

## Down With U.S. War Against ISIS!



# Syria/Iraq: Kurdish Nationalists Serve U.S. Imperialism

In his press conference the day after the midterm elections, President Barack Obama stated that he would seek Congressional authorization for his war against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, three months after the U.S. imperialists started their bombing campaign against those reactionary Islamists. Two days later came the announcement that 1,500 American troops would soon be sent to Iraq, doubling the number of military “advisers” there. The insistence by the White House that there will be no U.S. “boots on the ground” to carry out the war against ISIS is sounding thinner by the day.

For the moment, the Obama administration continues to rely on bombing attacks and local proxies on the ground. In the battle for the predominantly Kurdish city of Kobani in northern Syria, the U.S. has carried out airstrikes against ISIS and dropped arms and other supplies to fighters, mainly from the People’s Protection Committees (YPG). The YPG—the military wing of the Democratic Union Party (PYD), which is allied to the nationalist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) based in Turkey—is acting as both ground troops and spotters for the U.S. imperialists. YPG spokesman Polat Can described how a member of his organization in the joint operation command center transmits the coordinates for bomb attacks provided by YPG forces on site (civiroglu.net, 14 October).

The acceleration of U.S. “mission creep” in Iraq and Syria underscores the need for class-conscious workers everywhere, particularly in the U.S., to oppose the war against ISIS and all other imperialist depredations. Cynically carried out in the name of humanitarian assistance to the Yazidis, the Syrian Kurds and other victims of the ISIS cutthroats, the imperialist onslaught is aimed at reinforcing the U.S. hold over the Near East. The

**Airstrike on Syrian city of Kobani, October 29. Kurdish forces on the ground are acting as spotters for U.S. imperialist air assault.**

U.S.-led “coalition” hodgepodge includes Saudi Arabia and Qatar, which have been among the main financial backers of ISIS, as well as other Persian Gulf monarchies. The public beheadings by ISIS shocked Americans, feeding into support for the bombing campaign. Not as publicized in the U.S. capitalist media are the numerous beheadings carried out by Washington’s Saudi allies, who execute people convicted of homosexuality, adultery, blasphemy, apostasy and sorcery.

In Kobani, the PKK-allied forces have tied the fortunes of the oppressed Kurdish population to U.S. imperialism’s war against ISIS. They are joined in this effort by Iraqi government forces and the Kurdish *pesh merga* of northern Iraq, who are conducting joint military operations with the U.S., just as they did during the American occupation of Iraq. As we stated last issue, “The fact that all these forces are ‘boots on the ground’ for imperialist intervention means that revolutionary Marxists have a military side with ISIS when it targets the imperialists and their proxies” (WV No. 1055, 31 October).

We are implacable opponents of the ultra-reactionary political and social program of ISIS, and we condemn communal atrocities on all sides. Prior to the U.S. military intervention, we insisted that the international proletariat must take no side in the raft of interethnic and inter-communal conflicts in the region, which are in no small part the legacy of imperialist subjugation. Where the working class must take a side is in opposition to the imperialists and their lackeys in Iraq and Syria.

Our military side with ISIS against the U.S.-led coalition and its local adjuncts today flows from our understanding that it is the imperialists who are the main enemy of the working people in the U.S. and the Near East. In its quest for profit and domination, the U.S. ruling class has slaughtered millions upon millions and constantly wreaked havoc around the

world. In other circumstances, ISIS might well act as an agency of the imperialists, as its forebears did in the CIA-backed *mujahedin* war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. More recently, U.S. backing for the opposition to Syria’s Assad regime in the early part of that country’s civil war gave much encouragement to Islamic fundamentalist forces, including what would become ISIS.

Laying the cards on the table, a *New York Times* (23 October) editorial titled “Why Kobani Must Be Saved” noted that the Kurdish town, “once dismissed as inconsequential by American commanders,” had become a test of the Obama administration’s strategy of airstrikes combined with reliance on local ground forces. “A setback in Kobani,” the *Times* declared, “would show the fragility of the American plan and hand the Islamic State an important victory.”

From the point of view of the international proletariat, a defeat of U.S.-backed

forces in Kobani could throw a monkey wrench into imperialist designs for the region. It could also promote opposition domestically, where despite the uptick in support for the anti-ISIS campaign working people remain war-weary. Ground down by years of economic crisis, with a “recovery” that has overwhelmingly benefited the rich, much of the American population is distrustful of and disaffected from the government, including over its shredding of the right to privacy and other democratic rights under the rubric of the “war on terror.” We Marxists aim to turn such disillusionment and anger into *class struggle against the capitalist rulers at home*. It is through such struggle that the proletariat must be won to the program of socialist revolution to destroy the imperialist beast from within.

### Kurdish Nationalists’ Ties to Imperialism

The PKK leadership’s current alliance with the U.S. is only the latest in a long history of maneuvers by bourgeois and

*continued on page 10*

**June 24: U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry with Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani in Erbil, a week after White House started dispatching troops back into Iraq.**



# Defend Boston School Bus Union Leaders!

On November 24, Boston school bus union leader Stevan Kirschbaum will face trial on bogus felony charges of assault and battery with a dangerous weapon, as well as trespassing. This blatant attempt at a frame-up by state authorities acting at the behest of the employer, Veolia Transportation, recently renamed Transdev, is part of a concerted effort to break the back of the drivers' union, United Steel Workers (USW) Local 8751. Ever since the school district tapped it to start operating the bus system in July 2013, Transdev has lived up to its reputation and embarked on a union-busting campaign, from imposing new work rules and harsh discipline to cheating drivers out of pay. Now the company wants to write these new terms of exploitation into the union contract. We demand: Drop the charges against Kirschbaum!

Transdev's assault on the union came to a head on October 8 last year when management refused to meet with Local 8751 reps and locked out the workers, who responded with pickets at all four bus yards. After bringing in police to help clear the yards, management agreed to sit down with the union. The next day, with drivers back on their routes, Transdev refused to budge in those talks. In retaliation for the brief job action, it then moved to weaken the union by firing Local 8751 grievance committee chairman Kirschbaum, vice president Steve Gillis, recording secretary Andre Fran-



October 6: Boston school bus union leader Stevan Kirschbaum addresses rally after drivers and supporters packed courtroom for his hearing.

cois and shop steward Garry Murchison. A fifth worker, steward Richard Lynch, was suspended but not fired. Reinstate the school bus drivers!

In an act of solidarity with their victimized brothers, Local 8751 members elected Kirschbaum and the other fired workers to the union committee negotiating a new

contract with Transdev. At the conclusion of a union rally at the Freeport bus yard on the day the contract expired, June 30, the workers and their supporters went to the break room for a briefing on the contract battle. When a member of management tried to block the doorway with a table, it was allegedly shoved against her legs. This supposed assault with a "dangerous weapon" is what the Boston prosecutor is now trying to pin on Kirschbaum.

Hundreds of the heavily Haitian and Cape Verdean drivers in Local 8751 and their supporters packed a Dorchester courtroom for Kirschbaum's pre-trial hearing on October 6, at which two charges (breaking and entering and destruction of property) were dismissed. Importantly, a number of other unions in Boston and beyond have expressed support for the "School Bus 5," with some of these union members turning out to the court. The attacks on the poorly paid school bus drivers are representative of what the bosses have served up to labor across the country, not least in public education. The government agency overseeing the Philadelphia schools moved to junk the teachers' contract last month; unionized school bus drivers and matrons in New York City were stripped of job protections, provoking a bitter strike in 2013 that was sold out after one month. Kirschbaum's supporters, including the Workers World Party (WWP), are calling to pack the courtroom again on November 24. An injury to one is an injury to all!

Standing behind Transdev, the school board and city officials are gunning for Local 8751. Early last year, shortly before giving that employer control over its bus fleet, Boston Public Schools scrapped the last remnants of a busing plan first imposed in 1974 under a federal court desegregation order. The racist contempt that the city rulers have for the membership of Local 8751 is matched only by

their animus toward the students in the public schools, a full 75 percent of whom are black or Latino.

In the name of cost savings, the notion of busing kids across town to achieve integration is entirely out the window, and with it the jobs of the bus drivers, whose union was forged in the struggles to integrate Boston public schools four decades ago. School bus service was ended earlier this year for eighth-graders, who were given MBTA transit passes instead, with the school board planning to extend this program to sixth- and seventh-graders. The local NAACP president denounced the cutback in bus service, expressing fears that it "will only serve to further separate our children into racially isolated schools as families opt to keep their students close to home rather than send them on the T" (*Boston Globe*, 18 June). Here is a graphic example of how labor rights and black rights are bound together.

The 1974 busing plan was effectively killed long ago by the one-two punch of howling racists in the streets and, later, liberals in Congress who made certain that black youth were not bused to the comparatively privileged suburban schools (see article in *WV* No. 921, 26 September 2008). The Spartacist League actively intervened in the Boston busing crisis, agitating for mass, integrated labor/black defense guards to protect the black children. We also called for low-rent, racially integrated public housing; for quality, integrated education for all and for the implementation of the minimal measure of busing and its extension to the suburbs. The WWP, among other reformist left groups, channeled the fight to defend busing into dead-end appeals to black Democratic Party politicians.

The labor officialdom's embrace of the Democratic Party, which no less than the Republicans is a party of the capitalist class enemy, has paved the way to the wholesale destruction of unionized jobs nationwide. Boston mayor Martin J. Walsh, a former head of the city's Building and Construction Trades Council elected last year with heavy union support, alibied the firings of the school bus union leaders as a "private matter." Other Democratic politicians, most prominently black city councilman Charles Yancey, have denounced the firings. But what all these Democrats have in common is an aversion for even the slightest whiff of working-class struggle, expressed in their condemnations of Local 8751's pickets last October 8. Revitalizing the unions as fighting organizations against the bosses must proceed independently from and in opposition to the Democrats.

The Partisan Defense Committee has written to the Suffolk County D.A. protesting the prosecution of Stevan Kirschbaum and has contributed to his defense fund. We encourage *WV* readers to do likewise. Donations can be sent to Friends of the School Bus 5, P.O. Box 141, Stoughton, MA 02072 or online at [tinyurl.com/schoolbus4](http://tinyurl.com/schoolbus4). ■

## Standing Against Imperialist Aggression

*Military setbacks for the imperialist powers, whether governed by fascist or democratic regimes, are in the interests of the world's working class and oppressed. When Mussolini's Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935, Leon Trotsky condemned James Maxton and other leaders of the British Independent Labour Party who had adopted a neutral attitude to the conflict on the grounds that both sides were despotic. While Ethiopia*



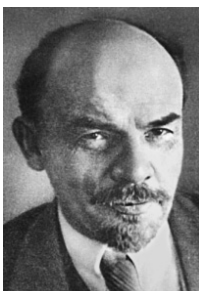
TROTSKY

*under the Negus (emperor) Haile Selassie was a cruelly oppressive society—one of the world's last bastions of chattel slavery—revolutionary Marxists sided with that country against Italy because the latter was imperialist.*

Maxton and the others opine that the Italo-Ethiopian war is "a conflict between two rival dictators." To these politicians it appears that this fact relieves the proletariat of the duty of making a choice between two dictators. They thus define the character of the war by the political *form* of the state, in the course of which they themselves regard this political form in a quite superficial and purely descriptive manner, without taking into consideration the social foundations of both "dictatorships." A dictator can also play a very progressive role in history; for example, Oliver Cromwell, Robespierre, etc. On the other hand, right in the midst of the English democracy Lloyd George exercised a highly reactionary dictatorship during the war. Should a dictator place himself at the head of the next uprising of the Indian people in order to smash the British yoke—would Maxton then refuse this dictator his support? Yes or no? If not, why does he refuse his support to the Ethiopian "dictator" who is attempting to cast off the Italian yoke?

If Mussolini triumphs, it means the reinforcement of fascism, the strengthening of imperialism, and the discouragement of the colonial peoples in Africa and elsewhere. The victory of the Negus, however, would mean a mighty blow not only at Italian imperialism but at imperialism as a whole, and would lend a powerful impulsion to the rebellious forces of the oppressed peoples. One must really be completely blind not to see this.

—Leon Trotsky, "On Dictators and the Heights of Oslo" (April 1936)



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# **Pennsylvania Adopts Prisoner Gag Law to Silence Mumia Abu-Jamal**

On October 21, Pennsylvania governor Tom Corbett signed into law the vicious “Revictimization Relief Act,” enacted with the express aim of silencing political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. An innocent man framed up for the 1981 killing of Philadelphia cop Daniel Faulkner, Mumia has spent 33 years in prison for a crime he did not commit. The bipartisan rush to pass the bill came after Goddard College, a small liberal arts school where Mumia earned his degree while behind bars, aired a prerecorded address by him on October 5. This gag law sailed through the state House of Representatives in a unanimous, 197 to 0, vote. The statute allows prosecutors and “victims” of a “personal injury crime” (and their family members) to sue prisoners who do or say anything that would “perpetuate the continuing effect of the crime on the victim” by causing “a temporary or permanent state of mental anguish.”

