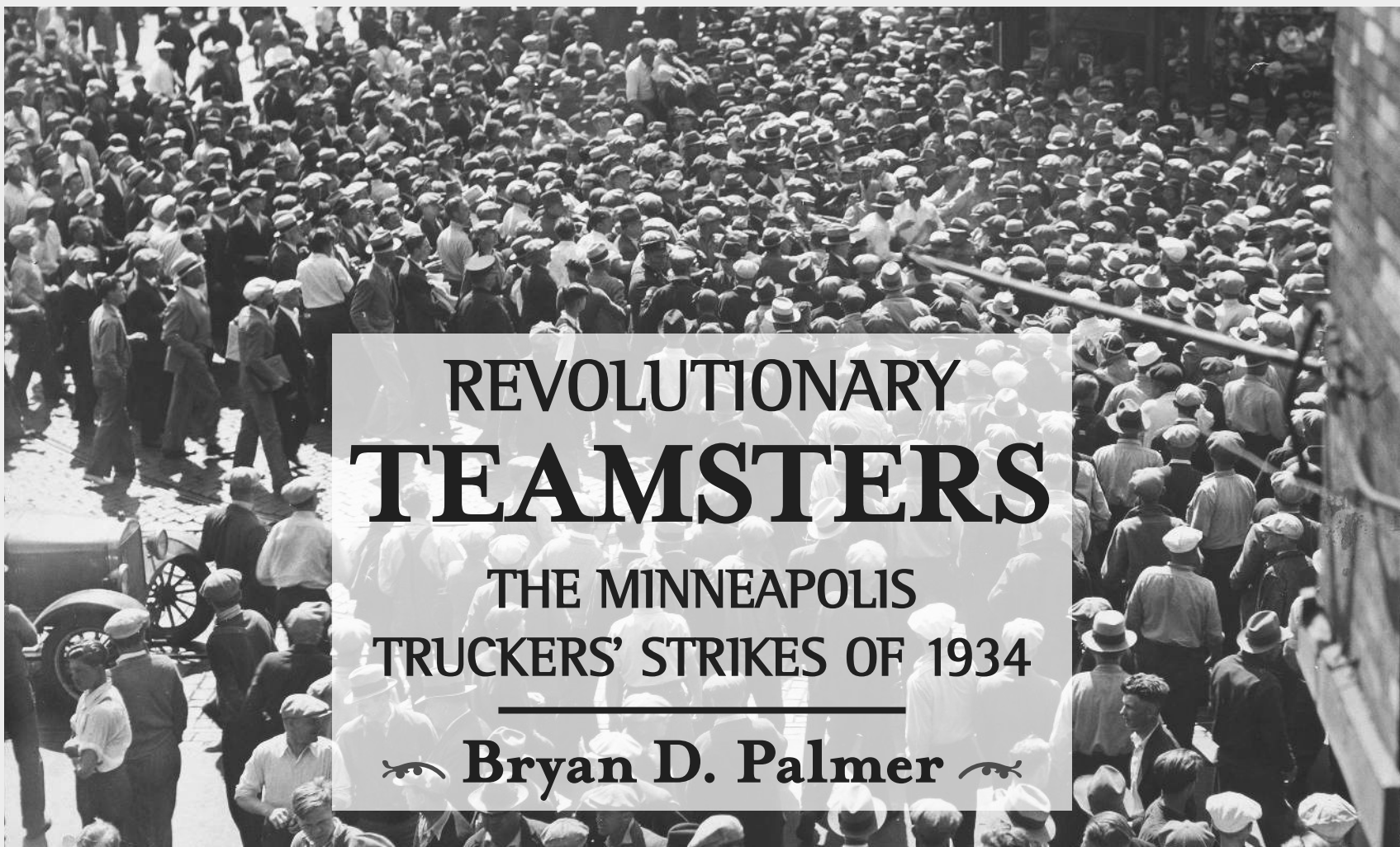
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REVOLUTIONARY TEAMSTERS

THE MINNEAPOLIS TRUCKERS' STRIKES OF 1934

👁️ Bryan D. Palmer 👁️

Minnesota Historical Society

A Review and Commentary by E. Tanner Part One

“The most important of all prerequisites for the development of a militant labor movement is the leaven of principled communists.” So wrote James P. Cannon, a leader of the Communist League of America (CLA), toward the end of the second of three truckers strikes that convulsed the city of Minneapolis in 1934. Bryan Palmer’s *Revolutionary Teamsters*, an in-depth study of those strikes—which were led by CLA members—brings this lesson home.

That spring and summer, the Minneapolis Teamster strikes overlapped with a similarly hard-fought 83-day strike by West Coast longshoremen and maritime unions, a battle that culminated in a four-day general strike in San Francisco. Both strikes were part of a wave of labor struggle that swept the country as the working class, shaking off the paralysis that had accompanied the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, began to fight. What distinguished these two strikes, along with one by auto parts workers in Toledo, from other 1934 labor battles is that they won *big*, establishing union representation for masses of previously unorganized workers and opening the road to the upsurge later in the decade that forged the industrial unions of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). Key to the victory of all three strikes was the leadership provided by “reds”—labor militants who considered themselves socialist or communist.

As we explained in Part One of our two-part article “Then and Now” (WV Nos. 1050 and 1051, 8 August and 5 September): “Unlike other strikes at the time, the militancy of the workers was not restrained by leaders who promoted the lie of a ‘partnership’ between labor and capital. Instead, the mass strength and solidarity of the workers was organized and politically directed by leaders who rejected any notion that the bosses are ‘reasonable’ or their state ‘neutral.’ Understanding the forces of the class enemy that would be arrayed against any union struggle, the leaders of these strikes were prepared for class war.”

When academics take up a subject of keen interest to revolutionary Marxists, the results are often disappointing. That was certainly the case with Philip A. Korth’s *The Minneapolis Teamsters Strike of 1934* (Michigan State University Press,



Bettmann

1934: Three Dunne brothers (from left), Vincent (Ray), Grant and Miles, Trotskyist militants who helped lead Teamsters strikes to victory.

1995). Although basing his narrative on some interesting oral history interviews, Korth painted the titanic battles waged by the insurgent truckers as an unfortunate class polarization that illustrated the need for the capitalist rulers to establish a “community” agency like the National Labor Relations Board to regulate industrial relations.

There is no danger of such a fundamental misunderstanding from Bryan Palmer, a professor at Canada’s Trent University with an impressive body of work on North American left and labor history. Writing with sympathy for the proletarian revolutionary cause, Palmer places the CLA leadership—Trotskyists whom the Spartacist League counts among its forebears—at the center of his narrative, detailing the ways in which they “proved undeniably more resolute and far-seeing” and “more decisively in control of the events” than the other left-wing 1934 strike leaderships. In Minneapolis, the CLA militants sought not only to build and strengthen the basic economic organizations of the working class, but also to educate the union ranks in the principles of class struggle. Palmer quotes Cannon:

“Every strike settlement is a compromise in the sense that it leaves the bosses in control of industry and free to exploit the workers. The best settlement only limits and checks this exploitation to a certain extent. Realistic leaders do not expect justice from the capitalists, they only strive to extract as much as possible for the union in the given situation and strengthen their forces for another fight.”

