

## Shut Down All the Refineries!

# Victory to Oil Workers Strike!



AP

February 7: Striking workers rally at entrance to Marathon oil refinery in Catlettsburg, Kentucky.

Some 5,200 oil refinery workers represented by the United Steelworkers (USW) are now on strike, chiefly over health and safety issues as well as the contracting out of maintenance jobs. Inadequate staffing forces workers to endure 12-hour shifts for as many as 16 days in a row, leaving them completely exhausted. Such grueling schedules are a major safety issue in this inherently dangerous industry made deadlier by corporate profit-gouging.

Even according to the bosses' own reports, a fire or explosion occurs at a refinery almost every week. In 2005, a vapor leak at the BP refinery in Texas City, Texas, ignited when a contractor attempted to start his pickup; the resulting explosion killed 15 workers and injured more than 170. A fire at the Chevron refinery

## Picket Lines Mean Don't Cross!

in Richmond, California, in August 2012 nearly incinerated 19 employees and forced 15,000 nearby residents to seek medical treatment for respiratory and other ailments. There must be union control of safety, including the right to stop work over dangerous conditions.

Organized labor has taken one hit after another in the bosses' decades-long war

on the unions. A real fight by the refinery workers—for many years organized in the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers (OCAW) before ending up through mergers in the USW—could breathe some life into the union movement. USW members produce 64 percent of the fuel in the U.S., meaning that they have tremendous potential social power. Shutting down

refinery production altogether would not only cut off the flow of profits to Big Oil but also quickly cause the gears of industry to grind to a halt, threatening the bottom line of a broad section of the U.S. capitalist class.

However, the USW bureaucracy has the union engaging in battle with both hands tied behind its back. When the national contract covering 65 oil refineries expired on February 1, the USW initially struck only nine of those facilities, in California, Texas, Kentucky and Washington state. One week later, the strike was extended to BP refineries in Whiting, Indiana, and Toledo, Ohio. The bulk of the 30,000 USW refinery workers continue to work under rolling 24-hour contract extensions,

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## Capitalist Syriza Government: No Friend of Workers Imperialists Squeeze Greece

FEBRUARY 16—Negotiations in Brussels broke off today when representatives of the Greek government, led by the bourgeois Syriza party, rejected demands by European Union (EU) finance ministers that Greece hew to the austerity conditions of its 240 billion euro (\$272 billion) bailout, which is due to expire at the end of this month. Wracked by a prolonged economic depression, masses of Greek workers and sections of the petty bourgeoisie have been thrown into destitution as the EU bankers make them pay for the massive national debt, now almost twice the country's gross domestic product. As detailed below in a February 10 report by the Trotskyist Group of Greece, Syr-

iza, while offering anti-austerity rhetoric, has made clear its intention to maintain Greece's use of the euro currency and membership in the EU, an imperialist trade bloc.

In a statement for the January 25 elections, our Greek comrades explained that "the EU's purpose is to enable the imperialist powers of Europe, led by Germany, to subordinate weaker capitalist countries like Greece and impose savage austerity on working people throughout Europe, including in Germany" (see "Greece: European Union Austerity Elections," WV No. 1060, 23 January). In contrast to the bulk of ostensible socialists, the TGG opposed voting for Syriza, "not only because it is committed to keeping Greece in the EU, which is a pledge for more hunger and joblessness, but also because it does not in any way represent the interests of the working class." The TGG called for votes to the Greek Communist Party (KKE), which stood

in opposition both to the EU and to Syriza, while sharply criticizing the KKE's nationalist populism, an obstacle to revolutionary working-class consciousness.

With the EU masters demanding blood, Syriza has been able to rally mass support on the basis of national unity, something that the two previous bourgeois governments could not do. Huge demonstrations have taken place in Athens, Thessaloniki and other cities in support of the government. The main call for a protest in Athens last week made clear that the purpose of the rallies was to provide Syriza with "the best bargaining chip" for the Brussels talks.

As internationalist communists, the TGG comrades have uniquely put forward a revolutionary perspective for combating the attacks on workers and the oppressed, writing in a statement on the elections:

"A Greek exit from the EU as a result of militant workers struggle would be

an important step forward, but not a solution in itself. The crisis in Greece is part of a world economic crisis of the imperialist system, which cannot be resolved within the borders of any single country, particularly within small, dependent Greece with its low level of industry and resources. The only way forward is a series of socialist revolutions that will expropriate the bourgeoisies, including in the imperialist centers, and establish an internationally collectivized, planned economy under workers rule. For a Socialist United States of Europe!"

\* \* \*

Syriza achieved an overwhelming victory in the January 25 elections with 36 percent of the vote. Despite the fact that Syriza spent the last couple of years, and especially the weeks before the election, furiously backpedaling on just about every piece of leftist window-dressing in its program, there are real illusions in Syriza among layers of the workers and

*continued on page 3*



## Measles in the U.S.

# Anti-Vaxxers: A Rash of Irrationality

The current Disneyland measles outbreak has brought the benighted anti-vaccine movement back into the limelight. With measles declared eradicated in this country over a decade ago, its comeback is a direct outcome of a decline in rates of MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccination. Exuding unbridled individualism, parents tout their right to personal “choice” in not immunizing their own children, a choice that gambles with the health and lives of vulnerable populations

like infants and the sick. Now there is the harsh reminder: measles is an extremely contagious respiratory disease that can lead to irreparable brain damage, blindness and death. So far this year, over 120 cases have been confirmed across at least 17 states.