Mumia has been in the crosshairs of the capitalist state since his days as a teen-aged Black Panther Party spokesman in the 1960s. That enmity grew in the 1970s when as a journalist known as the “voice of the voiceless” he exposed the racist Philly police vendetta against MOVE, the largely black back-to-nature group he came to support. On 9 December 1981, the Philly cops had their first opportunity to silence Mumia forever. Evidence shows that when he arrived at the scene of Faulkner’s shooting, the cops shot Mumia and brutally beat him on the street and later in the hospital where he was taken. When Mumia survived that ordeal, police and prosecutors proceeded to manufacture evidence to convict him, including by terrorizing witnesses and concocting a fake confession two months later.

After a 1982 trial in which Mumia was denied the right to represent himself and was repeatedly ejected from the courtroom, he was sentenced to death explicitly for his political views, primarily his Black Panther history. Federal and state courts have time and again refused to consider evidence proving Mumia's innocence, especially the sworn confession of Arnold Beverly that he, not Mumia, shot and killed Faulkner. (See the 2006 Partisan Defense Committee pamphlet *The Fight to Free Mumia—Mumia Is Innocent!*) In 2011, the Philadelphia district attorney's office dropped its longstanding effort to legally lynch America's foremost class-war prisoner. But Mumia remains condemned to life in prison hell with no chance of parole.

While the Pennsylvania gag law is directed against Mumia, if upheld, it por-

tends similar measures in other states to further restrict the already barely existent rights of prisoners. By its terms, anyone who would dare to publicize their legal defense in Pennsylvania can now be sued for “perpetuating” their crime and causing “anguish.” This twisted logic could be used to justify censorship of everything from prison newspapers, such as the acclaimed *Angolite* published by inmates in Louisiana’s Angola prison, to interviews with inmates who maintain their innocence or protest the inhumane conditions of mass incarceration or oppression in the world outside.

At a photo-op “signing ceremony” for the new law, the governor railed against Mumia’s “obscene celebrity.” Seated next to him on the platform was Maureen Faulkner, Daniel’s widow, who along with the Fraternal Order of Police (F.O.P.) campaigned for Mumia’s execution for over three decades. Even after the authorities have buried him alive in a Pennsylvania

silence Mumia and his defenders. In 1990, a PDC-initiated defense rally in Philadelphia was met by a cop backlash, with the Philly F.O.P. head declaring that all Mumia's supporters were part of a "misfit terrorist group" who should be put on an "electric couch." Over the next three years, the PDC and its fraternal organizations in Europe and beyond garnered wider support, significantly from labor organizations representing millions of workers, for Mumia's cause and spurred other organizations to take up his case. This international support for Mumia raked the forces pushing for his execution.

In 1994, when National Public Radio (NPR) agreed to run Mumia's commentaries weekly on its program "All Things Considered," the F.O.P. launched a national counter-campaign. From the floor of the U.S. Senate, Republican leader Robert Dole called for cutting NPR's federal funding. Bowing to the pressure, NPR canceled the commentaries. The PDC,



**Pennsylvania governor Tom Corbett signs vicious “Revictimization Relief Act” into law, October 21. Maureen Faulkner (left) and Philly Fraternal Order of Police howled for Mumia’s execution for decades.**

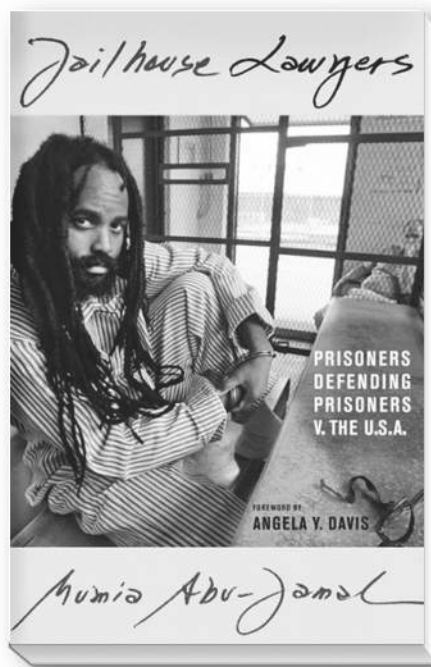
prison cell, with his legal appeals effectively exhausted, the fact that Mumia can still gain a hearing for his powerful print and radio commentaries drives the forces of "law and order" into a frenzy. The ongoing vendetta against Mumia and other former members of the Black Panther Party captures how the bourgeoisie is haunted by the spectre of defiance to this system of exploitation and racist oppression.

Mumia and Prison Radio, which broadcasts his commentaries, as well as other prisoners and prisoners rights organizations filed a lawsuit in federal court on November 10 challenging the “Silence Mumia Law.” The lawsuit includes the claim that this gag rule could be invoked to prohibit journalists and organizations from publishing commentaries by Mumia and other prisoners. Civil libertarians and many in the bourgeois media have castigated the legislation as blatantly unconstitutional. “Some victims of terrible crimes will be in a ‘state of mental anguish’ as long as the person who did it to them is alive and breathing,” wrote the Harrisburg *Patriot-News* (17 October), which asked: “Does ‘breathing’ qualify as ‘conduct’ that’s now subject to court action?” An editorial in the *Los Angeles Times* (22 October) opposed the law even while expressing relief that in his Goddard address “Abu-Jamal didn’t insist on his innocence or even refer to the crime, except to note that when he resumed his studies he was ‘a man on death row.’ Instead, his speech combined reminiscences of Goddard and commentary on current events, from the war in Gaza to the Supreme Court’s Citizens United decision.”

This is the latest of many attempts to

along with the Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, initiated a protest speakout that featured a reading of Mumia's commentaries by several personalities. Among them was the late actor and political activist Ossie Davis, who was co-chair of the Committee to Save Mumia.

The next year, Mumia came to national prominence with the publication of his first book, *Live from Death Row*. This



***Jailhouse Lawyers* (2009), one of Mumia's many publications.**

selection of powerful commentaries about Mumia's life, prison and death row was critical in blowing the lid off the cops' and prosecutors' Big Lie campaign to slander Mumia as some kind of crazed killer. The forces of reaction hit back with a campaign against the publishing company, which made its money primarily from school textbooks. The publisher lost orders from schools all over the country. A barrage of editorials and op-eds against Mumia appeared in such newspapers as the *New York Post*, the *Washington Post*, the *Boston Globe* and the *Philadelphia Daily News*, as well as on TV news shows like Dan Rather's *Eye on America* on CBS.

It is a good thing that today some of the media have denounced the Mumia gag rule. We note, however, that the bourgeois press played its part in consigning him to a life behind bars by acting as a transmission belt for police/prosecutor lies and refusing to report any of the overwhelming evidence of Mumia's innocence.

The state authorities who sought to strap Mumia to an execution gurney for three decades want to see him rot in prison, a forgotten man. We are determined that Mumia and other class-war prisoners not be forgotten, which is the purpose of the PDC's program of support to these prisoners. This program is modeled on the International Labor Defense in the 1920s, which not only provided stipends to class-war prisoners as an expression of solidarity but also gave voice to their fight for freedom. Ever since taking up his case in 1987, we have fought for Mumia's struggle to be taken up by the multiracial proletariat with the understanding that militant workers, fighters for black freedom and those opposed to U.S. imperialist depredations must have no illusions in the capitalist courts. Mumia must not be silenced! Free him now! ■

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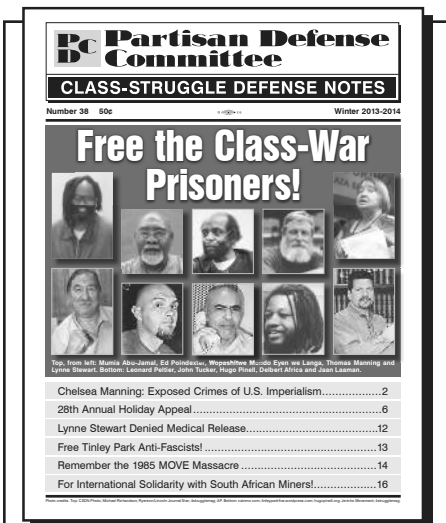
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# “Freedom of the Individual”

By Peter Fryer

The article excerpted below elegantly refutes the slander that communism stifles individuality. Its author, Peter Fryer, was one of some 200 British Stalinists won to Trotskyism under the impact of the 1956 Hungarian uprising, a defeated proletarian political revolution against Stalinist misrule of that workers state. “Freedom of the Individual” originally appeared in the August-September 1958 issue of *Labour Review*, the journal of a British group led by one Gerry Healy. Although the Healyites later revealed themselves to be political bandits, at the time they were putting forward a seemingly orthodox Trotskyist program, attracting high-caliber Marxist thinkers, including Fryer for a brief time. (For more, see “Chronicler of Hungarian Revolution: Peter Fryer, 1927-2006,” WV No. 883, 5 January 2007.) The ellipses within quotations in the article are Fryer’s.

\* \* \*

‘We are not communists who want to destroy personal freedom and transform the world into one great barracks or one great sweat-shop. As a matter of fact there are communists who do not care for and want to suppress personal freedom, which in their opinion bars the way to harmony; but we do not want to buy equality at the expense of personal freedom’ (Frederick Engels, *Kommunistische Zeitschrift*, September 1847).

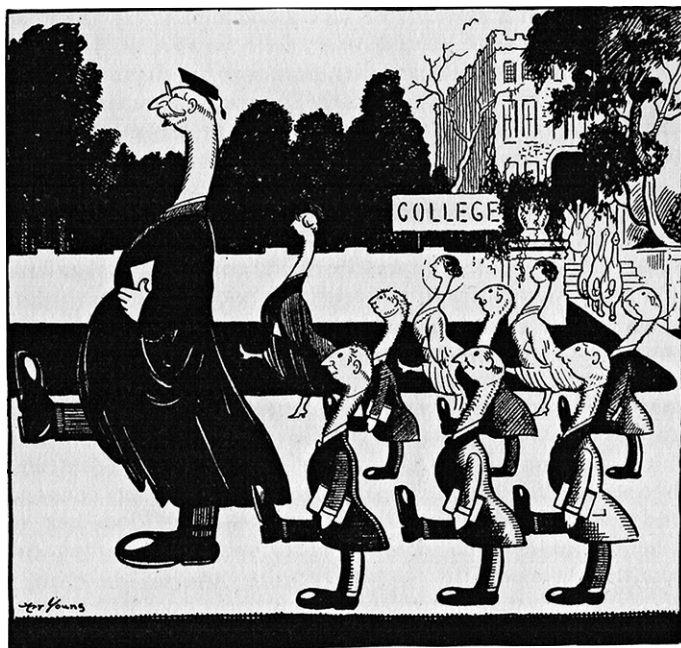
## Capitalism and Human Nature

To liberals no freedom is higher and more precious than the freedom of the individual. Marxists wholeheartedly agree that it is the individual human being who achieves freedom, and not humanity in general. They agree that society as a whole cannot free itself unless every individual is freed. But they take issue with the use of the watchword of individual liberty in opposition to socialism and socialist planning. For they do not think there is any contradiction between the interests of the individual and the interests of a society whose fundamental aim is the satisfaction of people’s material and cultural needs and the enrichment of their lives. They take the view that only under communism will the individual human being be able to develop his potentialities and abilities to the utmost.

Under capitalism the great majority of people have neither leisure, money nor education to develop as all-round human beings. Nor are they encouraged so to foster their individuality. The capitalist system of production, the bourgeois educational system, the barrage of advertising and ready-made ‘culture’ to which the individual is subjected from the cradle to the grave, are not designed to fan into flame the sparks of talent and creative ability that are possessed by all but a tiny proportion of human beings. They are designed to make competent wage-slaves. Capitalist relations of production—the

private ownership for private profit of the means of production—cannot bring to the individual wage-worker the freedom that comes through leading a full life, a life packed with many-sided activities and giving the fullest scope to every physical and mental aptitude. They block the way to a full life for the exploited.

Capitalism devastates human nature, dulls and extinguishes the senses, corrupts and brutalizes men as it sucks out profit from their work, rends men into fragments, into half-men, makes labour a burden instead of a joyful and indispensable part of life. It robs men of their heritage of happiness, beauty and knowledge. It takes the warmth and colour out of human relationships and measures every emotion, every delight and every virtue by the yardstick of gold and silver and bits of printed paper and entries in account books.<sup>1</sup>



Art Young

Cartoon from cover of *The Goose-Step: A Study of American Education* by Upton Sinclair. Bourgeois education instills conformity, prepares working-class youth for life of wage slavery.