—“Minneapolis Strike—An Answer to Its Defamers,” *Militant*, 16 June 1934

Revolutionary Teamsters grew out of research for the second volume of Palm-

er’s projected three-volume biography of Cannon. (For a review of his first volume, see “A Biography of James P. Cannon,” *Spartacist* No. 60, Autumn 2007). The Prometheus Research Library (PRL), library and archive of the Central Committee of the Spartacist League/U.S., was one of many institutions that assisted Palmer in preparing that previous book. PRL staff members also were among those who read and critiqued early manuscripts of *Revolutionary Teamsters*, as Palmer writes in his “Acknowledgements.”

Available for the last year only as an outrageously expensive hardback intended for the academic market, *Revolutionary Teamsters* has now been published in paperback by Haymarket Books. Happily, this edition preserves 28 pages of graphics (although without the color plates and photo-grade paper used in the hardback). The photographs will greatly assist readers, many of whom have witnessed little labor struggle in their lifetimes, to visualize the class war that rocked Minneapolis, including the pitched battles in which strikers routed police and their deputized auxiliaries. During the decisive five-week strike in July-August, cops armed with special riot guns shot 67 union picketers (two of whom died), martial law was declared and National Guard troops occupied the city. Readers might also want to view “Labor’s Turning Point,” a 1981 TV documentary now available on YouTube that features stunning 1934 newsreels as well as interviews with participants.

The Trotskyists inspired and mobilized the truckers in ways hardly imaginable today. Palmer’s text frequently makes the Minneapolis events come alive, marshaling an impressive array of published and

archival sources. He vividly describes the extensive preparations for the second and third strikes, in particular the transformation of old warehouse spaces into strike headquarters, which included a hospital, kitchens and truck refueling and repair facilities. His chapter on Minneapolis Teamster Local 574’s Women’s Auxiliary—whose members were integral to the strike apparatus, among other things running the commissary that fed thousands of strikers and their supporters daily—is particularly notable. So is his account of the Minneapolis Central Council of Workers (MCCW), a united front initiated and led by CLA cadre that organized the unemployed working on public relief projects, bringing them to union pickets and evening meetings at strike headquarters.

Minnesota: A Unique Political Landscape

Revolutionary Teamsters adds significant detail to previously published accounts. Best known is *Teamster Rebellion* (1972), written by Farrell Dobbs, a young trucker who was catapulted into the strike leadership team and joined the CLA. As the memoir of a leading participant, that book remains central to any attempt to revisit the 1934 events, although Dobbs eventually abandoned the revolutionary politics that animated him at the time. (As National Secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, the CLA’s eventual successor, he presided over the organization’s descent into reformism in the 1960s). Not as well known is *American City: A Rank and File History* (1937), a comprehensive study written by the liberal journalist Charles Rumford Walker in the aftermath of the strikes. Currently available in a 2005 reprint, Walker’s excellent account situates the Teamster battle in the specific social, economic and political context of both Minneapolis and Minnesota.

Though not without criticisms, Palmer acknowledges his debt to both works. He follows Walker in his description of the marked decline by 1934 of the railroads and extractive industries (mining and lumber) that had previously driven the region’s economic growth. Agriculture was left as the central engine of the economy, but American farming had been in free fall since the early 1920s. Minneapolis was a center for milling wheat, with many city dwellers retaining family links to rural areas. One of the first points that Walker made was that “the farmer is one-half of economics and two-third of politics in Minnesota.” Unfortunately, Palmer gives short shrift to this crucial observation.

Minnesota was one of only a few states where agrarian Populism—which had dominated rural areas for decades from the time of the 1870s Grange movement—remained an important political force. It had propelled the state’s Farmer-Labor Party (FLP) into the position of the Republican Party’s main bourgeois electoral rival, surpassing the Democrats, with whom the FLP was in a sometimes-uneasy alliance. (The two parties finally merged in 1944.) But Palmer never explores the ways in which the FLP made the Minnesota political landscape unique, creating *both* potential openings and pitfalls for an astute communist organization spearheading a union organizing drive, as Part Two of this article will detail.

Instead, Palmer insists on seeing Minneapolis as a locale of “uneven and combined development,” making belabored and erroneous use of the concept, which Trotsky expounded in reference to tsarist Russia and the imperialist-dominated countries where capitalism arrived late. In such societies, modern industry is superimposed on backward, traditional economies. Palmer argues that the weakness of the AFL unions and the strength of the Citizens Alliance—a group of some 800 employers who maintained an iron grip on the city, keeping wages low and unions out through a network of anti-union provocateurs and informers—made class relations in Minneapolis particularly brittle. The opening thereby created for a small group of Trotskyists to assume leadership of a major class struggle was, in Palmer’s words, “the privilege of historical backwardness.”

But he fails to make a convincing case that the relation of class forces in Minneapolis was different in any substantial way from other anti-union bastions of the time, e.g., Detroit or Los Angeles. The inappropriate use of Trotsky’s concept fails to take adequate account of the strike wave that was sweeping the country as a whole. In the end, it conceals far more than it elucidates.

The Importance of the Party Fraction

Revolutionary Teamsters includes a useful appendix that details the origins and early history of the CLA, giving particular emphasis to the poisonous personal polarization within its leadership between Cannon and his supporters (including the Minneapolis local leadership) on one side and Max Shachtman and his supporters on the other. This destructive internal struggle, which almost split the organization, was documented by the PRL in its book *Dog Days: James P. Cannon vs. Max Shachtman in the Communist League of America, 1931-1933* (2000).

The upsurge of workers struggle that began in 1933 enabled the CLA to finally turn outward toward the mass movement, contributing to the end of this internal battle, which had no principled programmatic basis. In early 1934, League members found themselves in the leadership of a strike by New York hotel workers. The strike’s leader, B. J. Field, was expelled by the CLA in the middle of the battle for violating discipline. Field had elevated himself above the CLA fraction, the body on which he nominally sat that was charged with overseeing the party’s intervention into the strike. He let himself be taken in by mediators from the Federal Labor Board, ignoring the counsel of the CLA leadership who knew that the “help” proffered by these slick operators would be a “noose for the strike” (as Cannon put it). The hotel strike went down to defeat.

The success in Minneapolis came hot on the heels of the disaster in New York. The contrast was later noted by Cannon:

“In our movement we never played with the absurd idea that only those directly connected with a union are capable of giving assistance. Modern strikes need political direction more than anything else. If our party, our League as we called it then, deserved to exist it would have come to the aid of the local comrades. As is always the case with trade union leaders, especially in strike times, they were under the weight and stress of a thousand pressing details. A political party, on the other hand, rises above the details and generalizes from the main issues. A trade union leader

who rejects the idea of political advice in the struggle against the bosses and their government, with its cunning devices, traps and methods of exerting pressure, is deaf, dumb and blind. Our Minneapolis comrades were not of this type. They turned to us for help.”

—*History of American Trotskyism* (1944)

Minneapolis was the only place in the country where a sizable proportion of the CP’s core leadership had come over to the Trotskyist movement—cadre with deep social roots in the city and years of experience working together in the labor movement. The branch had a social weight unique to the tiny CLA, enabling the cadre there to transform the insubstantial Local 574 (which Cannon later aptly described as “holding on to the ragged edge of nothing”) into an industrial union of some 7,000 truckers as well as loaders and warehouse workers by May 1934.

Palmer is at his best in the chapter describing the political histories, personalities and interconnections of the CLA members who conceived of and carried through this campaign. Pulling together information from previously disparate sources, he paints compelling portraits of Carl Skoglund (“Skogie”) and Vincent (Ray) Dunne along with his brothers, Miles and Grant. All found themselves working in the coal-hauling yards in the early 1930s. Understanding that truckers were strategic to the economy of an agricultural hub like Minneapolis, they made



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10,000 unemployed workers march in Minneapolis, April 1934. CLA sought to link struggles of the unemployed to the Teamsters strikes.

various attempts to prod Local 574 into an organizing campaign. But it only took off after the gregarious Miles succeeded in selling the idea to the local’s president, Bill Brown, who was disaffected with the craft-union prejudices and bureaucratic inertia of the national Teamster leadership.