In today’s anti-Enlightenment “Age of Endarkenment,” science-based medicine has lost ground to superstition and faith. The media crows over a vaccine “debate,” but the only debate is between

fact and fiction. The fact is that vaccines have saved the lives of countless millions across the world. Before the measles vaccine’s introduction in 1963, four million cases were reported annually in the U.S. There is no better proof of the effectiveness of immunization, which made those numbers plummet to practically nil, than that measles is unknown to most young parents today. Ironically, the near disappearance of many preventable illnesses has given anti-vaxxers fodder to discount the danger of infectious diseases like measles, diphtheria or whooping cough.

Vaccine rejecters get their booster from ignorance and irrationality, a testament to this deeply religious and decaying social order. The most widespread myth is over a supposed link between the MMR vaccine and autism, a fairy tale swallowed by a sizable segment of the American population. The autism fear was bolstered by a fraudulent 1998 study in *The Lancet* concocted by “doctor” Andrew Wakefield, whose medical license was finally revoked in 2010. Multiple credible scientific studies, involving hundreds of thousands of children around the world, have found absolutely zero connection between vaccines and childhood developmental disorders. Another theory—just as fantastical—is that too many vaccines given too close together can be detrimental.

Capitalist politicians on both sides of the partisan divide pander to anti-vaccine quackery. GOP presidential hopefuls New Jersey governor Chris Christie and Kentucky Senator Rand Paul recently took center stage with an onset of “foot-in-mouth” disease. Though now backpedaling, Christie proclaimed that parents needed “some measure of choice.” Paul linked vaccines to “profound mental disorders,” drinking from the same Kool-Aid as Michele Bachmann, who in 2011 asininely asserted that the HPV vaccine causes mental retardation. That vaccine, which protects against cervical cancer, has puritanical politicians howling about innocent teens turning into sex machines.

With measles cases continuing to climb, Democrats masquerade as champions of vaccination. But on February 3 President Obama proposed slashing \$50 million from an immunization program covering millions of the poor and uninsured. During the 2008 presidential campaign, Obama said the relationship between vaccines and autism was “inconclusive,” while Hillary Clinton pledged to investigate the matter.

Nearly half of Americans believe God created mankind in a single day less than 10,000 years ago, so anti-science baloney is hardly limited to radical evangelists. Opposition to vaccines makes strange bedfellows of small-government libertarians, anti-Big Pharma conspiracy theorists and well-heeled tree-huggers. “Alternative” medicine philistines swear that vaccines are harmful to the body, fancying a diet of organic kale and reiki therapy as a means to combat lethal microbes. Many prefer to expose their kids to deadly viruses through the notion of “natural” immunity—which is about as safe as inviting Hannibal Lecter over for dinner. Celebrity zealots like Jenny McCarthy, with her big-money affiliate Generation Rescue, went from fringe to fad after getting repeated airtime on Oprah and other talk shows. And while there are plenty of reasons to hate the profit-gouging pharmaceutical giants, the production of vaccines isn’t one of them.

The measles resurgence originated in



AFP  
**Ignorance on parade: “Generation Rescue” rally in Washington, D.C., July 2005.**

California, where there are pockets with sickeningly low vaccination rates. One of 19 states permitting “personal belief” exemptions, California allows parents to enlist a “naturopath” as the doctor excusing them from mandatory vaccine requirements. At several wealthy schools, concentrated in West Los Angeles, up to 60 percent of children are unvaccinated, a figure that rivals South Sudan. Meanwhile, the state with the highest vaccination rate is Mississippi, known for its poverty and dismal health care. It has the strictest immunization laws in the country, along with West Virginia, allowing only medical exemptions.

Anti-vaccine crusaders would let millions contract preventable diseases like measles, which kills 400 people a day across the globe, especially in the imperialist-subjugated Third World, where access to vaccines, antibiotics and clean water is limited. At the same time, granola crunchers and Tea Partiers certainly make no bones about the full vaccination schedule mandated for immigrants and green-card seekers in this country. One viral tweet by Nigerian author Elnathan John mocked the racist hysteria in the U.S. around the recent Ebola epidemic in West Africa: “Our thoughts are with the measles-ravaged country America. I hope we are screening them before they come to Africa.”

“Personal” health choices involve things like picking a toothpaste, since cavities are not contagious. But getting vaccinated is about protecting the individual and everyone else as well. The collective effectiveness of vaccines depends on a large enough portion of the population being immunized. When there’s a critical drop in vaccination rates, immunity crumbles.

In the spirit of doctors’ Hippocratic oath to “do no harm,” personal and religious belief exemptions should be scrapped. Life-saving vaccines should be mandated and, like all health care needs, freely available to all. As Marxists, we defend science against religious and superstitious obscurantism as part of fighting for a socialist future in which the wealth, resources, scientific developments and medical technology of society are put to the service of the many, not the profits of the few. Only then will we be able to build a world, freed of medieval and crippling backwardness, where human life, worth and dignity matter. ■

### U.S. Capitalism and Black Oppression

*In a 1933 document, Max Shachtman, then a leader of American Trotskyism, explained that the racial oppression of black people serves as a fundamental prop of capitalist class rule and can only be overcome with the multiracial proletariat seizing power through socialist revolution.*

With all the discrimination practiced against him, the American Negro has brought forward gifted men and women in the scientific, artistic, political and cultural world,



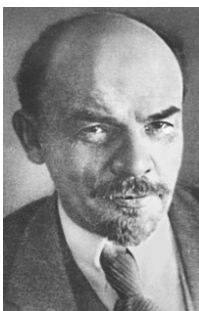
TROTSKY

men and women of talent and genius. It is a tribute to the race that these talents have emerged from the abyss of slavery in which they were kept for hundreds of years and from the purgatory of social, economic and political inequality where they have since been kept. They have risen in spite of the lack of educational opportunities, in spite of the barring of every door to their race, in spite of the hounding and harassment and insult and violence to which they are subject.