The individual is not, and cannot be, free under capitalism because he cannot leap out of the world of the market, the world where everything moral and spiritual is bought and sold for cash. It is a world of universal venality, of cynical self-interest. Human labour power; works of art; knowledge; the very conscience and honour of men; truth itself;<sup>2</sup> all become commodities, measured in terms of their market value, accessible to those with money.

To the profiteer the object he is buying or selling, its meaning and importance to human beings, are in themselves of little or no importance compared with the object’s abstract expression in monetary terms. This barren outlook determines and taints every relationship, not only between man and object, but between

the part of his life that is not his own, but the boss’s, spent in the factory, where the boss is the aristocrat; and there are the looked-forward-to oases of leisure, the time that belongs to the worker himself....

‘Taylor, of Bethlehem Steel Works fame, has declared that in order to get pig iron loaded most efficiently it is necessary to get men as near like oxen as possible. But men do not grow so: they have to be made. An important part of scientific management is this scientific degradation of men.’<sup>3</sup> The individual is stunted, warped, chained for life to one particular calling, to one particular function, often to one particular tool. In capitalist society what matters is not man as such but *particularized* man, restricted and conditioned by his special skills: the division of labour is the division of the individual labourer himself.



Index Books

Peter Fryer

And this means that men are subjected to their instruments of production, that instead of the producers using and controlling the means of production, the latter use and control the producers. Nor have men control over the disposal of the products which result from their labours; these products become independent forces which overpower their makers in booms and slumps according to the ‘blind’ laws of the market.

The means of production are utilized in such a way as to enslave men and atrophy their faculties. And the exchange of products for profit leads to the concentration of enormous wealth in the hands of a few and the impoverishment of the majority, to economic anarchy and periodical economic ‘blizzards’.

Thus men are not free to determine their own destiny. It is determined for them by forces over which they have no control. In the process men’s individuality is forfeited, is crushed. They lose their individuality because they are dependent on capital. ‘In bourgeois society capital is independent and has individuality, while the living person is dependent and has no individuality.’<sup>4</sup> ‘An economic individualism of motives and aims,’ echoes [American bourgeois philosopher John] Dewey, ‘underlies our present corporate mechanisms, and undoes the individual.’<sup>5</sup>

Defenders of and apologists for the capitalist system of society have as little right to speak of the freedom of the individual as they have to speak of any other freedom. Under capitalism human individuality ‘becomes at once a commercial article and the fabric in which money operates’. Capitalism ‘estranges man from nature, from himself, his own active functioning... It is the alienation of man from

1 In his *Adult Interests* (New York, 1935) Dr Edward L. Thorndike gave the cash payments which men and women would take to do certain normally repugnant things. He claimed to find that the average woman would practise cannibalism for 750,000 dollars, but the average man would do so for 50,000. The women tested would renounce hope of life after death for 10 dollars, but the men wanted 1,000. The men would become intoxicated for 25 dollars, but the women demanded 98. Other ‘money equivalents’ were given for blindness, temporary insanity, eating beetles and earthworms, choking a stray cat to death, cutting a pig’s throat and spitting on a crucifix and on pictures of Charles Darwin, George Washington and one’s mother. Dr Thorndike has been described as ‘the Nestor of American psychologists’.

2 ‘The best test of truth,’ according to Mr Justice Holmes’s epigram, ‘is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market’ (Dissenting opinion in *Abrams v. U.S.*, 250 U.S. 616 (1919)).

3 [R. M.] Fox, [*The Triumphant Machine: A Study of Machine Civilization* (1928)], p. 5.

4 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, vol. i (1950), p. 46.

5 [John] Dewey, [*Individualism Old and New* (1931)], p. 57.



Corbis

“Individual freedom” under capitalism. Textile factory in Jaipur, India, 2009.

man.”<sup>6</sup> Capitalism stifles men’s creative spirit, condemning the majority to a life of monotony, drudgery and ugliness—to life in a cage. It puts out the eyes of the painter and cuts out the tongue from the poet who is within each one of us. It butchers human nature on the altar of the machine and calls that progress....

The Decay of Liberalism

The liberal idea of individual liberty is a good example of an idea which is progressive when first put forward, but which begins to play a reactionary role when the circumstances which gave rise to it have changed.

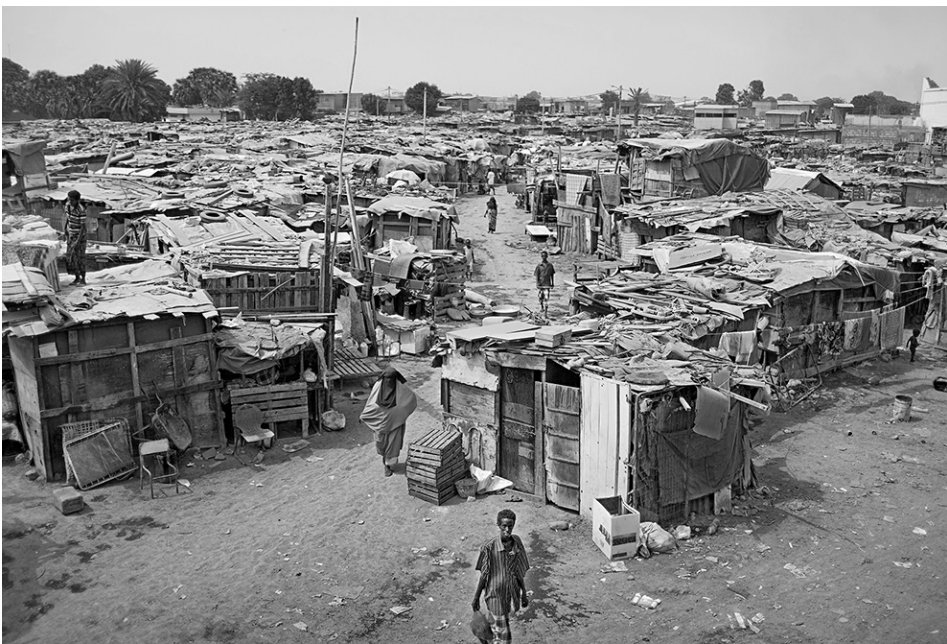
Preoccupation with the individual and his rights began in the seventeenth century, with the rise of the bourgeoisie, whose existence and development as a class depended on the freedom of the individual capitalist to buy, and of the individual proletarian to sell, labour power. The rebellion of the rising bourgeoisie against the economic shackles of feudalism found its political, social and ideological expression in opposition to arbitrary political power, to arbitrary restraints on personal liberty, to the violation of human dignity and to clerical obscurantism. The fight was seen as a struggle between reason and unreason. The class which fashioned liberalism as its intellectual weapon conceived of individual freedom, not as freedom from all restraint, but as freedom under the law,<sup>7</sup> as freedom limited by certain eternal truths and values which were thought to be embodied in a natural law or natural rights derived from human nature. Both the atoms of which matter was composed and the social atoms of which society was composed were governed by rational laws which human reason could grasp and apply. But, as Marx observed, the natural ‘Rights of Man’, the rights belonging to individuals by virtue of their humanity, did not eliminate man the egoist, an individual withdrawn into his private interests, separated from the community. On the contrary, bourgeois society itself appeared in them as an external frame for individuals, as a limitation of their original independence; the only ties by which individuals were held together were natural necessity, material needs, private interests and the conservation of their property.<sup>8</sup>

As developed by the bourgeois intellectuals of the early nineteenth century, the liberal idea of individual freedom remained progressive in an age when the workers were totally deprived of their leisure, when women and children worked in the pits, when there was no legal limit to the working day. These intellectuals supported the struggle for leisure for the industrial workers, as a struggle for time in which people might be free to do, think and say what they liked—provided they were not thereby endangering capitalist society.<sup>9</sup> The liberal ideal could not, and did not, transcend (but rather reflected) the splitting of a man’s life into two parts: his working time, in which he was unfree, a wage-slave, and his leisure, in which he was for a few hours a day an individual shorn of responsibilities, answerable only to himself—an individual temporarily outside of society, and whose ‘freedom’ was enjoyed outside of society. [The 19th century British political economist] Mill, for example, wanted every worker ultimately to have the same leisure as his employer and therefore the same partial freedom from the necessities of social organization as he.

What happened to liberal ideology when capitalism approached its monopoly phase has been well summarized by Hallowell and Laski:

So long as the bourgeoisie remained economically, socially, and politically unsatiated they championed the substantial rights of man. As...monopoly capitalism replaced free enterprise...and as the bourgeoisie acquired a dominant social and political position, they tended to espouse formal equality and formal rights of citizens rather than substantial equality and substantial rights of man.<sup>10</sup>

The earlier liberals released the individual from a type of social organization which restricted his capacity for growth. But the assumption which underlay that



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Half of city population of Djibouti, in Horn of Africa, lives in slums like Arhiba, pictured above in June 2013. Capitalist imperialism has imposed wretched conditions on Third World, stifling individual development.

release made it in fact valid only for men who were in a position to surmount the conditions of a fiercely competitive industrial society, that is, broadly, the owners of property. The liberty predominantly secured was their liberty; the others came in as residuary legatees of their triumph. And when the men of property had won, they conceived that the campaign was over.... What they did not see was that the new social order their liberalism had built brought with it new problems as intense as any they had solved.... Liberalism... had established a freedom in which, formally and legally, the workers were entitled to share. Actually, they could not, for the most part, share in it because its attainment was predominantly conditioned to the possession of property; and they had no property save in their labour power. When the victors were asked to extend the privileges their new freedom had brought them they were dismayed.<sup>11</sup>

In the period of monopoly capitalism it is precisely the separation of the interests of the individual from those of society, the counterposing of individual freedom to external social necessity and social responsibility, that becomes an ideological weapon for the defence of capitalism and for arousing opposition and hostility to socialism. The social discipline of social planning is held to destroy human personality, to take away the individual’s liberty to ‘live his own life’ and to think and choose for himself. This discipline is represented as being imposed on people against their will.

The liberal who today attacks socialism on these grounds is in fact surrendering all the values that liberalism once championed. He is turning his back on the warping of human individuality and human personality by monopoly capitalism. Whether he is aware of it or not, *his* claim to ‘freedom of the individual’ is at bottom the claim of the privileged, leisured and rich section of the population to the maintenance of their privileges, leisure and riches, based on ‘the liberty of private property as such, to be uncontrolled in its operations by aught else than the will of the individual possessing it’.<sup>12</sup> Since these privileges, leisure and riches are obtained and maintained for the bourgeoisie and for the intellectuals who serve them only by the exploitation of millions of their fellow human beings, what the modern liberal is really demanding is freedom for an *élite*....

The Individual and Socialism

The task of socialism is to lay the indispensable basis for the teeming abundance of necessities and what are today called luxuries that must be achieved before men may receive according to their needs. The social discipline of socialist planning alone can free men from the jungle of capitalism. Even with bureaucratic distortions [as in the Stalinist-ruled Soviet Union], socialist planning is able to achieve a great deal. With these distortions eliminated socialism will harness the creative energies of millions. Real socialism does not impose economic plans on people ‘from above’. The individual helps to draw up, administer and fulfil the plan; by so doing he not only helps

to make everybody else’s life better, but also improves his own life. The individual cannot free himself from the capitalist swamp by his own unaided efforts, but only in active co-operation with millions of others. Together they are fired with the vision of a new life and a new society. Together they work to achieve them. To accomplish the socialist reconstruction of the world is not to mould the individual to the requirements of an abstract ‘society’. It is to reshape the social system to the

University students doing laboratory work in Tashkent, Soviet Uzbekistan, 1958. Collectivized planned economy laid basis for great strides forward in culture and science.

Yevgeny Khaldei



requirements of the individuals who make it up. This implies planning. It implies discipline, endeavour, sacrifice, voluntarily undertaken. But this alone is the way to make men free from class exploitation and class oppression. ‘The outcome of socialism is...a *human* individualism as opposed to *class* individualism.’<sup>13</sup>...

The view that men who are hungry, or poor, or insecure, or exploited, or unemployed, or homeless, or oppressed, are not free, that freedom from these social evils is the foundation of human liberty, is to be found well before the advent of Marxism. It was held by Shelley:

What art thou, Freedom? Oh! could slaves  
Answer from their living graves  
This demand, tyrants would flee  
Like a dream’s dim imagery:

\* \* \*

For the labourer thou art bread  
And a comely table spread  
From his daily labour come  
In a neat and happy home.