Bill Brown was an FLP activist, not a Trotskyist, but he had a “sound class instinct” (Cannon’s words). His support to the volunteer organizing committee set up by the Dunne brothers and Skoglund was crucial. It gave the committee the cover to organize truckers *and their helpers* on an industrial basis into an established AFL union, enabling them to do an end run around the craft-union bureaucrats who dominated Local 574’s executive board.

The strength of Palmer’s book is that he understands how much the CLA as a whole contributed to the battle in Minneapolis. Palmer describes the supporting role of local CLA members and chronicles the growth of the local branch in parallel with the union. The first strike in the coal yards, carefully timed for a cold-snap in February, was won in three days as the innovative “flying picket” squads initiated by the strikers shut the coal yards tight. There was consultation with the New York CLA leadership but little need to involve national resources.

In the aftermath of the February victory, things moved with lightning speed as truckers from all the city’s industries began flocking into Local 574. Due to what Palmer views as misplaced concerns about the strains on New York, the Minneapolis Trotskyists didn’t keep the national leadership abreast of developments, which Ray Dunne later wrote was a “grievous mistake.” Cannon and other CLA leaders in New York were caught off guard when the national newspapers carried accounts of the pitched battles in the Minneapolis market area on May 21-22 that kept

CLA leaders Shachtman and Cannon (on right) politically reinforced strike leadership, assisted with daily strike paper, the *Organizer*.



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the companies from resuming operations with scab drivers. In what became known as the “Battle of Deputies Run,” the truckers and their supporters routed the cops and their specially deputized anti-union volunteers, killing two.

The money to fly Cannon into Minneapolis was quickly scraped together. He arrived just after FLP governor Floyd B. Olson had stepped in to negotiate a truce. The May settlement that followed was not a total union victory but a compromise. It gave the union the essentials of recognition; however, it was ambiguous with regard to the inclusion of the inside

bourgeois media bellowed forth as the strike began.

Hugo Oehler—an experienced mass organizer who had been a leader of the bitterly fought 1929 Gastonia, North Carolina, textile strike—was brought in to mobilize the unemployed behind the Teamsters. From the Chicago CLA came the lawyer Albert Goldman. Providing essential legal counsel, Goldman also proved himself an able revolutionary propagandist, and his speeches to union gatherings were often reprinted in the *Organizer*. Palmer details the activities of all these men, as well as local CLA members like Oscar Coover and Chester Johnson, unionists who marched a contingent of electricians to Local 574’s headquarters to support the May strike, and railway engineer C. R. Hedlund, who also mobilized support in the broader labor movement. Clara Dunne and Marvell Scholl, the wife of Farrell Dobbs who was recruited to the CLA along with her husband, ran the Women’s Auxiliary. Palmer also notes that strikers like Harry DeBoer and Jack Maloney joined the League in the course of the struggle.

Notably absent from Palmer’s book, however, is any substantial discussion of the party body responsible for the work in Local 574—the Teamster *fraction* of the Minneapolis CLA branch. This hole in *Revolutionary Teamsters* is not surprising given that Palmer is an academic, but it is glaring. Trotsky had stressed the absolute necessity of trade-union fractions in a document written to address the internal dispute in the CLA in 1933 (“Trade-Union Problems in America,” 23 September 1933). As the PRL explained:

“Essential to consistent work in any milieu is the organization of party cadre in working bodies that regularly meet, discuss how to implement party perspectives, and continually evaluate ongoing work, as laid out in the resolution on organization adopted by the Third Congress of the Communist International. This is the only way the party can act as a ‘fist’ in social struggle. In the absence of fractions responsible to geographically organized local committees, cadres, especially in the trade unions, are inordinately susceptible to political pressures that can pull them off course.”

—Introduction, *Dog Days*

The CLA’s attempts to work within the Progressive Miners of America in Southern

continued on page 11

Young Spartacus

Abolish the Student Debt! Free Quality Education for All!

Wall Street's For-Profit University Rip-Off

Years of education-funding cutbacks, skyrocketing tuition and the shredding of affirmative action programs have forced most working-class, poor and minority students out of access to community colleges and universities. For-profit universities have jumped into the breach, promising pie in the sky while delivering substandard education and debt bondage. With their tuition fees a whopping five to six times higher than those at community colleges and at least double those of four-year state universities, the for-profits have been big money makers on Wall Street. They particularly cashed in on the devastation following the 2008-09 financial crisis, preying on the growing millions desperate to find a job, for whom a college education is seen as the only way out.

Television, billboard and other extensive advertising for Phoenix, DeVry, ITT Technical and a plethora of other for-profit universities is aimed at the most vulnerable layers of society. Promising education and training for well-paying jobs, they particularly target those who have no options other than federal student loans, from which the for-profits rake in \$30 billion a year revenue.

A suit filed against Corinthian Colleges by California's attorney general, charging that the college lied about the success of its former students, uncovered internal documents describing its prime audience as "isolated," "impatient" individuals with "low self esteem" who have "few people in their lives who care about them." Geared particularly to single-parent families with incomes at or near the official poverty level, Corinthian—which includes Everest, Heald and WyoTech colleges—ran ads on the Jerry Springer and Maury Povich shows combined with high-pressure recruitment tactics.

Testifying before a Senate education committee, a former recruiter for ITT said she used and taught a process called the "pain funnel," where admissions officers would ask students increasingly probing questions about where their lives were going wrong. Another onetime for-profit recruiter reported that she was ordered to make 300 to 450 calls a day with instructions to "get to their pain" and "convince them that a college degree is going to solve all their problems." Once lured in with the promise of career courses (some of which were not even taught), the for-profits have students sign federal loan applications, leaving them mostly in the dark as to the amount of debt they are taking on. Moreover, it is virtually impossible to get out of student loan debt.

As a policy analyst on federal student loans, interviewed on a 2010 PBS *Frontline* documentary on for-profit universities, explained:

"It is the most collectible kind of debt there is. It is non-dischargeable in bankruptcy. They will garnish your wages. They will intercept your tax refunds. They will sue you in court...you become ineligible for federal employment. You become ineligible for any other kind of federal benefit. Increasingly, many states piggy-back those prohibitions."

In short, as he concluded, "it ruins you."

One of the few regulations curbing the for-profit colleges is a law mandating that no more than 90 percent (!) of college revenue can come from federal student loans. This has made military veterans, whose

out if they didn't make a payment on the spot. All of this has created huge wealth for the corporations running these colleges. According to a *Mother Jones* article "Screw U: How For-Profit Colleges Rip You Off" (31 January), ITT's revenue has "nearly doubled over the past seven years, closing in on \$1.3 billion last year."

As we wrote in "Students in Capitalist America: Huge Debt, No Jobs, No Future" (WV No. 989, 28 October 2011): "It is a measure of the decay in society that the only way for the majority of working class and poor to get a college education is to take on tens of thousands of dollars in loans, only to find themselves reduced to indentured servitude to pay back their financial usurers." Even those

have continued to cut funds for higher education to make up budget deficits. With public universities and community colleges stretched to the breaking point, the door was opened for the for-profit universities to step in, promising to fill the gap while in fact filling their pockets.