But the ruling class is in urgent need of the theory of racial inferiority. The historical background for it is the condition of chattel slavery once imposed upon the Negro. The difference in the economic, and consequently social, status of Negro and white upon which the ideology of inferiority was constructed has since been eliminated, but the ideology has outlived the foundation on which it was built. The bourgeoisie needs this theory for two reasons: first, it affords them a moral justification for the super-exploitation and persecution to which it subjects the Negro. If trifling sums are allocated for Negro education, he is, after all, “only a n[----]r”; if housing conditions are abominable, if the Negro is scandalously underpaid, if he is deprived of every democratic right, he is, after all, an inferior who does not deserve or require any better; if he is hanged from a tree and riddled with bullets, or soaked with oil and burned to death by a mob of savages, it is, after all, “only a n[----]r” who suffers. Secondly, the theory of racial inferiority is of invaluable assistance to the ruling class when it permeates the white workers. It serves to erect walls of prejudice between black and white wage slaves, to keep them divided, to pit the one against the other so that they may not pit their joint strength against their common adversary....

The militant proletariat inscribes upon its banner in this country the uncompromising demand for full and equal rights for the oppressed Negro, so that he may rise out of the position of debasement and the backwardness to which he has been forced by a decadent ruling class to the level of human dignity and consciousness that will make him the invaluable comrade-in-arms of the white proletariat. In their joint struggle for the proletarian revolution, they will sweep away the abominable structure of imperialist capitalism, rooting out the barbarous remnants of slavery and serfdom, and abolishing the poisonous system of caste inequality, ostracism, misery and exploitation under which the millions of American Negroes suffer today. Any other road is a deception, leading through mirages to the brink of the precipice. The proletarian revolution is the road to freedom.

—Max Shachtman, “Communism and the Negro” (1933),  
reprinted as *Race and Revolution* (Verso, 2003)



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## WORKERS VANGUARD

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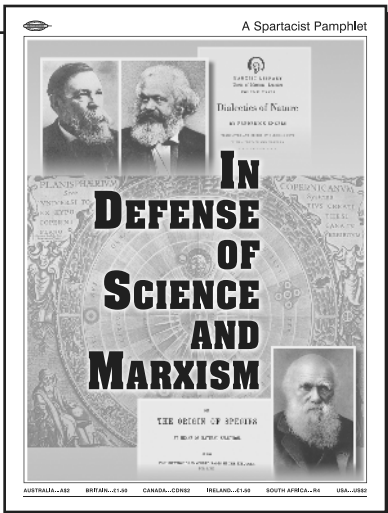
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### CORRECTION

The article “The Police and the 1918-19 German Revolution” (WV No. 1060, 23 January) identified the Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI) and the Workers International League (WIL) as successors of the British Militant tendency. In fact, following the 1992 split in the Militant tendency, the minority formed the International Marxist Tendency, of which the WIL is the U.S. section. The majority retained CWI as the name of its international.



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Greece...

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the oppressed. The fact that a party other than PASOK [bourgeois Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement] or [the right-wing] New Democracy won an election after 40 years is seen as a blow to the Greek “oligarchs” and their system of patronage and corruption. It is also seen as a source of national pride that Greece stood up to the imperialists, especially Germany, and voted in a party that the Troika (European Central Bank, European Commission and IMF) didn’t want in power.

At the same time that Greece supposedly shifted hard to the left, it is significant and very ominous that the fascist Golden Dawn took third place in the election despite the fact that its leadership is in prison and they couldn’t mount much of a campaign. It is also significant that the KKE slightly increased its percentage of the vote compared to the June 2012 national elections, indicating that it has a solid base of electoral support among those on the left who oppose the EU.

Since 2012, Syriza has gone from supposedly rejecting the Troika’s austerity memorandum to wanting to erase only a portion of Greece’s debt to now proposing

a mere debt swap scheme. Thus, Syriza’s promises to bring an end to austerity and reassert Greece’s national sovereignty are in practice increasingly hollow.

However, Syriza’s continued anti-austerity rhetoric and the popular perception that it is standing up to those who have treated Greece like a colony of Germany has much more sway with the population right now than the imperialist propaganda trying to scare Greeks into submitting to continued austerity for fear of a “Grexit” [exit from the eurozone]. Approval ratings for the government were at over 70 percent earlier this week. And Syriza truly has become a bourgeois party in government, with a section of the bourgeoisie now voicing open support for it as reflected in the shift in editorial position of major bourgeois newspapers. In fact, it is hard to find any bourgeois press that is *not* pro-government right now, which makes it difficult for us to find out what is really going on behind all the propaganda. Whether such bourgeois support will survive what lies ahead in the negotiations with the imperialists over Greece’s debt remains to be seen.

We cannot predict how long Syriza will manage to walk the tightrope between promising relief to the devastated masses and doing what the imperialists demand



Reuters

Syriza supporters at victory rally in Athens, January 25. Fake-socialist groups promote this bourgeois ruling party on the basis of its anti-austerity rhetoric.

in order to stay in the EU. Nor can we predict whether the imperialists will actually allow Syriza some slack in order to ease up a bit on austerity or continue to hardline it—both voices are being heard from different quarters internationally. Some predict that D-Day will be some-

time this week, and the British government is one among several governments and banks whose contingency planning for a Greek exit from the eurozone has been publicized. But it is hard to tell how much this is a propaganda exercise to

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NYC Pro-Syriza Forum

# Reformists Hail Greek Ruling Party

The electoral victory of the left-sounding bourgeois Syriza party in Greece has some self-proclaimed socialist organizations in that country and their international affiliates on cloud nine. A celebratory confab, “After the Greek Elections: The Future of Austerity,” was organized in New York City on February 6 by “State Department socialist” Joanne Landy’s Campaign for Peace and Democracy. Panelists included Aaron Amaral of the International Socialist Organization (ISO), whose Greek comrades are part of the Left Platform inside Syriza; Alan Akrivos of Socialist Alternative/Committee for a Workers’ International (SAlt/CWI), whose Greek affiliate unsuccessfully requested to run on Syriza’s ticket in the elections; and Iannis Delatolas of the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP), whose Greek cothinkers are part of the reformist Antarsya coalition, which tails after Syriza.