Thou art clothes, and fire, and food  
For the trampled multitude:  
No—in countries that are free  
Such starvation cannot be  
As in England now we see.<sup>14</sup>

If by ‘England’ we mean also the British colonies in Africa and Asia, the argument summed up in these lines is wholly true today, when for hundreds of millions of Asians and Africans the problem of individual liberty is before everything else the problem of finding enough food to keep the individual alive another day. Moreover it is recognized by many of those concerned about the growth of revolutionary movements in what are called the ‘under-developed’ regions as

by far the most difficult argument for imperialism to answer. An editorial in the *Manchester Guardian*, for example, came to the conclusion that the advocates of ‘Western freedom’ must address themselves, not to the masses of the people of Asia, but to the intellectual *élite* there, for only this enlightened minority could understand the meaning of the ‘freedom in ideas and freedom of debate’ that the West had to offer.

Offer a starving man liberty or a packet of sandwiches, it is said, and he will naturally choose sandwiches. But the classes to whom our appeal is addressed are not actually starving, though they may be commendably disturbed about how many of their countrymen are in this plight. The middle classes and intelligentsia of Free Asia can still be attracted by the ideals of liberty...<sup>15</sup>

But socialism does not make real liberty, liberty without quotation marks, stop at freedom from hunger. What it does do is expose the hypocrisy of capitalist ‘freedom’, which denies the fundamental freedoms to the colonial peoples, and hypocritically prates about ‘freedom in ideas and freedom of debate’ though it can no more permit free discussion and exchange of ideas in the colonies, when those ideas challenge imperialism, than it can adequately feed the millions it oppresses. Real socialism offers not merely material prosperity, but is also a powerful stimulus to intellectual ferment. Even with major bureaucratic distortions and defects, a workers’ State has taught tens of millions in the central Asian republics to read and write, so opening for them the gates to the

world of ideas and culture. And, as even [British pseudo-socialist William Angus] Sinclair admits, ‘one reason for the appeal of communism to the Asiatic and the African...is that it promises an industrialized  
*continued on page 11*

6 Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, quoted *Modern Quarterly*, vol. v, no. 1, p. 14, Winter 1949-50.  
7 ‘Freedom,’ wrote Voltaire, ‘exists in being independent of everything but law’ (*Pensées sur l’administration publique*).  
8 See D. Rjazanov, ed., *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, part i, vol. i, I (Frankfurt, 1927), p. 595.  
9 ‘No one pretends,’ wrote John Stuart Mill, ‘that actions should be as free as opinions. On the contrary, even opinions lose their immunity when the circumstances in which they are expressed are such as to constitute their expression a positive instigation to some mischievous act. An opinion that corn-dealers are starvers of the poor, or that private property is robbery, ought to be unmolested when simply circulated through the Press, but may justly incur punishment when delivered orally to an excited mob assembled before the house of a corn-dealer, or when handed about among the same mob in the form of a placard’ (*On Liberty* (Everyman edition, *Utilitarianism*; *Liberty*; *Representative Government*, 1954), p. 114).  
10 John H. Hallowell, *The Decline of Liberalism as an Ideology With Particular Reference to German Politico-Legal Thought* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1943), p. 14.  
11 H. J. Laski, *The Decline of Liberalism* (1940), pp. 13-14.  
12 E. Belfort Bax and J. Hiam Levy, *Socialism and Individualism* (n.d. [1904]), p. 10.  
13 Bax and Levy, op. cit. p. 28.  
14 *The Masque of Anarchy*.  
15 *Manchester Guardian*, January 10, 1956.



Sex and Consent...

(continued from page 12)

order. Whipping up social anxiety diverts attention from the madness of society, with deteriorating schools, massive unemployment, a failing health care system and perpetual war.

From an early age, youth are instilled with fear and loathing about sex—through everything from “abstinence only” moralism to “marriage is forever” straitjacket monogamy. As if getting past high school weren’t already difficult enough, the university administration and bourgeois state intervene as the guardians of moral order, infantilizing young adults who might just want to have fun. Crackdowns on harmless things like sexting or intergenerational relationships are a component of broader social regimentation, as are increasing restrictions on access to contraception and the rollback of abortion rights.

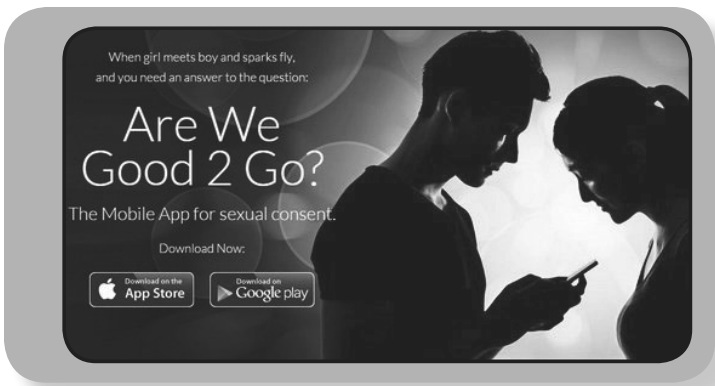
Sex, Race and Regimentation

To prove there is an epidemic of rape on campus, media outlets and activists recycle the deceptive statistic that one in five female college students is a victim of

media attention for her Carry That Weight mattress project. Sulkowicz carries a mattress with her around campus to dramatize that the male student she alleges raped her has not been expelled. We do not know what happened in the incident in question. But after the fact, her experience reporting to cops and campus investigators appears to have been harrowing and patronizing, as is typical.

Sulkowicz’s case is the central focus of the group No Red Tape, which cosponsored an October 29 “Carrying the Weight Together” national day of action. Among the chants that day at Columbia was “rape culture is contagious,” conflating general sexist behavior or ideas with rape. Protesters also called for university president Lee Bollinger to “be the leader on our side.” Top campus officials are the people who oversee the exclusion of black and Latino students, persecute leftists and pro-Palestinian activists and put the squeeze on campus workers.

The pseudo-socialists of the International Socialist Organization, who tail anything that moves, are heavily active in No Red Tape. These reformists tout the need to “hold administrations directly responsible” while celebrating the fact that the demonstrations have brought “welcome attention” from the White House (socialistworker.org, 2 October).



“Affirmative consent” hysteria? There’s an app for that.

similar to “yes means yes,” and he now intends to codify that standard as state law. Democratic Party politicians package these new policies as advancing women’s rights (while, of course, barely lifting a finger to defend access to abortion or birth control). Posturing as “friends of women” is made all the easier by right-wing misogynist pundits, who consider women vessels to produce babies.

Some conservatives have noted the usefulness of the campus anti-sex campaign in promoting neo-Victorian modesty and chivalry, which fell out of favor with “sexual liberation.” Meanwhile, many people rightly oppose the ominous overreach of affirmative consent. Harvard’s latest sexual harassment policy came under fire from 28 of the university’s current and retired law school professors because it lacked “basic elements of fairness and due process” and was “overwhelmingly stacked against the accused.”

Hailing the California law is old-school feminist Gloria Steinem. Preaching that “silence is not consent; it is the absence of consent,” Steinem welcomes a rule that “redefines that gray area” between yes and no (*New York Times*, 4 September). Offering perhaps the most blunt—but demented—rationale for affirmative consent laws is Ezra Klein of the online news site *Vox*, who remarked that “yes means yes” legislation is “terrible” but “necessary”! Presenting males as predators with an unrestrained libido, Klein wants all men to “feel a cold spike of fear when they begin a sexual encounter.” Klein’s preferred sexual “culture” more closely resembles a scene from the Inquisition.

For Klein, a conscious policy of false accusations and convictions is a good thing. He accepts that innocent men are collateral damage, and in this racist capitalist society black men in particular will be on the receiving end. Accusations of rape have long been used to justify lynch mob “justice” and railroad black men to prison. In 1931, the Scottsboro Boys were framed up and imprisoned for rapes that never happened; in 1989, the Central Park Five were falsely convicted and thrown behind bars for the rape of a jogger in New York City.

Frenzy about black male sexuality is a common thread in American culture. The recent viral *Hollaback* YouTube video documenting “catcalling” in NYC was edited so that it showed no white males, only dark-skinned men. The clipped segments of a white actress being leered and jeered at while walking down the sidewalk treats non-threatening and threatening behavior equally, from being greeted with “How you doing today?” to being followed. Rightly chastising *Hollaback*’s portrayal of black and brown men “as congenital predators,” Liliana Segura noted in an *Intercept* article (3 November): “That this viral video had, in the span of five days, sparked such a sense of crisis that people would push for a legal ban on street harassment was, to me, the most damning indictment of its race politics.” In a city infamous for “stop and frisk,” any such law will only lead to more criminalization of minority youth at the hands of police thugs.

It is wrong in any case to place the burden of women’s oppression—of which daily discrimination such as sexual harassment is but a reflection—on the behavior of individual men. Sexist stereotyping and attitudes flow from women’s subjugation in the patriarchal family, the main social source of women’s oppression. Together with religion, the family serves as a key prop of the capitalist system: it instills subservience to authority and promotes a puritanical morality against anything

that deviates from the family ideal—from premarital sex to gay sex. Working-class women shoulder a double burden, exploited at work and responsible for household drudgery and child rearing. The low status of women in this patriarchal society can only be ended through socialist revolution.

Feminist Puritanism and the State

It’s bad news when the ruling class is worried about what people do in their bedrooms. Anti-sex panics serve to bolster social conservatism and reinforce the family. In the 1980s and ’90s, people were force-fed the lie that there was an epidemic of child molestations and ritual abuse of children, with sexual predators supposedly lurking behind every teacher’s desk. Today, thousands of those engaging in private activities that do not harm anyone—such as possession of child porn—are criminalized as “sex offenders.” False allegations of sexual abuse have destroyed lives, torn up families and led to suicides.

In moral crusades against pornography, prostitution and youth sexuality, feminists have consistently found themselves in bed with the enemy of women: the state. Feminism works inside class society, seeking to give bourgeois and petty-bourgeois women a chance to compete in the male club of power and privilege. Feminist ideology presents women in a state of perpetual victimhood, needing government “pro-



No Red Tape

Protest at Columbia University sponsored by No Red Tape demands campus administration change its sexual assault policies, September 12.

sexual assault. That statistic, which was obtained through dubious calculations and unclear questionnaires, counts regrettable or confusing sexual encounters, that is, the “gray area,” as assault. Over half of MIT students in a recent survey thought it possible for rape to “happen unintentionally,” i.e., by accident! The one-in-five figure is the same that was retailed two decades ago when campus “Take Back the Night” rallies were all the rage. College campuses are not the epicenter of rape in the U.S.; one need only look at the military or cops, institutions of the state, to find rampant sexual abuse.

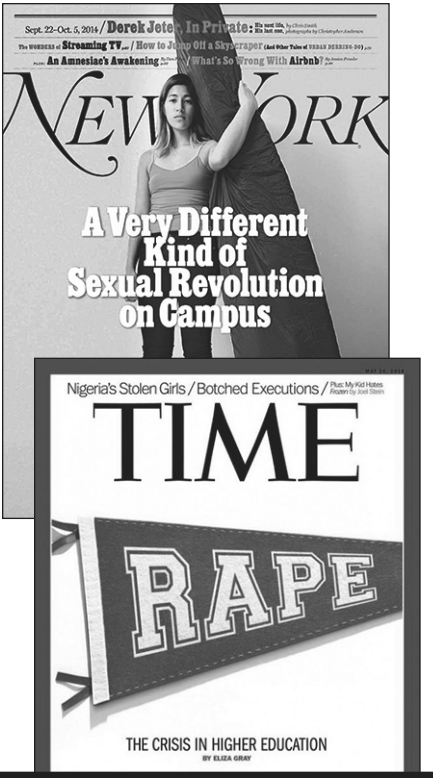
A current hotbed of the campus “anti-rape movement” is Columbia University, where senior Emma Sulkowicz has gotten

In fact, from the outset the “offensive against campus sexual assault” has been pushed from the top. Obama recently set up a White House task force on the matter and enlisted Hollywood stars to take an “It’s On Us” pledge. In 2011, the federal government released a “Dear Colleague” letter to university administrations setting a lower standard for the burden of proof, so that a student can be disciplined for something that was only more likely than not to have occurred. The Department of Education has more than 70 colleges under federal investigation for mishandling cases alleging abuse. Colleges that do not put forward the proper sexual consent rules under Title IX are threatened with losing funding.

Title IX, which outlaws gender discrimination in federally financed institutions, was enacted over 40 years ago, like many other reforms ushered in by the social struggles of the civil rights and Vietnam antiwar movements. Title IX not only benefited women’s participation in sports, but also opened doors to other educational programs and facilities. However, all reforms under capitalism can be reversed or perverted to serve a different purpose than intended.

The cast of characters backing this campaign is evidence in itself of the campaign’s repressive agenda. Take Janet Napolitano, former secretary of homeland security, top sheriff of the “war on terror,” now serving as University of California president. Napolitano demonstrates her touching concern for students by pushing a zero-tolerance policy toward sexual assault while jacking up tuition at the ten UC campuses.