While imposing token fines and regulations aimed at curbing the "excesses" of the for-profits, the government has allowed them to continue more or less unmolested. Most recently, much has been made of Obama's proposal to impose a regulation to limit federal student aid for for-profit universities if more than 30 percent of their students default on their loans. In short, the yardstick is not providing education but limiting the costs to the government. Accepting that nearly a third of the students will spend their lives in debt peonage, the regulation allows for 8 percent of the wages and 20 percent of the disposable income of the lucky few who do graduate and find a job to go to repaying their "debt to society."

The former president of the for-profit college association cynically proclaimed that "we educate the students that traditional higher education has given up on." But he scored a point by observing that if the government wanted to help it could easily wipe out the student debt! Secretary of Education Arne Duncan shot back that this was the "wrong answer." While Obama laments with hypocritical concern the plight of students with massive debts and no job, the truth is the Democrats are complicit with keeping afloat the giant corporations that run the for-profits.

Quality education should be the right of all society, not a privilege for the few who can afford to pay for it. But under capitalism, the ruling class only invests in education for the working class and poor to the extent that they can expect returns on that investment in the form of profit. This was baldly explained by a former director of Phoenix University, the granddaddy of the for-profit colleges, who declared: "Listen, I'm happy that there are places in the world where people sit down and think. We need that. But that's very expensive, and not everybody can do that. And so for the vast majority of folks, who don't get that privilege, then I think it's a business."

We fight for free, quality, integrated education for all—from pre-K to a doctorate. To provide real access to higher education, we call for open admissions, free tuition and state-paid living stipends for all students as well as the nationalization of both the for-profit colleges and the old private universities. These measures must be made retroactive by canceling all student loan debt, both private and federal. We demand full remedial programs at the universities and an end to the "tracking" system in high schools. A country as wealthy as the United States could easily meet such demands. The problem is that the wealth and the power in this society lie in the hands of the capitalist class whose profits derive from the exploitation and immiseration of the many.

The Spartacist League and the Spartacus Youth Clubs are dedicated to building the revolutionary party that can lead the working class in the fight to wrest the wealth created by its labor out of the hands of the greedy capitalist rulers and use it to meeting the needs of the many. In a socialist America, education will not only be the right of all but will also be dedicated to benefiting all of humanity. ■



Students and other Occupy Wall Street activists protest student debt peonage, New York City, October 2011.

GI benefits are exempt from this regulation, a hot commodity for the for-profit universities. For many who enlisted to pay for an otherwise unobtainable education and then served as cannon fodder for U.S. imperialism's dirty wars and occupations abroad, the meager veterans' benefits are seen as a cash cow for Wall Street vultures at home. ITT came up with another "innovation" to make up its 10 percent shortfall in funding. That was to offer private loans at zero interest rates to new students. If not repaid within a year, the students were made to take on a new loan at up to 14.75 percent interest. A student missing any monthly payment would be pulled out of class and threatened with being kicked

who do graduate from the for-profit colleges often find that their degree is worth little more than the paper it is written on. One group of students studying nursing at Everest College was told they would get jobs paying \$25-\$35 an hour. Paying nearly \$30,000 for a 12-month program, the training these students received would be laughable if it wasn't so devastating for the students.

As one woman graduate told PBS: "I got my license in December of '09, and I've been on countless interviews. And they all ask if I've ever been in a hospital, and I would have to tell them we never set foot in a hospital, ever. We went to a museum of Scientology for our psychiatric rotation." A fellow graduate of the program added that they went to a day care for their pediatric rotation. Other students have completed their degrees only to find that they were invalid because the college was not accredited.

Capitalist Democrats Weep Crocodile Tears

Amidst the devastation of the 2008-09 economic crash, Obama declared that "every American will need to get more than a high school diploma," and "by 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world." In the intervening years, Obama's Democratic Party administration has continued the decades-long assault on K through 12 public education coupled with a union-busting offensive against teachers across the country. At the same time, states

Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste Forums

From World War I to Today 100 Years of Imperialist Barbarism

For Workers Revolution to Sweep Away the
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TORONTO

Saturday, Sept. 27, 7 p.m.

OISE

Room 3311

252 Bloor Street West
(St. George subway)

For information: (416) 593-4138
spartacan@on.aibn.com

VANCOUVER

Saturday, Oct. 4, 1:30 p.m.

Roundhouse Community Centre
Multimedia Room

181 Roundhouse Mews
(corner of Davie and Pacific)

For information: (604) 687-0353
trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com

Protest Witchhunt at University of Illinois!

Reinstate Steven Salaita, Opponent of Zionist Terror!

On September 11, the University of Illinois board of trustees upheld the firing last month of outspoken Palestinian American academic Steven Salaita. Slated to join the faculty at Urbana-Champaign as a tenured professor in the American Indian Studies program, Salaita became the target of a vicious Zionist witchhunt after he condemned Israel's relentless barrage of terror against the population of Gaza this summer. In defense of the embattled Palestinians, Salaita posted a series of tweets

thumb. During our subscription drive, *Workers Vanguard* teams from Chicago have met a number of students who defend Salaita because they are in solidarity with his defense of the Palestinians. "If they're going to deny this would-be professor to teach here," said a U of I junior, "what would come next?"

The administration's witchhunters are particularly incensed by Salaita's statement that he wished Zionist settlers in the West Bank "would go missing." In fact,

a position. In his academic career, Salaita has published half a dozen books, including *Anti-Arab Racism in the USA*, and numerous journal articles on Arab American literature, Palestine and Native American culture. Salaita is just the latest in a long list of faculty and students targeted by pro-Israel forces. Anti-Zionist writer Norman Finkelstein was hounded from his assistant professor position at DePaul University in 2007, shortly after a vicious campaign was incited against Columbia



Sanchez/Chicago Tribune

Professor Steven Salaita

the education system to serve bourgeois interests, including propagating bourgeois ideology and training the necessary administrative, technical and cultural personnel. The firing of Salaita illustrates how the administration enforces the political will of the bourgeoisie on campus. It also shows that, in academia as elsewhere, he who pays the piper calls the tune. A letter to Chancellor Wise from one business school alum who described himself as a "multiple 6-figure donor" with "quite a balance sheet," threatened to end the gravy train if Salaita joined the faculty. Shortly after, Salaita was out of a job. **Abolish the administration! For student/worker/teacher control of the universities!**

We defend Salaita, Massad, Finkelstein and other targets of such witchhunts despite whatever differences they may have with our Marxist worldview. Against the Zionists and all forms of Arab nationalism and religious fundamentalism, we emphasize that a just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where two peoples lay antagonistic claims to the same small piece of land, is not possible under capitalism. Every bourgeois "solution" either perpetuates the oppression of the Palestinians or envisions a reversal of the terms of oppression, denying national rights to the Israeli Jews. Our perspective is that of joint class struggle by Jewish and Arab workers, connected to working-class struggle to overthrow capitalist rule throughout the region. We fight for the establishment of a socialist federation of the Near East—the only way to guarantee the national rights of the region's myriad peoples. This perspective is integrally tied to the struggle for socialist revolution in the U.S., the belly of the imperialist beast. ■



Young Spartacus photos

Spartacus Youth Club (far left) attended rally against firing of Professor Salaita, U of I Urbana-Champaign, September 11.

such as "Who is left for Israel to kill? This is the logic of genocide." In response to pressure from some big-money donors, U of I chancellor Phyllis Wise then yanked Salaita's job offer—a blatant act of censorship on behalf of Israel's capitalist rulers and their U.S. imperialist patrons.