The panelists gushed that Syriza’s election victory was a “historic moment” (Akrivos) and a “huge victory for the workers movement” (Delatolas), and they raved about how the formation of a new capitalist government is a step toward socialism. Far from it. Despite its rhetoric against the austerity imposed by the European Union (EU), Syriza does not represent the interests of the poor and working people but of the capitalist ruling class, whose affairs it

now manages from the seat of government.

The reformists’ enthusiasm for Syriza, an expression of outright class treachery, had not been dampened by its forming a government in coalition with the virulently chauvinist Independent Greeks (ANEL). Aside from one passing reference, the matter did not come up until the last panelist, the ISO’s Amaral, spoke. In the “spirit of solidarity,” he offered some “constructive” criticism of Syriza, including for its choice of coalition partner.

A Spartacist League comrade began his remarks in the discussion period, “And now for something completely different.” Cutting against all the panelists’ fawning, he argued:

“I think there need to be some basic truths spoken here. The class character of Syriza is bourgeois. The class character of their coalition government, including with the right-wing, anti-immigrant ANEL group, is bourgeois. To call for a vote to Syriza, whether explicitly as the speaker from the ISO or the CWI did, or implicitly as Antarsya does, is a betrayal of the interests of the working class of Greece that further ties them to their capitalist class enemy. This is not a step forward, but an obstacle to winning workers to socialist revolution. “The Greek masses voted for Syriza in the hopes of getting some relief from EU austerity. They will be disappointed because this bourgeois government is beholden to the European, centrally German, imperialists and their banks. And

it was the job of socialists to tell them that truth from day one. Syriza doesn’t oppose the EU, it wants to stay in the EU, which is an imperialist conglomeration. It merely wants to renegotiate the terms of oppression.”

The Spartacist speaker continued:

“Our comrades in Greece, the Trotskyist Group of Greece, said: No vote to Syriza, no vote to Antarsya, down with the imperialist EU, and underlined that the only way forward lies in class struggle and the fight for international socialist revolution and a Socialist United States of Europe. “In that light, we did give critical support to the KKE (the Communist Party of Greece) not least because in this election they drew a crude class line and said they opposed the EU, wanted Greece out of the EU—and actually tried to win people over to that perspective—and said no vote to Syriza.”

In Greece, our TGG comrades’ critical support to the KKE was in sharp counterposition to the likes of the panelists at the NYC event. It also gained us a hearing among some supporters of that mass reformist party, which has the allegiance of the most militant section of the Greek working class. While calling for a vote to the KKE, our comrades argued against its calls for “people’s power,” which disappear the fact that the working class uniquely has the social power to overthrow capitalism. We denounced the KKE’s embrace of Greek nationalism, as shown by its defense of capitalist Greece’s borders. We also excoriated the KKE leadership’s failure to

mobilize its working-class base to sweep the Golden Dawn fascists off the streets.

The British SWP, ISO and SAlt pseudo-Trotskyists on the panel directed their sharpest vitriol at the KKE. These organizations, which lined up behind the imperialists in the drive for capitalist counter-revolution against the Soviet Union, have a long history of anti-Communism, which they present as anti-Stalinism. They went into a frenzy over the KKE’s principled refusal to consider entering a Syriza-led government, blaming the KKE for forcing Syriza to partner with ANEL. SAlt’s Akrivos lambasted the KKE’s “criminal, abstentionist, ultra-left position.” The chair, Joanne Landy—a long-time promoter of “democratic” imperialism’s counterrevolutionary designs—interrupted Akrivos to underline that the KKE has a “long, rotten sectarian history.” The room broke into loud applause when Akrivos went on to describe the KKE’s policy as “Stalinist lunacy.”

The real lunacy is to celebrate a capitalist party running a capitalist government. The meeting on the “Future of Austerity” revealed, yet again, the political bankruptcy of the reformists, whose pandering to Syriza and whatever else is popular can only mislead any worker who listens. An essential task for Marxist revolutionaries is to prepare the working class so it can reject false friends and see who its true enemies are. ■

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scare the Greek government into submission, and how much the European imperialists actually might believe that the time has come for Greece to be kicked out of the EU and that the ensuing “contagion” will be minimal. The European Central Bank certainly yanked on the leash attached to the choke collar last week with its refusal to keep accepting Greek bonds as collateral, thereby forcing the insolvent Greek banks to borrow emergency funds at a much higher interest rate.

Imperialists United for Austerity

All the imperialists are united in demanding Greece continue its “structural reforms,” which mean decimating the wages and conditions of the working class in order to increase capitalist profitability. Without some crumbs to throw at the workers and poor, Syriza will have a hard time doing its job of keeping Greek capitalism safe by containing class and social struggle. That’s really what all their pleas to the imperialists for some “humanitarianism” amount to.

With no such crumbs in hand, Syriza has played up its nationalist populism domestically as an ideological prop for its capitalist government of “social salvation.” Having fallen two seats short of a parliamentary majority, Syriza predictably proceeded to form a government coalition with the virulently anti-immigrant and nationalist Independent Greeks (ANEL), who are only a step removed from Golden Dawn on the Greek political spectrum.