Before his recent re-election as New York governor, Andrew Cuomo pushed for State University of New York campuses to adopt a uniform consent policy



National spotlight on supposed epidemic of campus rape.

tection.” Far from “empowering” them, feminism keeps young women activists wedded to the very puritanical and repressive order that oppresses them.

As Marxists, we have always been outspoken opponents of anti-sex hysteria and state intrusion into private life. However, we do not offer a program on how to untangle the complexities of sex under capitalism. As we stated in our article titled “Rape and Bourgeois Justice,” (*Young Spartacus* No. 29, February 1975): “Only in a workers state will men and women stand in full equality before the law, the administration of which will be a part of the creation and maintenance of the social fabric of well-being for the population as a whole.” And while we cannot spell out what sexual relations will look like in a society liberated from religious anxieties and racial and class inequities, we know they will be far better. ■

**Women and Revolution**

The “Date Rape” Issue: Feminist Hysteria, Anti-Sex Witchhunt

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Written amid a general anti-sex frenzy in the U.S. two decades ago, the article excerpted below, about a supposed epidemic of “date rape” on college campuses, also cuts against today’s campaign for anti-sex “affirmative consent” regulations. *Women and Revolution*, in which the article originally appeared, was the journal of the Women’s Commission of the Spartacist League/U.S. until its publication was suspended in 1998. Today, articles under its masthead also appear in *Spartacist*, the International Communist League’s theoretical organ.

\* \* \*

The anti-sex frenzy springs from the agenda of the religious right. Espousing an ideology supposed to have something to do with women’s rights, the feminists might be expected to oppose this witch-hunt. Instead, there is a convergence between feminism and religious reaction in support of moralist repression. This is particularly evident in the “date rape” frenzy on the campuses which has recently grabbed headlines across the nation and the world. Egged on by feminist witchhunters, “politically correct” sex on campus serves the war on privacy by whitewashing the intrusion of the campus administration and the cops into students’ personal business as “protecting women” and “stopping rape.” One goal of the student struggles of the 1960s and ’70s at colleges across the country was to put a stop to the *in loco parentis* prerogatives of campus administrations and to end rules that set curfews for young women, limited the hours that men could enter the sex-segregated dorms and encouraged “housemothers” to make periodic checks of the rooms to see that “all four feet” were firmly planted on the floor when a guy visited one of the “coeds.” The “date rape” hysteria has opened the door to the return of the college snoops.

In *The Morning After: Sex, Fear, and Feminism on Campus*, Princeton grad student Katie Roiphe exposes the climate of fear and the self-imposed status of “victims” engendered by the “date rape” feminists. Speaking for a layer of young women repulsed by this anti-sex hysteria, Roiphe contrasts what she found when she entered Harvard with what she was taught by her mother, who grew up in the wake of the anti-Communist witchhunt of the 1950s:

“This image of a delicate woman bears a striking resemblance to that fifties ideal my mother and the other women of her generation fought so hard to get away from. They didn’t like her passivity, her wide-eyed innocence. They didn’t like the fact that she was perpetually offended by sexual innuendo. They didn’t like her excessive need for protection. She represented personal, social, and psychological possibilities collapsed, and they worked and marched, shouted and wrote, to make her irrelevant for their daughters. But here she is again, with her pure intentions and her wide eyes. Only this time it is the feminists themselves who are breathing new life into her.”

Roiphe’s scathing attack on the “date-rape crisis” has earned her the enmity of rabid feminists everywhere, and congratulations from more rational layers. In “Not Just Bad Sex” (*New Yorker*, 4 October 1993) Katha Pollitt accuses Roiphe of everything from poor journalism to a “privileged” lifestyle. While Roiphe’s polemic does not reach beyond the middle-class, heterosexual and largely white college milieu in which the “date rape” frenzy is centered, she has done a real service in challenging the campaign of “politically correct” sex—what the *Nation* (8 November 1993) labels “the new sexual McCarthyism.”

On a certain level, “date rape” hysteria is an absurdity: Even literary classics like Andrew Marvell’s love poem “To His Coy

## The “Date Rape” Issue: Feminist Hysteria, Anti-Sex Witchhunt

From *Women and Revolution* No. 43, Winter 1993-Spring 1994

Mistress” have been tagged as apologies for male sexual “coercion”! “Date rape” is indeed a fitting butt for the spate of cartoons and magazine articles that followed the publication of Roiphe’s book.

But ludicrous as it is, “date rape” feminism has a destructive logic, and it’s nowhere more obvious than on the question of abortion rights. The government has usurped the authority to determine when and if a woman wants to have a child by whittling away at the historic 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision which legalized abortion nationally. A big part of this is its assertion of the *in loco parentis* privilege of “protecting” young women through “squeal laws” that demand parental consent for abortions for women under the age of 18. Last November the Supreme Court upheld Mississippi’s reactionary law requiring permission from *both* parents or a judge.

“Date rape” hysteria serves as a diversion from the *real* oppression and exploitation suffered by the vast majority of women in this country. Most working-class and minority women can’t afford to go to college, but rather endure the constant menace of violence and rape as they go to and from backbreaking, low-paying jobs or to pick up their continually threatened welfare pittance. The most forceful and consistent assertion of government intrusion into private life has been the anti-drug witchhunt, which for poor blacks (including, obviously, women) in the devastated inner-city ghettos has meant massive police raids, while workers across the country are subjected to urine testing serving to enforce discipline in the workplace.

Willfully lumping together everything from morning-after regrets to savage brutality, “date rape” hysteria trivializes the crime of rape and belittles the real humiliation, terror and agony that rape victims undergo.

### Anti-Sex Codes and Campus Hysteria

The “date rape” campaign was launched on campuses in the 1980s with annual “Take Back the Night” candlelight parades to “end sexual violence against women.”

Culminating in outdoor speakouts where “survivors” give testimonials of their personal experiences, the marches have taken on the aura of religious ceremony.

Far from focusing on real acts of violence against women, the “date rape” frenzy redefines as rape experiences which are instead ambiguous or unpleasant—thus trivializing the sometimes painful tribulations of young people grappling with their first sexual encounters. But the “date rape” frenzy is more than these celebrations of trauma and helplessness. Freshmen undergo required “sexual harassment counseling”; films are shown and peer-group sessions held, all with the message that sex is dangerous and dating should be done only when sober, preferably with a chaperon. College pamphlets ask, “Is Dating Dangerous?” and “Friends Raping Friends: Could It Happen to You?”

As if this weren’t sufficiently daunting, campus administrations are now enforcing *in loco parentis* anti-sex codes. At Ohio’s “liberal” Antioch College, a “sexual consent policy” proscribes “Insistent and/or persistent sexual harassment... emotional, verbal or mental intimidation or abuse found to be sexually threatening or offensive... unwelcome and irrelevant comments, references, gestures or other forms of personal attention which are inappropriate and which may be perceived as persistent sexual overtones or denigration.” To avoid any misunderstandings, students must get “willing and verbal consent” at each stage of the sexual encounter: “If you want to take her blouse off, you have to ask. If you want to touch her breast, you have to ask. If you want to move your hand down to her genitals, you have to ask. If you want to put your finger inside her, you have to ask.” While many of us would be begging this motormouth to shut up and get on with it, this seemingly absurd scenario is serious: A woman can now cry “rape” if she *thinks* a guy might want to screw her, and the administration can suspend or expel the accused, who then faces the hideous legal ramifications of a bogus rape charge. Novelist Martin Amis, speaking at Princeton in 1992, quipped, “As far as I’m concerned you can change your mind before, even

during, but just not after sex.”

Lots of people think it’s fun to get drunk and screw, but if you go to Antioch it’s against the rules: If you’re drunk, your “consent is not meaningful”! At Ann Arbor sororities, one woman is picked to remain sober during frat parties; it’s her job to stop her sisters from going off with a guy to his room. The logic of the “date rape” frenzy is carried to its chilling extreme in a poster put up around Berkeley, “Dead Men Don’t Rape” and signed by the Women’s Action Coalition “We Will Take Action.”...

### “Date Rape”: Brutal Reality or a Political Program?

Statistics are notoriously susceptible to manipulation for political ends, and the statistics cited for the feminists’ “epidemic” of campus rape couldn’t be a better example. The evidence for “date



A lot of campus rapes start here.

Whenever there's drinking or drugs, things can get out of hand. So it's no surprise that many campus rapes involve alcohol. But you should know that under any circumstances, sex without the other person's consent is considered rape. A felony, punishable by prison. And drinking is no excuse. That's why when you party, it's good to know what your limits are. You see, a little sobering thought now can save you from a big problem later.

### “The fatal glass of beer” theory resurrected. Poster from 1990.

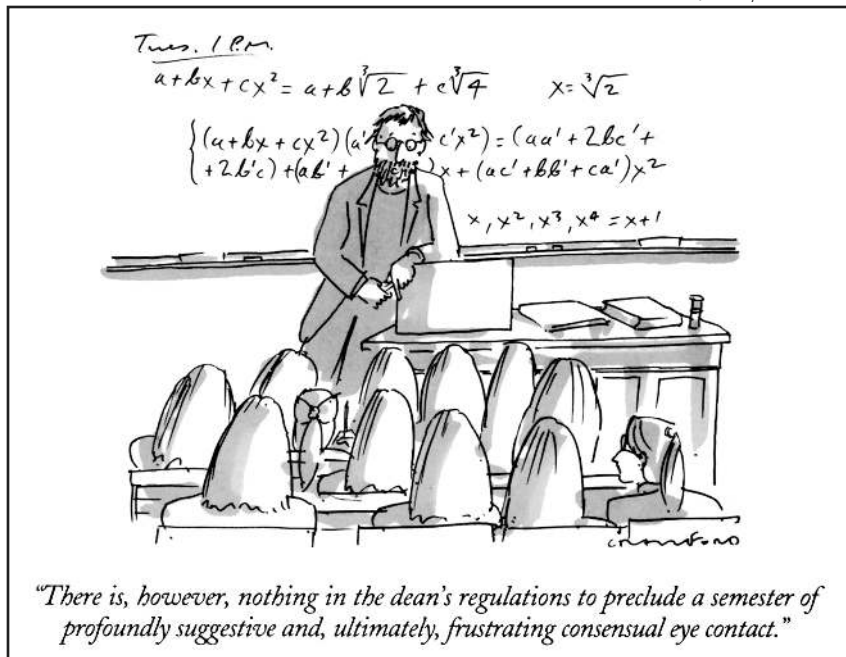
rape” rests on a 1985 survey by *Ms.* magazine, financed by the National Institute of Mental Health, which found that “one quarter of women in college today have been victims of rape or attempted rape.” But, as debunkers have pointed out, 73 percent of the women categorized as rape victims did not define their experience as rape—that was done by Dr. Mary Koss, the psychologist who analyzed the survey and who coined the term “date rape.” Some 42 percent of these women later had sex with the man who allegedly “raped” them!

Roiphe astutely points out that the “date rape epidemic” is not a reflection of sexual behavior but a “mood.” Just listen to its propagandists: “Without mutual desire” it’s a “form of rape,” according to Andrea Parrot, Cornell professor and “date rape expert.” The code words are “manipulation” and “verbal coercion”—defined as “a woman’s consenting to unwanted sexual activity because of a man’s verbal arguments not including verbal threats of force.” The etiquette guides of the 19th century told young women that attractive men “can with a subtlety almost beyond the power of her detection, change her ordinary views of things, confuse her judgements, and destroy her rational confidence in discriminating the powers of her own mind” (*Advice to Young Ladies*, 1848). The titles may be different, but today’s “sexual consent policies” peddle the same retrograde assumptions about the stereotype of the aggressive, violent man, who “wants only one thing,” and the weak, indecisive woman, uninterested in sex and requiring protection.

The definitions used in the “date rape” culture reflect the feminist view that heterosexual sex and rape are a natural

*continued on page 8*

Crawford/New Yorker



# “Date Rape”...

(continued from page 7)

progression. Naomi Wolf in *The Beauty Myth* (1991) writes: “Cultural representation of glamorized degradation has created a situation among the young in which boys rape and girls get raped *as a normal course of events*.” This is a rehash of Susan Brownmiller’s 1975 book, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, in which she argued that rape was “nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which *all men keep all women* in a state of fear.” According to Brownmiller’s contemporaries:

“Rape is not a special isolated act. It is not an aberration or deviation from the norms of sexual and social behavior in this country. Rape is simply at the end of the continuum of male-aggressive, female-passive patterns, and an arbitrary line has been drawn to mark it off from the rest of such relationships...most men in our country are potential rapists.”