The U of I witchhunt has been met with protests from students, campus unions such as the Graduate Employees Organization and the American Association of University Professors. The Spartacist League and Spartacus Youth Club join in condemning the firing and demand that Salaita be reinstated. "The firing of Professor Salaita is the Israeli attack on Palestine coming to our campus," said a September 3 protest letter signed by 98 Jewish U of I students, faculty, staff and parents. In the weeks since his firing, nearly a dozen campus departments have voted no confidence in the chancellor. Close to 20,000 have signed a change.org petition protesting his termination, a petition we support. Thousands of academics have pledged to boycott speaking engagements at U of I.

Our defense of Salaita is linked to our forthright defense of the Palestinians, who have suffered more than six decades of brutal oppression, dispossession and dire poverty at the hands of the Israeli capitalist state. In the face of Israel's barbarity in Gaza, as Marxists we took a side militarily in defense of Hamas, which runs Gaza, without giving an iota of political support to that reactionary Islamic fundamentalist outfit. **Defend the Palestinian people!**

In condemning the latest attack on Gaza, Salaita has aimed his fire not only at the Zionist rulers and the U.S. and other Western imperialists, but also at Arab monarchs, the Islamic reactionaries of ISIS and the Palestinian Authority, which administers the West Bank under Israel's

the ever-expanding Zionist settlements in the West Bank have increasingly ghettoized the native Palestinian population, from the walls surrounding the territory to the "bypass roads" and the military zones that are off-limits to the Palestinians. Hundreds of thousands of settlers, backed up by troops, routinely terrorize Palestinian residents. We say: **All Israeli troops, settlers out of the West Bank and East Jerusalem!**

Chancellor Wise justified Salaita's firing on the ground that the use of profanity in his tweets violated academic "civility." This is pretty rich coming from a campus administration that long insisted on retaining its racist "Chief Illiniwek" sports mascot despite protests from Native American groups. The reality is that Salaita is a victim of politically biased censorship in defense of the Zionists and their backers in the American ruling class. As it has for decades, Israel continues to play a key role in securing U.S. imperialist interests in the Near East.

Key to the campaign against Salaita is the classic slander that any criticism of Israel equals anti-Jewish bigotry, or even support to "terrorism." In Salaita's defense, Michael Rothberg, head of the university's English department and director of its Initiative in Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies, wrote in an open letter to Wise: "The tweets that have been reproduced again and again in reports on this case are not expressions of antisemitism, but criticism of how charges of antisemitism are used to excuse otherwise inexcusable actions." As Salaita himself put it, his attacks are on "the discourses of Zionism that cheapen anti-Semitism by likening it to principled stands against state violence."

Salaita gave up a tenured teaching job at Virginia Tech after U of I offered him

University professor Joseph Massad, a prominent advocate of Palestinian rights.

Many of Salaita's defenders frame his case in terms of "academic freedom." In fact, the universities have never been the "ivory towers" of intellectual freedom they claim to be. Through campus administrations, the capitalist ruling class runs

Spartacus Youth Club Events

BAY AREA

Thursday, Sept. 25, 7:30 p.m.

Reconstruction, Its Defeat, and the Rise of U.S. Imperialism

SFSU, Cesar Chavez Student Center Room T-153

Information and readings: (510) 839-0851 • sycbayarea@fastmail.net

CHICAGO

Saturday, Sept. 27, 2 p.m.

ABCs of Communism

University of Illinois - Chicago Addams Hall, 2nd Floor, Room 200 830 S. Halsted St. (Take Blue Line to UIC-Halsted)

Information and readings: (312) 563-0441 • chicagosyc@sbcglobal.net

TORONTO

Thursday, October 9, 7 p.m.

Defend the Palestinians! For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!

University of Toronto Sidney Smith Hall, Room 2114 100 St. George Street

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

NEW YORK CITY

Tuesday, Sept. 30, 7 p.m.

For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution: A Marxist Analysis of Black Oppression

City College of New York NAC Rm. 1/209

138th St. and Amsterdam Avenue

Information and readings:

(212) 267-1025

nysl@tiac.net

VANCOUVER

Wednesday, October 15, 6:30 p.m.

The Struggle for Native Rights Marxism and the Aboriginal Question in Canada

University of British Columbia Irving Barber Learning Centre (IBLC) Room 315

Information and readings:

(604) 687-0353

trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com

Visit the ICL Website:
www.icl-fi.org

Poverty Wages...

(continued from page 1)

is that reforms are “winnable” through electoral campaigns; so long as you don’t sound too radical, you will get something concrete.

In fact, the Seattle ordinance came with a number of escape hatches. Crafted carefully, it contains such a conciliatory phase-in period that \$15 won’t actually be reached until between 2017 and 2021 depending on the size of the company. Accounting for the current rate of inflation, the minimum wage will be well below \$15 in today’s dollar terms by the end of the phase-ins. The ordinance that passed had been watered down to assuage the concerns of business elites and Democratic Party city council members, resulting in a bill that is even weaker than the one put forward by Mayor Murray’s advisory committee.

When SAlt is not engaging in inane hyperbole it does, at times, admit that the ordinance has more than a few loopholes. Among these are tip and health care credits that allow businesses to pay less for longer, and a lower wage for teenage workers. The wage increase doesn’t begin until April 2015 and from that point involves a two-year phase-in for big companies and up to a six-year phase-in for small companies, defined as any enterprise with fewer than 500 employees!

As a member of the mayor’s hand-picked advisory committee, Sawant was the one who recommended the phase-in for small businesses, with the goal of not appearing “extremist” to Seattle’s petty bourgeoisie. During the final vote, Sawant tried to dodge some of the concessions by putting forward a series of amendments. But after all were rejected, she touted the compromise as a “victory.” San Francisco’s mayor, the liberal Democrat Ed Lee, has proposed a \$15-an-hour ballot measure that would take effect faster and without the same exceptions—no weak-kneed “socialist” conciliator he.

Reformists of SAlt’s ilk are fond of declaring their intent to drive the liberals and Democrats to the left. In actuality, the only motion these social democrats display in their quest for a “reasonable” compromise with the powers that be is to the right. With SAlt now taking its “15 Now” campaign nationwide, these inveterate reformists undoubtedly went gaga when on Labor Day President Obama stated: “Until we’ve got a Congress that cares about raising working folks’ wages, it’s up to the rest of us to make it happen.”

By SAlt’s lights, the 15 Now campaign is the modern-day version of the great class battles of the 1930s, presented as the “reflection of what workers and the labor movement have won on the streets.” This



Chicago mayor Rahm Emanuel (above on right) with fellow Democrats Illinois governor Pat Quinn (on left) and Vice President Joe Biden posing as friends of labor, August 25. Emanuel provoked 2012 teachers strike (right) by slashing jobs, pay and conditions.

is to equate a bake sale with a general strike. From the get-go, the whole exercise in Seattle was about legislative wheeling and dealing. The 15 Now coalition was formed in mid January, two months after the elections. Its members then held meetings and rallies to popularize the demand, all carefully calibrated not to rock the boat or embarrass their ally in the mayor’s office. The coalition levied a “threat” to gather signatures for an alternate “stronger” ballot proposal, but dumped even that idea after the weaker measure passed.