This was the culmination of more than a year of repeated collaboration in parliament between Syriza and ANEL. Their collaboration began with a joint front over the 2013 economic crisis in Cyprus and included populist campaigns, for example in opposition to the proposed privatization of the public power company DEI. Among the concessions Syriza made to the bourgeoisie and the likes of ANEL before the election was to renounce its opposition to NATO, make overtures to the reactionary Orthodox church, come out against adoption by gay parents and assure the fascist-infested police that they would get more resources if Syriza were elected. Even a notorious pro-Golden Dawn Orthodox archbishop has now come out in support of Syriza.

The government coalition between the bourgeois populists of the left and right is thus united not only in its “anti-austerity” rhetoric but in its upholding of reactionary bourgeois nationalism. Indeed, Syriza handed ANEL leader Panos Kammenos the post of defense minister. He then promptly proceeded to fly to the disputed islets of Imia, off the coast of Turkey, on the anniversary of the fatal crash of a Greek Navy helicopter there in 1996. This is an anniversary regularly celebrated by the fascists. More importantly, Syriza leader Alexis Tsipras’ first foreign trip as prime minister was *not* to a West European capital to deal with Greece’s economic crisis but to Cyprus, where he

complained about Turkish “provocations” off the southern coast of the island. While there, he would not give a straight answer to a question about whether minorities in Thrace should be given more rights.

Syriza is so far from being any kind of “radical” left party that prior to the election, Marine Le Pen of France’s National Front said she would welcome a Syriza victory as strengthening “eurosceptic” forces. And after the election, Golden Dawn announced that it will support measures by Syriza against privatizations as well as



Athens, April 2014: People receiving food handouts. European Union-imposed economic austerity has devastated working people, unemployed.

anything Syriza does to oppose sanctions against Russia. In their own way, such expressions of support by fascists to Syriza confirm how correct we were to characterize its class character as bourgeois.

Subordination to Imperialism

While Syriza’s posturing over ending austerity and verbal challenges to the Troika may have caused tremors in the markets and grabbed headlines, it is clear that at bottom Syriza seeks to collaborate with the imperialists to keep Greece in the EU. Syriza’s *modus operandi* so far seems to be to trumpet some tough-sounding position and then water it down in practice over the following days. For example, its promise to overturn privatizations actually boils down to reviewing the plans for new privatizations while quietly pledging not to touch [Chinese shipping company] Cosco’s privatized part of the port in Piraeus. Syriza gave “Left Platform” leader Panagiotis Lafazanis the ministry in charge of privatizations, and he has gone from calling the proposed privatization of the Greek natural gas company a “national crime” to admitting that its partial privatization is proceeding.

Likewise many of Syriza’s promises have melted away, such as immediately restoring the minimum wage level. However, its promises to provide free health care for the poorest and other measures of social welfare, along with the pledge to increase the minimum wage and pensions by 2016, were enthusiastically received

here and are undoubtedly a big source of illusions in the government.

More than 20 billion euros have poured out of Greek banks since November, leaving them insolvent without the European Central Bank’s promise to continue to “infuse liquidity.” More money flowed out of Greek banks in the week before this year’s election than in May 2012, when the imperialists worried about a Greek banking collapse. That no capital controls have been implemented in the face of a veritable bank run is an expression of the Greek

government’s expectation of continued financial support from the imperialists.

Apparently, the possible dissolution of the Troika has been discussed for some months now as a measure that would give more “democratic legitimacy” to European institutions. It would certainly be a way to throw Syriza a symbolic bone while making not one bit of difference in Greece’s subordination to the imperialists in practice. The likes of U.S. president Barack Obama, French president François Hollande and Italian prime minister Matteo Renzi have made comments about how austerity alone isn’t going to get Europe out of its crisis and about the need to negotiate a new deal with Greece, comments that have been played up here as expressions of support for Syriza. Of course, the U.S. “growth strategy” was to bail out the banks—which then threw hundreds of thousands out of their homes—as well as bailing out the auto bosses who slashed wages and conditions with the collusion of the union bureaucracy. But such attacks on the workers and poor go unmentioned in the bourgeois press here while Syriza whips up hopes that Obama and others will pressure Germany to give the Greeks a break.

Measures like hiring back sacked Finance Ministry cleaning ladies and removing busloads of riot cops from downtown Athens have cost the Syriza government almost nothing while doing a lot to bolster its image as friends of the downtrodden. At the same time, the Syr-

iza government continues to send out its cops against immigrants, as described in the *New York Times* (7 February) article, “Greek Austerity Spawns Fakery: Playing Nurse,” which also gives a sense of the grim state of Greek public health care. These mostly immigrant “illegal” nurses are being targeted both by the fascists and the state. The alliance with ANEL will certainly help Syriza in that it can claim its hands are tied over passing socially progressive legislation on questions such as immigration or gay rights. Already, ANEL has announced that it will vote against pending legislation to give Greek citizenship to the children of immigrants who are born and raised here.

Our political opposition to this capitalist government is not dependent on whether its policies are more or less progressive. That is the criteria of much of the reformist left, who hope that with enough pressure from below Syriza might become a “workers government” somewhere between capitalism and socialism, which would supposedly pave the way to full-blown socialism. Even if Greece were to end up outside the EU in the near future against Syriza’s wishes, the only way back to “growth” under capitalism is the continued exploitation and oppression of the working people of Greece. This is what the reformists inside Syriza conceal. But so does the ostensibly oppositional Antarsya coalition, which is continuing its alliance with ex-Syriza leader Alekos Alavanos and his nationalist Plan B group, who are explicitly for a capitalist Greece outside the EU. The KKE excepted, most of the left has celebrated Syriza’s victory to one degree or another.