—A. Medea and K. Thompson,  
*Against Rape*

At its extreme, rape is equated with sex, for example by anti-porn queen Catharine MacKinnon: “Compare victims’ reports of rape with women’s reports of sex,” she says. “They look a lot alike.” But contrary to feminist mythology, rape is not a “normative” expression of sexuality in this society. As we wrote in 1975 in “Rape and Bourgeois Justice” (*Young Spartacus* No. 29, February 1975):

“Rape transforms what is normally a pleasurable intimacy and consensual activity for sexual gratification into an experience of fear, degrading submission, brutality and often injury for the victim and into an overt expression of hostility and aggression for the rapist. Between the actuality of rape and the sex act per se there are differences. These differences may be considered as discontinuities in the continuum of sexual relations. It is precisely the feminists who make the value judgement that there are no discontinuities, no differences in kind, between mutually pleasurable, consensual sexual intercourse and a victimization and violation filled with terror and degradation.”

Rape at the final discontinuity ceases to be a sexual act.

Susan Estrich, feminist author of *Real Rape*, believes many women “would say no if they could” to any sex with men. Nonetheless she is quite correct that “The legal definition of rape turns on force and nonconsent, not on the relationship between accuser and accused.” We believe that effective consent should determine sexual relations—not the age, sex, number or degree of intimacy of the people involved. Because it’s the circumstances of a sexual encounter that determine whether it is a crime or an act of voluntary sexual intercourse, ambiguities about consensuality do and must occur, particularly when the people know each other. Consent is *always* colored by the society we live in. Consensuality is rendered something less than complete when sexist attitudes and economic constraints (however expressed through a complex set of social factors that make them more or less “acceptable”) keep estranged couples together. And given the tangle of race, sex and class in this bigoted society, relationships can often be emotionally exploitative and unequal—but to call them “crimes” is to bring in the government, which is the very enforcer of that bigotry and exploitation.

If among adults the psychology and sociology of sexual relations are murky and complex, they are all the more so when young people come into sexual contact with each other at the height of their *socialized* sexual differentiation, without any preparation or experience and without much access or opportunity. Sexual experimentation is one of the things youth is all about. Sex hormones are boiling for both young men and women, but the expressions of this sexuality differ. While the current crop of college women has been spared some of the guilt, shame and fear of pregnancy imposed on earlier generations, experiences vary from doing nothing to doing a lot. Social control over teenage boys is much less: they can be described as alienated young males charging an indifferent and hostile society

with an erection, and generally bouncing off. Young men will do almost *anything* to get off; mainly this takes the form of masturbation, but guys will get a girl in bed if they can. And contrary to feminist myth, they are often successful: many young women do like to screw.

Of course early sexual experiences are not always the most auspicious, particularly now that AIDS is a real fear. Condoms do not make for a spontaneous expression of passion. Teenagers often have to get drunk to get up the nerve to have sex, and they aren’t experienced at handling alcohol. Under these circumstances, premature ejaculation, fumbling, miscommunication are unfortunately probably the norm rather than the exception. But awkward, unpleasant, even manipulative experiences are *not* rape. In an interview with the London *Independent on Sunday* (31 October 1993), Mary Koss revealed an underlying assumption behind the “date rape epidemic”: “It isn’t drunkenness itself that determines whether or not you

violence. The laws exist for the protection of women as *property*, based on the moral code embodied in the institution of the family. Thus the real crime of rape in patriarchal societies of all kinds is that the woman is “defiled”; her value as a “pure” transmission belt for the inheritance of private property is damaged. In the U.S. this is expressed in the notorious harassment of the victim by the police. Victims are sometimes denied immediate medical attention and frequently find themselves on trial as courts subject them to rigorous moral scrutiny. For the cops and judges in America, a rape victim with a sexual past has no value to protect.

In strict Islamic societies, rape victims are often killed by their families; at best they cannot marry. Shrouding women in the veil in countries like Iran and Afghanistan is the ultimate in “protection of women,” meant to keep them in a condition of chattel slavery to husbands or fathers. This was not the least of our reasons for hailing the Soviet interven-



WV Photo

**Spartacist contingent at March 1994 Bay Area demonstration honoring Dr. David Gunn, murdered by anti-abortion fanatics.**

get raped, it’s whether you have the misfortune to be drunk around a sexual jerk.” If finesse defines consensuality, one gets an idea of the genesis of her “one in four women raped” statistic.

The difficulties of teenage sex result in part from religious moralism which reinforces the myth of asexuality of youth in this society and in part from sexual stereotyping which tries to make bullies out of little boys and compliant dolls out of little girls. Moreover, deforming puritanism and bigotry in North American society all but seals off, especially for boys, anything but heterosexual activity.

It would surely help to have sex education that prepared young people for screwing. An understanding of the reproductive system is important, but somewhat more pertinent for youth than the placement of a girl’s Fallopian tubes is the existence of her clitoris. Instead, the federal government has spent over \$31 million to develop an “abstinence only” curriculum which teaches “the only safe sex is no sex,” doesn’t mention condoms or homosexuality, and counsels girls that have had sex already to practice “second virginity.” This does not differ much from the message of pamphlets distributed at some college orientations to teach of the danger of AIDS: “To eliminate risk, abstain from sex or avoid sexual intimacy beyond fantasy, massage and mutual masturbation.” In this sexually charged society, the message that teenagers get from these moral strictures is that when adults tell you “what’s good for you” it’s all hypocrisy and lies.

## Rape Laws and “Family Values”

...Rape is a hideous crime, one which embodies all the sexual myths and stereotypes of this deeply racist society. But the juridical basis of the current rape laws has little to do with protecting women against

tion in Afghanistan in 1979, which alone held forth the prospect of freeing women from this bondage. Indifferent to the plight of their Afghan “sisters,” American feminists backed the CIA’s cutthroat *mujahedin* allies in their fight against the Red Army.

Despite the inherent contradictions of “justice” in the bourgeois court system, we do not oppose the rape laws per se and could well support prosecution of an accused rapist in a given situation. We take a very different attitude, however, to the statutory rape laws, which prohibit *any* sexual intercourse with *any* girl under the age of consent (which varies from state to state). Such laws exist only to oppress young people and are almost always prosecuted in a vindictive manner by the state. In New York, for example, a 19-year-old boy can go to jail for spending the night with his 17-year-old girlfriend.

## The Social Tinder of Race and Sex

The reform of the rape laws in the 1970s made it easier for a woman to prosecute, but it also made it easier to railroad the accused on purely vindictive charges. In this racist society the new laws have been used to further victimize black people. In a country where the ultimate taboo is interracial sex, the ruling class never hesitates to pull out all the stops in their manipulation of sexual fear in the service of racial oppression. Nor are the feminists wanting in this regard.

Emmett Till, a 14-year-old black youth, was hideously mutilated and murdered in Mississippi in 1955 for “reckless eyeballing” a white man’s wife. This monstrous racist lynching was a touchstone on the race question. But 20 years later Susan Brownmiller disgustingly insisted that Till had something in common with one of the murderers: “*They both understood*

that...it was a deliberate insult just short of physical assault, a last reminder to Carolyn Bryant that this black boy, Till, had in mind to possess her.” In her book Katie Roiphe recalls Emmett Till’s case, and describes how at George Washington University a female student fabricated a story about “two muscular young-looking black males” in “torn dirty clothing” raping a white student; she later recanted.

Roiphe rightly points out that the feminist insistence that male catcalls and leers are tantamount to rape is no different from the accusations of “reckless eyeballing” that formed the basis for white lynch mob attacks on blacks in the South. But Roiphe relegates it to a lesson of history, asserting that “lynchings and Jim Crow are not the current danger.” In fact, the protection of “Southern white womanhood” remains the bloody battle cry of the Ku Klux Klan. Legal lynching is a current reality: In 1990, a 21-year-old black man, David Scott Campbell, was found hanged in a Mississippi jail, one of 24 blacks who were declared “suicides” in the state’s prison system in the past five years. Campbell was arrested on a year-old warrant, but in the eyes of the cops his “crime” was dating a white woman.

The institution of the family inculcates powerful anxieties and superstitious fears which are especially prone to social control by reactionary forces. “Take Back the Night” marches are reactionary, not-so-thinly veiled calls to strengthen the state and its repressive apparatus, the racist cops; along with slogans like “Dead Men Can’t Rape” and “Castrate Rapists,” they’re a lynch mob waiting to happen. (The demand for castration is especially horrifying: this brutality was performed on black men by the slavocracy until as late as the 19th century, when even they abandoned it as too barbaric; and for decades the Klan performed it in lynchings.)

[....]

The “date rape” hoax is a cynical and dangerous business because it invokes government authority to intervene as moral arbiter in our most intimate affairs and fuels a state-sponsored campaign of sexual regimentation in the service of bolstering the reactionary institution of the family. While Marxists cannot decree either a just or a pleasurable solution to the ambiguities that arise out of the intersection of sex, race and class in this capitalist society, we can and do oppose all attempts to fit human sexuality into legislated and decreed “norms.” Back-alley abortions, prostitution, unwanted pregnancies, physical and sexual violence and racial oppression are the sordid reality behind “public morality.”

The “date rape” fraud deflects attention from the real violence perpetuated every day against women and children under this class system. Social degradation and dehumanization (which permeate sexual relations as all else) is rooted in the nature of this society and the exploitation of labor. The social alienation of a system in which the vast mass of people are tools for the enrichment of the very few is compounded by the institutionalized inequalities of race, nationality and sex. Violence against women springs in part from the deep sexual insecurities fostered by repressiveness and social irrationality.

This system is also imperialist, reaping billions off the Third World masses who are deliberately pushed down into starvation, illiteracy and endemic disease, and held down by brutal dictatorships. Subjected to oppressive practices like female genital mutilation or enforced segregation under the veil and in the home, most women get to watch their children die and to die young themselves, often in childbirth or after some botched abortion.

To create genuinely free and equal relations between people in all spheres, including sex, requires nothing less than the destruction of this class system and the creation of a communist world. In a classless society social and economic constraints over sexual relations will be nonexistent, and in the words of Frederick Engels, “there is no other motive left except mutual inclination.” ■



# ILWU...

(continued from page 12)

the ILWU of engaging in a “slowdown.” The Republican Bush administration—which had earlier warned that a strike would “threaten national security” and drawn up plans to militarize the docks—brought down Taft-Hartley, forcing longshoremen back to work under conditions dictated by the PMA.

There should be no illusion that things are different with a Democrat in the White House. Contrary to the trade-union bureaucracy’s promotion of the Democrats as the allies of labor, they represent the interests of American capitalism no less than the Republicans. That Obama will stand with the PMA is as obvious as the flotilla of armed Coast Guard ships his administration had readied to use in the ILWU’s 2011-12 battle against the union-busting EGT grain consortium in Longview, Washington. Federal mediators and other agencies like the National Labor Relations Board are merely the government’s advance men whose purpose is to bring the unions to heel.

The showdown between the PMA and the ILWU could become a critical class battle in which all labor has a stake. The ILWU has enormous potential social power. With the offshoring of much manufacturing and the just-in-time delivery system, a strike would quickly paralyze whole sectors of the U.S. economy. But the union has been weakened and is increasingly isolated as it faces a confrontation with the powerful conglomerate of shipping and terminal operators—and behind them the forces of the capitalist state.

## Union Hiring Hall Under Attack

For months, the contract negotiations were portrayed as the smoothest in years. In late August, an agreement was announced on health benefits, which had been seen as a major hurdle. Details were left unsaid, and looming on the horizon in 2018 is a whopping \$150 million annual Obamacare tax on the ILWU’s so-called “Cadillac” health plan. Even now, the union’s membership is left in the dark as to what’s on the table. Nevertheless, there are warning signs. A backdrop to the present confrontation is the ILWU’s recent contract agreement with major grain terminals in the Pacific Northwest, which are not part of the PMA. After a lengthy battle in which ILWU members working at United Grain in Vancouver, Washington, and Columbia Grain in Portland, Oregon, were locked out for well over a year while scabs did their jobs, the settlement essentially guts the union hiring hall.

The hiring hall was a key gain of the momentous 1934 West Coast longshore strike. Under the previous hated “shape-up” system, corrupt and brutal gang bosses in



ILWU Local 6 workers on strike at Waste Management recycling center, San Leandro, California, October 24.

the service of the companies had total power to select who among the men desperately gathered at the ports each morning would be allowed to work. To win union control over hiring, the longshoremen fought an all-out battle against the companies, the cops and National Guard troops. The implementation of the rotary dispatch system was designed to equalize work opportunity among longshoremen, with the union having the decisive say in the system.

Ever since, this system has been a thorn in the side of West Coast shipping, terminal and export trade bosses, who bristle at the fact that they don’t have the same hiring prerogatives as employers in almost every other industry or workplace in capitalist America. In the 1960s, following the introduction of container shipping, the PMA got a foot in the door with a contract provision allowing for “steady men.” These skilled workers bypass the hiring hall, reporting directly to stevedoring companies. They are paid a premium and are also guaranteed a minimum of work each month. This subversion of the hiring hall has long been a dagger pointed at the heart of the union.