In their 30 June article “The Fight Against Inequality Reaches New Heights” (socialistalternative.org), SAlt details 15

closer in the orbit of the Democratic Party, which operates to suppress labor struggle through the agency of the union bureaucracy. With Sawant declaring that “the \$15 demand marks a decisive challenge to capitalism,” one can only wonder why many bourgeois politicians see no problem in supporting it.

Abolish the Wage System!

Since long ago, the labor tops have essentially renounced the class-struggle methods that actually built the unions, such as picket lines that bring business to a grinding halt and plant occupations. As a consequence of this recipe for defeat,



Seattle, 19 December 2013: Mayor Ed Murray announces minimum-wage advisory committee including business leaders and Socialist Alternative’s Kshama Sawant (second from left).

Now’s actual strategy: petitions, neighborhood action committees and backing candidates who make a pretense of running independently of the Democrats (which for them has always included those of the small-time capitalist Green Party). What it calls “democratic, visible, grass-roots tactics” are, in plainer language, the permissible forms of begging for crumbs from so-called friends of labor in the Democratic Party.

SAlt is peddling the snake oil that such activity will bring the “resurgence of the workers’ movement.” In reality, revitalizing labor will require breaking through the legal constraints of bourgeois rule. SAlt, however, would have workers pulled

unionized workers have suffered one setback after another while the masses of non-union workers fall into further destitution. The union misleaders devote little energy to organizing the unorganized, and having voluntarily disarmed, they are frequently defeated when they do make an effort.

Today, Mary Kay Henry, president of the SEIU service workers union, expresses support to fast-food workers who want to unionize, without committing the SEIU to doing so. On the ground, the SEIU has pursued “alternate” strategies like boycotts and community advocacy peppered with mini-rallies and civil disobedience by the workers, which no doubt have drawn attention to their plight. But these workers have no defense against possible employer repercussions. And what the labor bureaucrats do not say is that it will take shutting down the outlets through strike action to secure real gains.

In line with their legalistic pursuits, the sights of the SEIU tops are entirely set on the National Labor Relations Board issuing a favorable ruling against McDonald’s, which ought to be considered a joint employer rather than an antihill of thousands of franchises. Whatever the ruling, Henry & Co. have given no indication that they are going to do anything more to bring these workers into the union.

The organization of the atomized fast-food workforce poses the need to mobilize the power of unionized workers along the supply lines of the fast-food chains, where once-strong union concentrations, such as in trucking and meatpacking, have been eroded by the craven policies of the union bureaucrats. A hard struggle to organize fast-food workers would rapidly fuel a resurgence of union strength in those industries.

The SEIU tops are now using the “\$15” rhetoric to leverage the Democratic Party into supporting higher minimum wages as a substitute for waging a fight to



Reuters

extract higher pay from the bosses. In a September 5 interview with *Democracy Now!*, Henry stated that workers “were incredibly thrilled that the president of the United States is saying that what they’re doing makes complete sense.” After sitting back in the face of the wage-slashing, anti-union onslaughts accompanying the Great Recession, labor misleaders look to the very forces—the president, Congress and state and city legislatures—that were responsible for these attacks on workers, especially unionized teachers.

SAlt criticizes the “business union approach” of the union bureaucrats and begrudgingly admits that in order to organize on a mass scale there would “likely” need to be “mass strike action.” But their conclusion is that the role of strikes today is to simply “back up fights for increased wages on the legislative plane.” In making a fetish of electoral politics, SAlt is at one with the labor statesmen.

Sawant’s actions belie even this failed attempt to sound militant. One of the proposed 15 Now ballot initiatives that she had pushed included an opt-out clause exempting HERE hotel workers from the new minimum wage. The reason: HERE officials wanted the option of negotiating lower wages to preserve health benefits, with one spokesman invoking the union’s supposed “unique relationship with the boss.” A similar exemption for unionized workforces was included in the \$15/hour measure passed last November in the nearby suburb of SeaTac, penned by the sellout bureaucrats themselves. These exemptions are an affirmation by the union tops that they will not challenge the wretched compensation they have negotiated in subservience to employer demands.

Reformists like those in SAlt have always claimed that the way forward is to look for “realistic” solutions in the here and now, i.e., liberal panaceas. The 15 Now campaign is no different. But any reform wrested from the capitalists today will be easy pickings tomorrow in the absence of the mobilization of the working class to defend and extend its gains.

The goal of revolutionary Marxists is to link the daily struggles for immediate demands to the need to abolish the entire capitalist system of wage slavery that keeps the masses in a state of perpetual want. We call for jobs for all through shortening the workweek at no loss in pay, for fully indexing wages to inflation and for a massive program of public works to rebuild the country’s crumbling infrastructure. Such demands will not be delivered through liberal pressure politics.

In *Value, Price and Profit* (1865), Karl Marx makes the point that the working class must fight the encroachments of the capitalist system or be “degraded to one level mass of broken wretches past salvation.” He goes on to emphasize that anything short of the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism would be merely “applying palliatives, not curing the malady.” Workers need to understand that: “Instead of the conservative motto, ‘A fair day’s wage for a fair day’s work!’ they ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword, ‘Abolition of the wages system!’” It is necessary to forge the revolutionary internationalist proletarian party of socialist revolution, the only force that will carry that banner with conviction. ■

SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S.

Local Directory and Public Offices

Web site: www.icl-fi.org • E-mail address: vanguard@tiac.net

National Office: Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116, (212) 732-7860

Chicago

Box 6441, Main PO, Chicago, IL 60680, (312) 563-0441
chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net
Public Office: 1st Sat. of every month, 2-5 p.m., and by appointment, 222 S. Morgan (Buzzer 23)

Los Angeles

Box 29574, Los Feliz Sta., Los Angeles, CA 90029, (213) 380-8239
slsycla@sbcglobal.net
Public Office: Sat. 2-5 p.m., 3806 Beverly Blvd., Room 215

New York

Box 3381, Church St. Sta., New York, NY 10008, (212) 267-1025
nysl@tiac.net
Public Office: 1st Sat. of every month, 1-4 p.m., and by appointment, 299 Broadway, Suite 318, Manhattan

Oakland

Box 29497, Oakland, CA 94604, (510) 839-0851
slbayarea@fastmail.net
Public Office: Sat. 1-4 p.m., 1904 Franklin (Buzzer #407)

TROTSKYIST LEAGUE OF CANADA/LIGUE TROTSKYSTE DU CANADA

Montréal CP 83 Succ. Place-d'Armes, Montréal, QC H2Y 3E9, (514) 728-7578
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10

WORKERS VANGUARD

Abortion...

(continued from page 12)

stigma.” Clearly, the bourgeois feminists were irked that Stop Patriarchy’s rhetoric and tactics might antagonize the good people of Texas and maybe even cost Wendy Davis and other of their “allies” votes in November.

The feminists have preached the same impotent reliance on the Democrats and “softly, softly” incremental change for decades. In the early 1990s, when Operation Rescue was blockading abortion clinics, abortion-rights activists repeatedly mobilized in mass clinic defense. Those militant actions were consciously demobilized by NOW and NARAL, which actively worked with the cops to exclude leftists and to enforce “non-violence” pledges for clinic defenders. After 12 years of Reagan/Bush reaction, the bourgeois feminists saw the Democratic Clinton administration as their chance to gain some clout and did not want any reds rocking the boat.

One scheme was to pressure the Democrats to implement so-called buffer-zone laws to keep the Operation Rescue terrorists away from the clinics. The Supreme Court struck down the Massachusetts variant of such laws in June. The ruling was welcomed by anti-abortion bigots, who see it as a godsend that opens the door to heightened harassment of patients and clinic workers. A month later, the

All Families Healthcare, one of only four abortion clinics in Montana, was severely vandalized on night of March 3, forcing it to close.