The Antarsya coalition announced that with the Syriza victory Greece has turned a page and promises much struggle to “fight so that measures in the interests of the people are imposed, so that the memoranda [austerity terms] are negated, so that the struggles are linked with the program of the anti-capitalist overthrow in the context of a left, labor and popular opposition.” In other words, they will struggle to push Syriza to the left. And as true believers in the possibility of genuine democracy under capitalism, they also pledge to fight in a front to root out Golden Dawn support in the police and the state.

What such a front means was on display at the first demonstration under the Syriza government. The fascists held their yearly anti-Turkey rally on January 31 to honor the three Greeks killed in the helicopter crash on the Imia islets—a rally attended by fascists from Germany, Spain and Italy as well. The left typically holds a counter-rally. This year the left rallied two hours before the fascists, in a different location and with no intention of stopping the Golden Dawn rally. Everyone from the Syriza youth to Antarsya and anarchists were represented. Much was made of the fact that there was a minimal police presence and the cops stood by as protesters sprayed graffiti on police buses. Had this demonstration been intended as a mobilization to stop the fascists, you can be sure that hundreds of armed riot cops would have been dispatched to protect the Golden Dawn rally. ■

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4

WORKERS VANGUARD

# Oil Workers...

(continued from page 1)

a move by the union tops that has not sat well with those on the picket lines.

Meanwhile, management and other scabs have kept struck facilities running. In this heavily automated, capital-intensive industry, only a relatively small number of scabs are needed for this strikebreaking activity. As one striker at the Tesoro refinery in Carson, California, told *Workers Vanguard*, the scabs, who lack sufficient training, are “sitting on a ticking time bomb.” The bosses have repeatedly demonstrated their willingness to risk a refinery disaster, this time in order to inflict a defeat on the union.

The USW tops, who have acceded to small picket lines restricted to select entrances, seem to want striking workers to wait it out until equipment breaks down or the plants otherwise become inoperable. This strategy is a loser. It avoids hitting the bosses in the pocketbook, where it truly hurts, and drags out the strike. In the last national oil strike, in 1980, the OCAW union tops put up similarly symbolic picket lines (even while striking all unionized refineries); scabs operated the facilities for three months before a settlement was reached.

Further undermining the current strike, building trades workers are overwhelmingly crossing the picket lines to perform maintenance and other jobs. During normal operations, many plants have a mix of union and non-union contract workers in addition to the USW workforce. Reports have emerged of bad blood between the USW and the craft unions, including mutual recriminations over job-stealing claims. Wherever the truth lies in these jurisdictional disputes, there is no excuse for scabbing. If the oil giants are able to have their way with the USW, the craft unions will find themselves in a weaker position when the bosses turn their sights on them. A common front of the USW and the craft unions in struggle against the oil companies would be to the advantage of all refinery workers.

To win decisively, this strike must be extended and all refineries shut down tight with mass picket lines, at every entrance, that no one dares cross. The guiding principle should be one out, all out. In the course of this battle, it is incumbent upon the USW to reach out to the non-union contract workers—who are temporarily hired to maintain plant equipment, then discarded—by striving to bring them into the union with full wages and benefits. A militant strike could also chart a way forward for organizing the non-union refineries and more widely in the oil industry.

## Anti-Union Laws and the Capitalist State

Mass pickets would almost certainly be met with government injunctions. Indeed, in most places there are already laws limiting the size and location of picket lines so that scabs have an easy time of it. Unions that honor the picket lines are threatened with fines under the Taft-Hartley Act, which bans secondary boycotts and sympathy strikes. After a week of not crossing the USW pickets at the Marathon refinery in Catlettsburg, Kentucky, building trades workers were instructed by their union tops to scab in order to avoid “detrimental legal proceedings.” The bosses prohibit such union solidarity in action precisely because it is one of labor’s most effective weapons.

A striker at the BP refinery in Whiting opined to a *WV* reporter that there hasn’t been a pro-labor law in the past 30 years. In fact, the capitalist government’s “labor law” is designed to hold the unions captive to the class enemy. And the forces of the capitalist state, including the courts and cops, are there to be deployed against striking workers to enforce those laws. Criminally, the USW bureaucracy has welcomed into the union the bosses’ scab-herding security guards, who are cop auxiliaries.

To counter the bosses and their anti-labor arsenal, the unions must make use of their own weapons: their numbers, organization

**Texas City, March 2005: Debris from massive BP refinery explosion that killed 15 workers and injured over 170.**



and collective strength. In the early 1980s, a spate of killings of strikers, among them OCAW member Gregory Goobic, who was run over by a scab driving a truck through a picket line at a California refinery, made clear the burning need to build solid mass picket lines. As we observed in “Labor’s Gotta Play Hardball to Win” (*WV* No. 349, 2 March 1984):

“‘But that’s illegal,’ the bureaucrats whine. So maybe some labor leaders go to jail six months *after* they surround the terminals with thousands of pickets and call a solidarity strike and the battle is won....”

“No decisive gain of labor was ever won in a courtroom or by an act of Congress. Everything the workers movement has won of value has been achieved by mobilizing the ranks of labor in hard-fought struggle, on the picket lines, in plant occupations. What counts is power.”

Picket lines are the battle lines of the class war, where strikes are won or lost based on the balance of forces between the workers and their exploiters.

The USW bureaucrats, like the rest of the AFL-CIO officialdom, hide behind the anti-labor laws as an excuse to avoid

refineries are also in unions, from Teamster truckers and rail engineers to tugboat operators in the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU). If the full force of the USW was mobilized, and support garnered from these strategic unions, the strike would be vastly more effective, making the bosses think twice about trying to enforce any injunctions.