In longshore operations, “steady men” are restricted to crane operators, mechanics and certain heavy equipment operators. But the recent grain contracts give those companies the right to hire unlimited steady workers for *all* job categories at their terminals. Management has sole discretion over whether additional workers will be ordered on a day-to-day basis for terminal work. The hall crews formerly required for work on river barges have been eliminated, although gangs from the hall will still be dispatched to load the ships. However, if the hall cannot supply adequate “qualified” labor, management has the right to hire non-ILWU labor or use supervisors to do the work. The key terminal job of operating the console that

controls the flow of grain was ceded to management, as was the job overseeing the loading of ships.

One of the gains of the mass struggles that built the ILWU was the six-hour day. Now, even the eight-hour day (long the norm) is a thing of the past in grain, as the companies are allowed to extend shifts up to 12 hours, an ominous threat to health and safety. At the same time, provisions allowing longshoremen to “stand

as well as the victory of other strikes that year by Minneapolis Teamsters and Toledo auto parts workers—was a leadership committed to a class-struggle policy. As we wrote in Part One of our article “Then and Now” (WV Nos. 1050 and 1051, 8 August and 5 September) contrasting these strikes with today’s devastation of organized labor:

“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. And it was no easy fight.”

## Not the Time to Be Making New Enemies

In August 2013, on the eve of the AFL-CIO’s convention, the ILWU split from the federation. At the time, ILWU International president Robert McEllrath pointed to escalating attacks on the West Coast longshore union by AFL-CIO affiliates. These charges were all too true. One of the more notorious examples was the strikebreaking role played by the Operating Engineers Local 701, which supplied scab labor during the ILWU’s fight against EGT.



Union-run hiring hall was a major gain of coastwide 1934 longshore strike. Shown here is San Francisco hall, 1946.

by” (stop work) if they feel their safety is threatened have been vitiated. Not only is management allowed to work their jobs if the matter is not immediately resolved, but the workers can be subject to discipline up to and including firing if an arbitrator rules the safety claim was not made “in good faith.”

The trendsetter for these agreements was the 2012 contract at the new, multimillion-dollar EGT terminal in Longview. Early in the battle against EGT’s union-busting offensive, ILWU members and their allies fought back in class-struggle actions, the likes of which had not been seen in this country in years. But in the face of massive fines, the ILWU International backed off. With military forces mobilized by the Obama administration to escort the first shipment of scab grain out of the terminal, an agreement was signed. Subverting the hiring hall, it gave EGT complete control over which ILWU members would be approved to work at its terminal. In the new grain agreements, workers dispatched from the hall are not subject to company pre-approval, nor are there fines and other penalties for unauthorized work stoppages as at EGT. But this is small consolation.

No doubt the PMA sees the grain agreements as an opening to press its own advantage against the ILWU. Pointing to the tie-up at the container ports, an article in the shipping industry’s publication of record, the *Journal of Commerce* (5 November), argues that the grain companies “found a solution to the problems generated by such tactics” with contracts that “in effect give control of the hiring hall to the employers.”

What made the difference in the 1934 longshore strike that won the hiring hall—

Other attacks have come as part of the dirty game of jurisdictional warfare pitting union against union in a scramble to defend their own shrinking turf. Here the ILWU bureaucracy’s hands are no cleaner than those of the AFL-CIO tops. Faced with the PMA’s drive to increasingly mechanize operations on the docks, the ILWU leadership’s answer is to claim jurisdiction over maintenance and other mechanical service jobs, a number of which are currently done by the IAM machinists and other unions.

Turning its back on any fight to mobilize *unity* in action of all unions at the ports, including the East and Gulf Coast ILA longshoremen, the ILWU has only greased the skids for more backstabbing by the trade-union bureaucrats by splitting from the AFL-CIO. In a recent strike by some 130 recycling workers, organized by ILWU Local 6, at Oakland’s Waste Management plant, Teamsters truck drivers at the facility scabbed, herded across the picket lines by their union bureaucrats! ILWU Local 6 members chanted “Remember 2007,” referring to when they honored locked-out Teamsters pickets at the same facility. The bureaucrats’ alibi was that the Local 6 strike was not officially sanctioned by the Teamsters Joint Council or the Alameda Labor Council, the latter reportedly arguing that “sanction” could not be given to a union not affiliated with the AFL-CIO.

The strikebreaking actions of the Teamsters against mainly Latino immigrant workers, many of them women, fighting for a meager increase in their poverty-level wages were a crime against all labor. But the ILWU tops have done likewise,

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## Spartacus Youth Club Events

### BAY AREA

**Thursday, November 20, 7:30 p.m.**  
**The Fight for Black Freedom Today**  
SFSU, Cesar Chavez Student Center  
Room T-153  
Information and readings:  
(510) 839-0851 • sycbayarea@fastmail.net

### TORONTO

**Thursday, November 20, 7 p.m.**  
**From Marikana Miners to B.C. Port Truckers—The Social Power of the Working Class**  
University of Toronto  
Sidney Smith Hall, Room 2114  
100 St. George Street  
Information and readings:  
(416) 593-4138 • spartacan@on.aibn.com

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

### LOS ANGELES

**Monday, November 17, 7 p.m.**  
**Meet the Marxists**  
3806 Beverly Blvd., Room 215  
Los Angeles  
Information and readings:  
(213) 380-8239 • slycla@sbcglobal.net

**Wednesday, December 3, 7 p.m.**  
**Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution**  
UCLA, Kerckhoff Hall, Room 152  
Information and readings:  
(213) 380-8239 • slycla@sbcglobal.net

### NEW YORK CITY

**Tuesday, November 18, 7 p.m.**  
**Fascism: What It Is and How to Fight It**  
City College of New York  
NAC Rm. 1/209  
138th St. and Amsterdam Avenue  
(Take #1 train to 137th St.-City College)  
Information and readings:  
(212) 267-1025 • nysl@tiac.net

# Syria/Iraq...

(continued from page 1)

petty-bourgeois Kurdish nationalists to ingratiate themselves with the imperialists and/or regional capitalist regimes. At all times, this program has meant betraying the just struggles of the Kurdish people.

The Kurdish nation is divided among Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey—a legacy of the carving up of the Near East by British and French imperialism out of the carcass of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I. The national liberation of the Kurdish people requires the proletarian overthrow of those states and the forging of a Socialist Republic of United Kurdistan. Kurdish national aspirations must be linked to the struggles of the working class in Turkey and throughout the Near East and beyond. Centrally important to this perspective is the presence of as many as one million Kurds in Germany, where they are heavily integrated into the working class. These workers are a living bridge between the struggles of Near Eastern Kurds and those of the powerful German working class against its exploiters.

The Kurdish nationalist and tribal leaders have compiled a century-long record of betrayal, leading to one disaster after



**First issue of *Ria Taza* [New Way], Kurdish-language newspaper published in Soviet Armenia in 1930s.**

another for the Kurdish masses. When the Turkish Ottoman empire launched the genocidal campaign against the Armenians during World War I, in which as many as one million or more were massacred, it was assisted by Kurds mobilized by their tribal leaders. The Kurds were subsequently rewarded with merciless repression. In consolidating the modern Turkish state, Mustapha Kemal (Ataturk) sought to destroy the Kurds’ national identity, banning the use of their language. Repeated Kurdish revolts were brutally suppressed, with hundreds of thousands deported to central and western Turkey.

It was the Soviet Union, created by the proletarian 1917 Russian Revolution, that showed the way out of this cycle of ethnic and communal slaughter and created the

conditions for the Kurds to achieve their greatest degree of freedom. Under V.I. Lenin’s Bolshevik regime, the 200,000 Kurds in the fledgling workers state were granted full political and language rights. Autonomous administration was granted to Kurdish districts in the Caucasus, with education and government business conducted in their language. It was in Soviet Armenia that a written Kurdish language first flourished (initially in the Armenian alphabet, followed by Latin and Cyrillic). The Armenian capital, Yerevan, became the first center of Kurdish publishing and literary development. The bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet state under J.V. Stalin did not erase these gains, even after Stalin dissolved “Red Kurdistan” in 1929. By the 1930s, all Soviet Kurds were literate, compared to a mere 1 percent before the Revolution.

The actions of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), today led by Massoud Barzani, and Jalal Talabani’s Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) in Iraq provide a textbook example of how looking for allies among local capitalist rulers and their imperialist godfathers spells defeat. After the Arab nationalist Ba’ath regime that was installed in Iraq in 1963 launched an attack on the Kurds, the KDP got support from an unholy alliance of the CIA, the Israeli Mossad and the Shah of Iran. In return, the KDP turned on the Iranian Kurds, hunting them down and turning them over to the Shah. After a cease-fire with the Ba’ath regime in 1970, the Kurds secured a large autonomous region in northern Iraq.

As always, the Kurds’ supposed benefactors turned on them. In 1975, the Shah made a separate peace with Hussein and cut off support to the Kurds, with the CIA quickly following suit. This allowed the Iraqi army to surge back into the Kurdish area. The subsequent wave of repression forced more than 100,000 Kurds to flee the region. Shortly afterward, during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88), the KDP got support from Iran while the PUK made a cease-fire deal with Hussein. In 1983, the U.S. began a tilt toward Iraq in the conflict. With arms and other aid flowing in from the U.S. and Europe—including the technology to develop poison gas and biological weapons—the Iraqi regime was emboldened to move against the Kurdish population. The PUK then joined with the KDP and Iranian armed forces, which moved deep into Iraqi Kurdistan. Hussein responded by launching air bombardment and poison gas attacks, killing Kurds by the thousands.

During Operation Desert Storm, America’s first war on Iraq in 1991, the KDP and PUK sided with the imperialists. Following the war, the Kurds rose up in the vain expectation that the U.S. would back them. The uprising was brutally suppressed by the Iraqi government, and this time the number of refugees exceeded one million. Nevertheless, the Iraqi Kurds were able to set up their autonomous region as a result of a U.S.-enforced “no fly zone” in the north of the country. During the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, both the KDP and PUK operated under American command and then served as military auxiliaries to the occupation



**U.S. troops on duty with Kurdish *pesh merga* militia during war in Iraq, March 2003.**

forces. For nearly a decade, Barzani has held office in the oil-rich north, and Talabani served as president of the Baghdad government from 2005 to July 2014.

While the Kurdish leaders have benefited handsomely from their services to the imperialists, the masses have paid with their blood. Throughout the Iraq occupation, the U.S. manipulated and reinforced sectarian divisions, including by mobilizing the Kurdish *pesh merga* along with Shi’ite militias to crush Sunni insurgents in Falluja in 2004 as American troops leveled that city. From encouraging Shi’ite death squads to rounding up Sunnis associated with Saddam Hussein’s Ba’ath Party, the Shi’ite-dominated Baghdad government poured gas on the exploding sectarian powder keg. It was out of the ruins of such communal warfare that Al Qaeda in Iraq, which later morphed into ISIS, emerged and gained support from many aggrieved Sunnis.

## The PKK, Syria and Turkey

The PKK, which used to pass off its nationalist program as a variant of “Marxism-Leninism,” got a foothold in Syrian Kurdistan in the late 1970s as a result of tensions between Turkey and Syria. At the time, Syria became a close ally of Iran, as it is today, and was also aligned with the Soviet Union. Seeking to use the Kurds against his Turkish rivals, then-president of Syria Hafez al-Assad (father of the current president) allowed the PKK to open offices in Damascus and establish training centers in Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley, which was under Syrian control. A high proportion of PKK fighters in Turkey—as many as a third by some estimates—were and are today Syrian Kurds.

At the same time, Hafez al-Assad’s Arab nationalist regime moved to deepen the oppression of the Kurdish people in Syria. He actively sought to settle Arab tribes on Kurdish land and continued to deny citizenship to hundreds of thousands of Kurds. Today, some 300,000 of them are stateless.

The destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991 increased Syria’s vulnerability

to Turkey’s much greater military power. By 1998, facing the threat of military intervention by Turkey, Assad banned the PKK, imprisoned a number of its leaders and kicked out PKK founding leader Abdullah Öcalan. The following year, Öcalan was captured with the assistance of the CIA and imprisoned in Turkey. In subsequent years, PKK fighters in Syria and Lebanon were forced to relocate to northern Iraq.

The 2011 outbreak of the Syrian civil war provided the PKK/PYD with a new lease on life. The regime of Bashar al-Assad and the Kurdish PYD shared an antipathy toward the Sunni Arab rebels. Even those Syrian Kurdish parties that were initially willing to play ball with the U.S., Turkey and others in setting up a united opposition in exile eventually withdrew from the main anti-Assad coalition because the non-Kurdish rebel groups rejected any form of autonomy for the Kurds. The PYD told Free Syrian Army (FSA) forces to stay away from Kurdish territory. The warning was generally heeded, although there have been intermittent clashes between the FSA and the YPG. Assad sought to encourage the tension by conciliating the Kurds, allowing some to have their citizenship restored and assenting to the transfer of around 1,000 PKK fighters from Iraq to Syria.