Susan Cahill



state’s governor signed a new buffer-zone law taking account of the Court’s objections. We have always opposed such laws because they substitute reliance on the capitalist state for militant clinic defense. As we warned, “such laws will be used to bust strikes and quash political protests by leftists, workers and minorities” (WV No. 580, 16 July 1993) and, in fact, from the start they were used to arrest clinic defenders along with anti-abortion bigots.

The American feminist establishment is the voice of bourgeois and well-off petty-bourgeois women whose only quarrel with capitalist society is that it denies them full access to the boys’ club of ruling-class power. As noted in a recent article on prominent German socialist Clara Zetkin in our theoretical journal *Spartacist* (No. 64,

Summer 2014): “Feminists seek to change society, and thus the position of women, by *changing social relations within the existing capitalist society*. We understand that to liberate the exploited and oppressed, you have to *change the class relationships to the means of production*, that is, abolish private property altogether.” In essence, that is the difference between reform and revolution.

For Women’s Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

Several of the Stop Patriarchy activists were arrested at the protests, and we demand that any charges pending be dropped. But for all their “in your face” tactics and “revolutionary” phrasemongering, the Maoists of the RCP have no program at all for liberating women. The freedom ride kicked off with a protest at the Republican Party office in Houston and ended with a series of actions outside Republican governor Rick Perry’s mansion. The aim of this activity, according to a Stop Patriarchy statement published in the *Austin Statesman* (4 August) that disappears the Democrats, was “to change hearts and enlighten minds.” Such a “fight the right” focus in the thick of election season amounts to backhanded support to the other party of capitalist exploitation and oppression.

The oppression of women is rooted in the institution of the family, a vehicle for the inheritance of private property for the ruling class and the means of reproduction of labor to be exploited. Along with religion, the nuclear family also plays a key role in helping to regiment the popu-

lation and instill social conservatism. The liberation of women can only be realized with the overthrow of the capitalist order, which would lay the basis for replacing the stultifying nuclear family through socialization of housework and childcare in collective institutions. The one force, based on its role in production, that has the numbers, social power and class interest to carry out this revolutionary transformation of society is the working class.

Virulently hostile to a revolutionary proletarian perspective, the opportunistic RCP seeks out other class forces to hitch its wagon to. In recent years, the RCP and Stop Patriarchy have campaigned to “End Pornography,” aping the anti-sex feminists who argue that pornographic images cause rape, murder and other violent crimes against women. And the arbiter of what constitutes porn is none other than the RCP’s cult leader Bob Avakian, who also has creepily precise ideas about what sexual practices and even what underwear (no thongs!) are acceptable. Sex should be a purely private matter, subject only to the mutual consent of the participants. Neither the state, the churches nor Chairman Bob should have any say over what people look at or do in the bedroom.

The RCP’s reactionary anti-porn campaign buys into the very bourgeois “family values” that the anti-abortionists revel in. Those values have served as a battering ram for generalized social and political reaction. The war on abortion rights is part of the bipartisan assault on the rights and living conditions of working people—from union-busting and mass layoffs to skyrocketing medical costs and the shredding of what is left of the social safety net.

Nonetheless, many working people are opposed to abortion, one example of the backward consciousness inculcated by the capitalist rulers through the church pulpits, bourgeois media and education system. What is needed is a revolutionary party to make the working class conscious of the need to fight independently of the class enemy for its own interests as well as those of women and all the oppressed, not least for free, quality health care for all, including abortion on demand, and 24-hour childcare. Capitalism is unable to satisfy even the most basic needs of the working masses and must be swept into the dustbin of history. ■



WV Photo

Spartacists join in defense of abortion clinic against Operation Rescue terrorists, San Mateo, California, July 1993.

Teamsters...

(continued from page 7)

Illinois were stymied precisely due to the lack of party branches and fractions, ensuring that its isolated supporters in the area remained weak reeds. Ignoring fraction discipline was the charge against B.J. Field, expelled from the CLA in the middle of the NYC hotel strike.

The necessity of a fraction was fully understood by the Minneapolis branch. According to Farrell Dobbs, “Within the union the party fraction functioned as a cohesive unit, harmoniously united in carrying out party policy. Intimate contact was maintained between the fraction and the local party branch.” Ray Dunne was the fraction head, even though he had been fired from the industry for his political activities in 1933 and had no standing to be a member of the union. Dobbs describes how the fraction implemented crucial decisions made by the CLA at each step of the struggle. In this regard, his narrative is far stronger than that of *Revolutionary Teamsters*.

Cannon and Federal Mediators

As is to be expected in a work that grew out of research for a biography of Cannon, Palmer focuses heavily on the role of Cannon himself. He reasonably posits Cannon as the author of the “dere emily” letters that were a regular feature of the *Organizer*. Chronicling with cornball humor and purposeful misspelling the awakening class consciousness of Mike, a fictional striker straight off the farm writing to his sweetheart back home, these “Lake Wobegon” missives may have been effec-

tive and humorous at the time, but.... Let’s just say Cannon would be grateful no one has yet sought to include them in a book of his writings, unlike, e.g., “Spilling the Dirt—A Bughouse Fable,” a satire of the anti-communist hysteria dominating strike coverage in the bourgeois press, written for the *Organizer* and later reprinted in *Notebook of an Agitator* (1958).

Cannon was immediately incorporated into the CLA strike leadership team upon his arrival in Minneapolis. Palmer draws special attention to his contributions as regards the federal mediators and the handling of Governor Olson. Especially after the experience of the NYC hotel strike, there can be no doubt that Cannon had plenty to do with tactics to counter the “wily artifices and tricks” of government mediators in July-August. As he later wrote, “Unlike stupid sectarians, we didn’t ignore them. Sometimes we would initiate discussions. But we didn’t let them use us, and we didn’t trust them for one moment. Our general strategy in the strike was to fight it out.”

Palmer implies that if Cannon had been on site earlier to provide “input,” the union could have struck a harder bargain in the May settlement and avoided the ambiguous formulation Olson proposed on the inside warehouse workers. His corollary is that the Minneapolis CLAers were much more susceptible to government deception, and Palmer insists: “There is definitely evidence that Dobbs and others seemed to rely, at times, rather naïvely on Olson’s assurances.” But Palmer only cites post-strike testimony by Dobbs before the Regional Labor Board, where he would naturally have sought to use Olson’s authority to bolster the union’s

position. Such evidence is not convincing. Dobbs wasn’t acting on his own—he was the new boy in a party fraction that included plenty of Marxist capacity.

By late May, the strike had reached a pivotal point. The union had beaten back the local police, prodding the bosses to bray for the governor to call out the National Guard. Olson had called up the state troops but not deployed them, preferring first to try to force a deal. Even before the settlement was announced, the *Militant* warned:

“The swift developments of the strike are putting the Governor on the spot. Whether or not to call out the Militia—he can’t decide. No reliance can be put upon the Governor or the Labor Board to settle anything favorably for the workers. This is tirelessly explained by the militant leadership of the strike.” —“Minneapolis Shows the Way,” *Militant*, 26 May 1934

There was careful calculation involved in the decision to accept the compromise rather than face all-out confrontation with the National Guard. In the pages of the *Militant*, Cannon scoffed at the CP and its spokesman Bill Dunne (the senior brother and the only one who had remained within the Stalinist ranks) for attacking the limited victory as a “sell-out” because it stopped short of attempting to bring down Olson. This charge was an expression of the ultraleft adventurism typical of the CP during its 1928-34 “Third Period.”