There have been isolated incidents pointing to the potential for labor solidarity. Members of other unions, including nurses, teachers and auto workers, have joined the picket lines. In Whiting, USW members from nearby steel plants have marched with the pickets. These mostly black steelworkers were warmly welcomed by the largely white refinery workers. One steelworker, from U.S. Steel in Gary, Indiana, told *WV* that he came out to show solidarity in the expectation that it would be reciprocated when the steel contract expires in August. Notably, Teamsters and Ironworkers are not crossing the Whiting picket lines.

In the 1980 oil strike, there was a significant, though brief, show of labor solidarity when the ILWU shut down the Los Angeles port for one day in support of the striking refinery workers (see *WV* No. 251, 7 March 1980). Today, the longshore workers in the ILWU (and the International Longshoremen’s Association on the East and Gulf Coast) remain key potential allies of the refinery strikers. The ILWU has been working without a contract since July and the shipping bosses have recently imposed a partial lockout (see page 12). A victory by one or both of these powerful unions would redound to the benefit of the entire working class.

A number of capitalist Democratic Party politicians, and even a few Republicans, have expressed support for the strike, with the USW bureaucracy touting a visit by one Democrat, Congressman Gene Green, to a Texas picket line. Striking workers must be clear: bourgeois politicians are no “friends of labor.” In the event the union actually flexes some muscle, they will undoubtedly scatter to the winds. And Democratic president Barack Obama is no better. When 400 Philadelphia transit workers went on strike last June, he ordered them back to work.

The pro-capitalist union officials’ embrace of the Democrats is part and parcel of the lie that there is a partnership between labor and the filthy rich capitalists who run the country. USW International president Leo Gerard, who expresses a special affinity for the current administration, has been tapped repeatedly to sit on White House bodies. In 2010, Gerard was appointed by Obama to his Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations along with various business magnates, including the then-CEO of U.S. Steel. That committee advocates for the economic interests of U.S. imperialism in dominating dependent countries and competing with its rivals overseas, at the expense of working people everywhere.

Openly boasting of his exploits in filing trade complaints against foreign corporations and countries, Gerard is a strong pusher of protectionist poison under the

pretext of helping “preserve and grow jobs” in steel and other industries. In fact, this practice gives aid to the profiteering of the U.S. capitalists, while making enemies of workers abroad rather than of the greedy American bosses who exploit USW members. The capitalists always seek to maximize their profits and drive down labor costs (that is, slash wages and worsen work conditions), including by moving production wherever it suits them. During the 1980s and early ’90s, OCAW lost nearly half its membership, largely because U.S. oil companies moved refinery production offshore. With the shale oil boom, domestic refineries have expanded their operations of late.

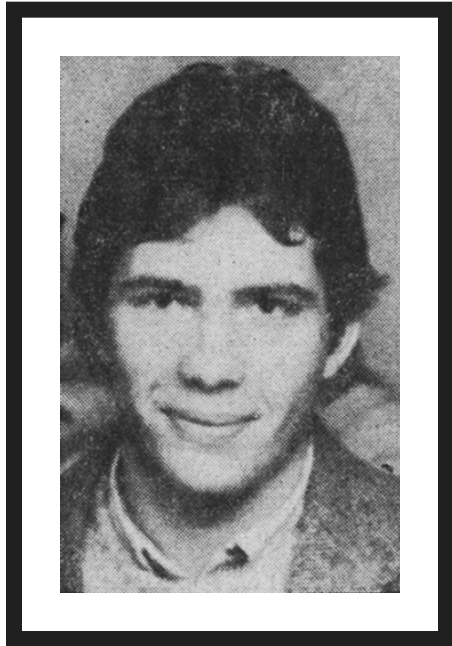
The protectionism of the USW leadership has given a boost to Big Oil, not least with a 5,000-page suit the union prepared to curtail China’s burgeoning green energy sector. That suit was taken up by the Obama administration with the World Trade Organization. Gerard is notorious for his virulent bashing of China, a bureaucratically deformed workers state where capitalism has been overthrown. In so doing, he eggs on the U.S. imperialists in their counterrevolutionary crusade to reopen that country to untrammelled capitalist exploitation. If successful, Washington’s moves against China would embolden the imperialists in further putting the squeeze on working people around the globe. Just as class-conscious workers defend the USW and other unions against the bosses despite their sellout leaders, workers must defend China against imperialist-backed capitalist counterrevolution despite the misrule of the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy.

## For New Leadership of the Working Class

Some striking refinery workers hark back to the late OCAW International secretary-treasurer Tony Mazzocchi. In the 1990s, Mazzocchi and other OCAW officials were involved with the Labor Party Advocates (LPA). This lash-up of left-talking union bureaucrats eventually founded their so-called Labor Party in 1996 after years of discussions. However, the LPA, far from a genuine workers party, was never intended to be anything other than a shill for the Democrats and soon faded away. Its aim was to rope workers back into the Democratic Party fold at a time of growing disaffection with both the Republicans and Democrats. Its newsletter *Labor Party Advocate* (August 1991) explicitly stated: “Organizing Labor Party Advocates is not going to retard the re-birth of the Democrats. On the contrary, it will encourage it.” The working class needs its own party, one standing completely independent from the capitalists and their political representatives.

The chronic fatigue and overwork of USW members is all too familiar to workers across the country. While many people are compelled to work excessive hours just to make ends meet, millions more are unemployed. Over a century ago, massive class battles won the eight-hour workday, a historic gain for labor now substantially eroded. Workers today need to fight for a shorter workweek with no loss in pay, linking the fight for decent working conditions to the struggle for jobs for all. A 30-hour workweek at 40 hours’ pay, with the available work divided among everyone, would go a long way toward addressing both unemployment and the serious safety problems resulting from fatigue and understaffing.