July 2012 marked an important pivot in the Syrian civil war, as rebel forces launched an offensive in Damascus (killing three members of Assad’s inner circle in a bomb attack). With rebels advancing on the outskirts of the capital, Assad reached a tacit agreement with the PYD. Syrian troops were withdrawn from Kurdish areas and PYD forces quickly moved in virtually without military confrontation. This freed up regime forces to fight the rebellion in Damascus and elsewhere.

The main foes of the PYD were now the Nusra Front and ISIS. A detailed on-site study earlier this year by the International Crisis Group (ICG), an advisory body to the imperialists, documented cases in which the YPG, while engaged

# ILWU...

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ordering their members to cross the picket lines of overwhelmingly immigrant, unorganized and viciously exploited port truckers in Oakland and more recently at the L.A./Long Beach port. Now locked in a showdown with the PMA, the ILWU finds itself with few friends and many real and potential enemies. Faced with the backstabbing moves of the trade-union misleaders, all workers had better understand that if a union with the strength of the ILWU goes down, it will be a savage body blow to labor as a whole.

## For a Class-Struggle Leadership!

In his letter of disaffiliation from the AFL-CIO, McEllrath pointed to the

ILWU’s “long and proud history of militant independence inside and outside the House of Labor.” The notion of the ILWU as the last remaining bastion of labor militancy is one readily belied by the actual history and practice of its leadership. In fact, the last coastwide ILWU strike was in 1971, more than 40 years ago. That strike was largely foisted on the union leadership, then under ILWU founder Harry Bridges, by a membership seething over the massive loss of jobs under the 1960 Mechanization and Modernization Agreement that he had negotiated and rammed down their throats.

Key to reversing the erosion of the ILWU as an industrial power on the West Coast docks is defense of the union hiring hall. That means a fight to bring all the steady men back to the hall, with equal pay for equal work at the highest rate of

pay. The answer to the job loss threatened by the increasing automation of the ports is to return to one of the union’s first achievements, the six-hour day, at no loss in pay to spread the available work among all longshoremen. There must be a fight to organize the port truckers, who are crucial to the movement of cargo. As a key link in the vast global cargo chain, the largely immigrant port truckers, many of whom have experiences in class battles and other struggles in their home countries, have tremendous potential social power to take on the trucking companies and, behind them, the international shipping and terminal bosses. Such an organizing effort, combined with the fight for a shorter work-week at no loss in pay, would also forge bonds with the black and Latino poor by opening up good-paying union jobs.

The road forward lies in the struggle

to build a class-struggle labor leadership that will fight in opposition to the aims and interests of American capitalism, its government and political parties. For the workers to prevail over their exploiters, it is essential that labor’s fight be linked to the building of a multiracial revolutionary workers party capable of leading the struggle to do away with this entire system of wage slavery through socialist revolution. When those who labor rule, the means of production will be taken out of the hands of the rapacious capitalist owners and made the collective property of society, ultimately on an international scale. Then, advances in automation and other technology, which are now wielded as a club against the workers’ jobs and livelihoods, will be used to reduce their workload and vastly improve the conditions of life for the population as a whole.■

## WORKERS VANGUARD

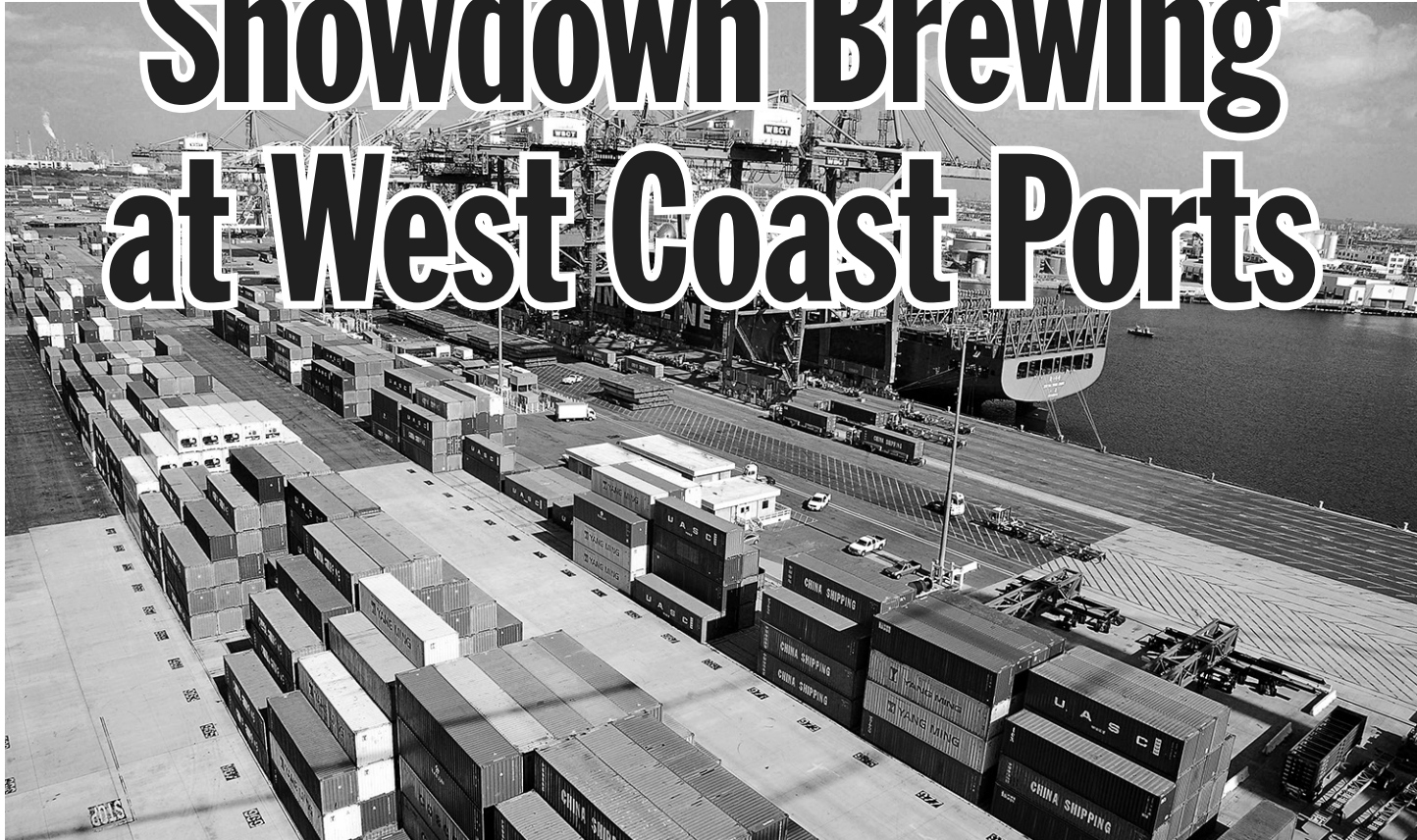




# WORKERS VANGUARD

## Shipping Bosses Accuse ILWU of Tying Up Docks

# Showdown Brewing at West Coast Ports



Containers piled up at Port of Los Angeles, October 27.

Reuters

10 NOVEMBER—For over four months, some 14,000 members of the West Coast International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) have been working without a contract. Now, the shipping and terminal

bosses organized in the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) are screaming that the ILWU has “orchestrated work slowdowns” that are “crippling” ports from Seattle and Tacoma to Los Angeles/Long

Beach. Charging that the union reneged on its agreement that “normal operations at West Coast ports would continue until an agreement could be reached,” the PMA is demanding an extension of the previous

contract. The ILWU slammed the PMA’s claim as “a bold-faced lie,” pointing out that the union has never agreed to a definition of “normal operations.” What the union is up against is the “normal,” relentless drive of the companies to maximize profits by increasing productivity through attacks on hard-won union work rules and job conditions.

An ILWU press release issued today puts the blame on the bosses for creating the bottleneck at L.A./Long Beach through mismanaging port operations and undermanning the work at a time of increased volume. The squeeze on longshore labor is a matter of life and death. As the press release stated: “West Coast longshore work is extremely hazardous, with higher fatality rates than the work of firefighters or police officers, according to U.S. Department of Labor figures. The biggest factor causing accidents on the docks is the employers’ constant demand for increased production.”

With ships stacking up at ports that handle nearly 80 percent of container shipping on the West Coast, a group of more than 100 retail and transportation companies fired off a letter to President Barack Obama demanding that the government “use all of its available options” to head off the growing confrontation. They called for everything from sending in a federal mediator to invoking the union-busting Taft-Hartley law in the event of a strike or lockout. During the 2002 contract negotiations, the PMA locked out longshoremen for 11 days after accusing

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## “Yes Means Yes” Law: Anti-Woman, Anti-Sex

# Sex and Consent on Campus

Amid an ongoing debate over sex and consent on college campuses, in September California passed “affirmative consent” legislation, which was followed by a slew of similar initiatives nationwide. The pretext is to curb a purported epidemic of sexual violence and have college administrations come clean on reporting sexual assault complaints. But legislating one form of consent as the only acceptable variant and branding all else as assault—as these new policies do—means that these administrations now have even greater power to enforce what is acceptable sexual activity among students.

The new California code, known as “yes means yes,” dictates that “affirmative, conscious, and voluntary agreement” must be ongoing throughout an entire coupling. Acts without explicit agreement or while under the influence of drugs or alcohol are not considered consensual. As many young students are unskilled at both sex and drinking, this combination often results in morning-after misgivings and bad hangovers. In an *American Spectator* article online titled “In California, Every Love Scene Ever Filmed Is Rape” (2 October), one commentator aptly captured that state lawmakers have made “every drunken collegiate hookup a potential sexual assault.”

Like the “date rape” frenzy in the 1990s (see article, page 7), the current campaign invites campus bureaucrats into the bedroom to poke, pry and criminalize a range of customary sexual activity—from intoxicated make-out sessions to miscommunicated caresses or overly zealous groping. Regimenting sex is a morality drive, and laws dictating affirmative consent give the campus sex police an even freer hand to say what is immoral, much like former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart’s standard for pornography: “I know it when I see it.” *Campus administrations, government out of the bedroom!*

What might be in store for students is shown by a case from Occidental College in Los Angeles. In September 2013, after a day of binge drinking, two heavily intoxicated freshmen planned to have sex, exchanging text messages about having a condom. The next day, neither could recall what happened. The young woman was told by a sociology professor that she had been raped, evidenced by her difficulty sleeping and because the man “fit the profile of other rapists.” In police interviews, witnesses said both students were willing participants exercising bad judgment. But Occidental’s investigation determined that *he* violated school policy because *she* was drunk, i.e., he

failed to recognize that her drunken consent was meaningless. Occidental found him guilty of sexual assault, rejected his appeal and expelled him. As a result of this botched one-night stand—details of which are in an 82-page report online—both lives are ruined. She dropped out of school and he has been rejected by other colleges and stigmatized as a rapist.

The suggestion that a misunderstanding—or for that matter, bad or unpleasant sex—is equivalent to rape is not only ludicrous but dangerously trivializing of actual sexual violence. Human sexual behavior is certainly complex, but it is not one broad continuum from the innocuous hookup to violent rape. Rape is a heinous crime of degradation and terror whose victims have every right to legal recourse. One much-discussed article in *New York* magazine (21 September) on student activists “starting a revolution against campus sexual assault” captures the effort to make all sexual acts suspect: “Frustration with hook-up culture is undeniably a part of the anti-rape movement. In some activists’ ideal world, there might be no trial, on campus or elsewhere, but instead a simple presumption of guilt.”

For us Marxists, the guiding principle in all sexual relations is that of *effective consent*, meaning nothing more and

nothing less than mutual agreement and understanding, as opposed to coercion. The social norms surrounding sexuality—colored by shame, fear and religious mores, not to mention gender, class and racial inequalities—can complicate matters. But as long as those who take part agree at the time, nobody else, least of all the state, has the right to tell them how or if they can do it.

Sexual violence is an extreme reflection of the degraded status of women in this decaying capitalist social order. More often than not, going to the authorities who enforce that order, whether it be the police or the campus administration, adds more trauma on top of the sexual assault itself. It is a reflection of entrenched anti-woman bigotry that those looking for redress are subjected to indifference or “blame the victim” humiliation, or pressured into recanting.

The “yes means yes” campaign will do nothing to curtail actual rape, let alone address the social degradation and abuse perpetrated daily against women and children under this class system. Instead, the capitalist rulers have seized on the campaign to drum up fears among the population while reinforcing obedience to god and country and bolstering the bourgeois

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