But Cannon also frankly acknowledged the limits of the deal, describing the union’s agreement to set wage rates and settle seniority disputes through a joint union-employer arbitration board as “a serious concession which the union officials felt it necessary to make under

the circumstances in order to secure the recognition of the union and consolidate it in the coming period.” Nonetheless, Palmer writes:

“Dunne and the Communist Party did highlight some shortcomings of the Trotskyist leadership.... Stronger stands could have been taken against Olson, his harnessed use of the National Guard and his duplicitous role in the obvious ambiguities inherent in the settlement, including on the nature of arbitration.”

This concession to Stalinist Third Period sour grapes hardly seems merited.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

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WORKERS VANGUARD

Anti-Woman Crusade Marches On For Free Abortion Available to All!

In the first half of this year, state governments passed 21 restrictions on women's right to abortion, adding to the more than 200 such restrictions imposed between 2011 and 2013, more than in the entire previous decade. Among them are waiting periods (including a just-instituted 72-hour wait in Missouri), parental consent requirements, bans on consultations with doctors over the phone and limits on coverage of abortion in health insurance plans. With Republican state legislators spearheading the attacks on abortion, bourgeois feminists are once again trying to corral supporters of abortion rights into voting for the Democrats in the mid-term elections. But in office, the Democrats themselves imbibe "family values" moralism and have helped set the stage for the reactionary onslaught against women's rights.

The anti-abortion forces have shifted tactics of late, pushing laws known as Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers (TRAP) that aim to erect insurmountable barriers to keeping abortion clinics open. These tactics have been so successful that the anti-abortion terrorists of Operation Rescue brag that a record 87 surgical abortion clinics closed in 2013, 12 percent of the national total. Some of these laws force clinics to expand procedure rooms, widen hallways to match ambulatory surgical centers and institute other medically useless but hugely expensive building upgrades. Planned Parenthood had to spend over \$750,000 to upgrade their clinics in Pennsylvania to comply with one such law. For smaller providers, such costs are prohibitive and many are forced to shut down.

Other laws, now on the books in 20 states, compel abortion providers to have an official relationship with a local hospital. For many clinics this is impossible; religious-run hospitals refuse to deal with them and for-profit hospitals see no money to be made off them. In Ohio, after a new anti-abortion law went into effect last year, six of the state's 14 abortion clinics closed, in multiple cases because they were unable to obtain transfer agreements with local hospitals. The remaining clinics are in limbo since the state has not renewed their expired licenses.

In late July, a federal appeals court blocked a Mississippi law that would have closed the state's last abortion clinic as its doctors were unable to obtain admitting privileges at local hospitals. The ruling wasn't that the law per se was too restrictive, but only that having *no* in-state abortion clinics would place an undue burden on other states to meet Mississippi women's right to abortion under *Roe v. Wade*. The rights supposedly enshrined in *Roe v. Wade* are thus reduced to the right to have one abortion clinic in an entire state.

The Democrats and bourgeois feminists seek to limit the struggle for abortion rights to a sanitized electoral movement that does not go beyond defense of *Roe v. Wade*. They represent the concerns of middle-class and bourgeois women, who can afford to pay and don't want their "right to choose" infringed. But for poor and working-class



Austin: Opponents and supporters of anti-abortion HB2 rally outside Texas Capitol shortly before bill's passage in July 2013.

women, "choice" doesn't amount to much if you don't have the money for the procedure, insurance won't cover it and you have to travel a long distance because the local clinic has been shut down. And without access to abortion, an unexpected pregnancy can be devastating, with all the extra costs of raising a child and the added challenges to holding down a job.

In fact, *Roe v. Wade* falls far short of granting a blanket right to abortion. The ruling allows states to regulate abortions in the interests of women's health or those of the fetus at later stages of pregnancy. The bible-thumpers have driven a horse and cart through these loopholes, using the pretext of protecting women's health to close down clinic after clinic.

While abortion should be merely a question of basic health care, the anti-women bigots view it as a threat to the patriarchal family, the main source of women's oppression and a key prop of capitalist class rule. Unrestricted access to abortion and contraception is essential for all women to exercise control over whether and when they will have children. There is an urgent need for mass struggle to defend abortion rights. As Marxists, we fight for *free abortion on demand* as part of a system of quality health care for all that is free at the point of delivery.

Texas, Wendy Davis and the Democrats

After an omnibus anti-abortion law known as HB2—a veritable checklist of TRAP restrictions and more—was passed in Texas last summer, the number of the state's abortion clinics was halved to around 20. A requirement that abortion clinics meet the standards of ambulatory surgical centers was due to go into effect on September 1, which would have further reduced the number to seven. While that section of the law was struck down by a federal judge on August 29, the state is appealing the ruling. The judge also ruled that two shuttered clinics be allowed to reopen because the closures had left women in vast areas of South and West

Texas unable to access abortion services.

In the legislative debate over HB2 last year, Democratic state senator Wendy Davis was catapulted into the national limelight by attempting to block the bill with an 11-hour filibuster. She has now parlayed that prominence into a campaign for Texas governor. On her campaign website, the widely touted "abortion-rights champion" Davis presents the issue simply as "Fighting Against Closure of Women's Health Centers," taking pains not to mention the "A" word to avoid offense. Since her filibuster, Davis has made it clear that she supports state bans on late-term abortions with limited exceptions. Such bans are the thin edge of the wedge in the wholesale assault on abortion rights.

With the Republican zealots around, it does not take much for the Democrats to pose as allies of women. But, even though the Republicans may forthrightly prefer to keep women "barefoot and pregnant," the Democratic Party—the other party of U.S. capitalist rule—also panders to religious reaction. A case in point was when Pres-

ident Barack Obama attempted to reverse the FDA's approval of over-the-counter access to "Plan B" contraception for teens. In 2010, Obama signed an executive order to ensure that federal funds from his signature health care legislation "are not used for abortion services." By that law, every state insurance exchange must offer a plan that *excludes* abortion. Women who want abortion coverage have to pay a surcharge.

While the Democrats often claim that their hands are tied by Republican control of one or another branch of government, that's just an excuse to cover for their complicity in the rollback of abortion rights. For example, the Hyde Amendment banning federal funding for abortions has been renewed every year since the time of the Democratic Carter administration regardless of which party controlled Congress or the White House. By now it should be obvious to all but the willfully blind that reliance on the Democrats is no way to defend abortion rights.

Feminist Redbaiting Alive and Well

At the end of July, the Stop Patriarchy group launched an "Abortion Rights Freedom Ride" through Texas, calling for "abortion on demand and without apology." The "freedom ride" consisted of a series of "people's hearings" and protests mainly directed at Republican politicians. Stop Patriarchy, which the Maoist Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) initiated, was met with a campaign of vicious redbaiting by liberals and feminists.

The group Texans For Reproductive Justice was set up in opposition to Stop Patriarchy, stating: "We believe that Stop Patriarchy's hyperbolic and confrontational style puts the most vulnerable Texans in danger, and confuses and ostracizes those who would be our allies." Heather Busby, executive director of NARAL Pro-Choice Texas, said: "You don't have just one protest and affect change; you're not going to have a 'revolution' over abortion rights. You have to change the culture and reduce

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June 28: Planned Parenthood volunteer protects Boston clinic from anti-abortion bigots emboldened by Supreme Court striking down Massachusetts buffer-zone law.