The capitalists will, of course, reply that such demands are not practical (at least not if they are to maintain their obscene wealth). Indeed, the felt needs of the working class run right up against the inability of the capitalist system to satisfy them. What we must strive for is a wholly different type of society, a workers America where the productive wealth has been ripped out of the hands of the tiny capitalist elite and put at the disposal of the vast majority. Such a society can be achieved only when the working class, led by a genuine workers party, overthrows capitalist class rule through a socialist revolution and establishes a workers government. ■



Oakland Tribune

**Gregory Goobic, labor martyr, killed by scab driver during 1984 strike at Bay Area refinery.**

sharp class struggle. At the refinery in Martinez, California, picketers who tried to prevent tanker trucks from crossing the lines were told by their own picket captains to stop. With the USW tops playing by the bosses’ rules, it is no wonder that even workers who reminisce about the militant tactics of past labor struggles see little prospect of reviving those traditions. If the unions are to be revitalized, a new class-struggle leadership, imbued with the understanding that the interests of labor and capital are irreconcilably counterposed, must be forged.

The weakened state of labor today does not foreclose the possibility of mounting a real fight in this strike. The USW itself has a total of 850,000 members, not just in steel and refining but other key industries like mining and rubber. Many workers who bring oil and gas to and from the



# The Rise of British Imperialism

One hundred years ago, World War I, which brought unprecedented suffering and mass slaughter to working people, demonstrated that capitalism had reached its final, barbarous epoch, the epoch of imperialism. As Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin noted in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916), “Imperialism is capitalism at that stage of development at which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital is established” and “in which the division of all territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed.” A small club of wealthy imperialist powers, currently dominated by the U.S., subordinates and oppresses the vast majority of the world’s population. Today, most of Asia, Africa and Latin America, “politically, are formally independent, but in fact, are enmeshed in the net of financial and diplomatic dependence.”

As a world economic system, imperialism took shape in the late 1800s. However, to understand how and why imperialism emerged out of the political and economic logic of capitalism requires going back to the origins of the world capitalist system in the 16th century, some three centuries earlier. This subject was addressed in a presentation by comrade Russell Stoker at the Trotskyist League of Canada/Ligue Trotskyste du Canada Thirteenth National Conference in summer 2013, an edited version of which was printed as a two-part article in *Spartacist Canada* Nos. 182 and 183 (Fall 2014 and Winter 2014/2015). We reprint below the first part of the article.

\* \* \*

**SPARTACIST**

CANADA

This class is about the rise of British imperialism, the first of that economic order to arise. Arguably it was also the first to decline. Because Britain was the first, it represents the “classical” rise of imperialism, which developed quite differently elsewhere. For instance, in America, which had capitalism in its bones, there was no previous epoch of feudalism to overcome; a relatively small indigenous population was easily overwhelmed and militarily crushed by the settlers’ regime. Capitalism developed quite differently too in Germany, France and Japan especially, but that is well beyond the scope of this talk.

Originally I had considered presenting the elements of the structure, the relentless and bloody march of British capital across the globe, etc. But in the end, comrades asked why Britain was first and not Spain or India—and that was a brilliant question.

To attempt to answer that, I have to take us on a bit of a selective romp through the ages, well before the onset of British imperialism. Now I will not be discussing the Scramble for Africa, the Opium Wars, the Near East, China, the French Revolution or even the Napoleonic Wars, which are not at all unrelated to the rise of imperialism and more specifically the rise of British imperialism. In particular I regret giving France such short shrift, but there you go. This is a one-hour climb and I am sure to shift my ladder on many sets of PhD toes—apologies in advance.

## The Feudal Order

“The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.

“Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.”

So begins the *Communist Manifesto*, written by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in 1847.

What did this class struggle look like in feudal Europe? The early medieval Cath-

## Part One

# The Protestant Reformation to the English Revolution

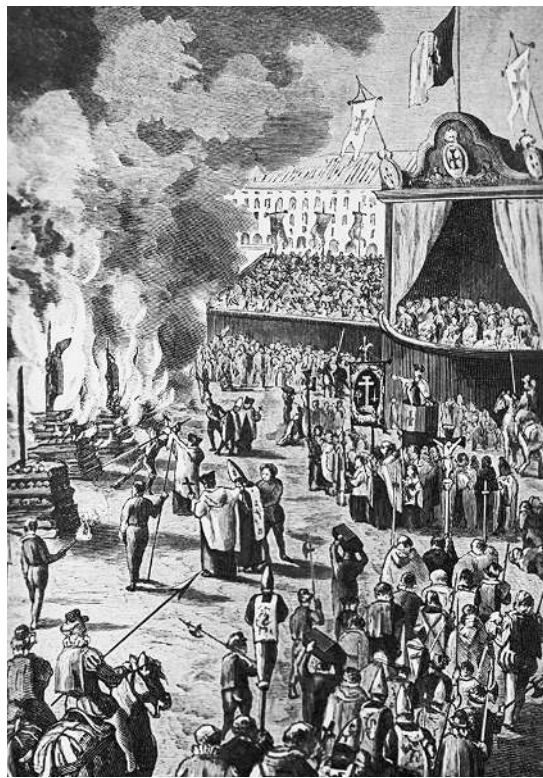
olic church, in the absence of printing presses and a literate populace, possessed a virtual monopoly of technical and literary knowledge. The church became the ideological and political power which transcended the local authority of the lords and chieftains, great and small.

As the church vigorously expanded and consolidated its empire and wealth, in alliance with the rising nobility, it came to mirror that nobility in aristocratic structure, ostentatious wealth, corruption and a capricious cruelty toward its subjects. Monarchs were given the authority of church and God when they were crowned by some high clergyman or other.

And the church was far and away the largest feudal landlord, owning up to a third of the land. That included the sovereign papal states. Moreover, many of the clergy were feudal lords in their own right. Later, as trade revived and the new town merchants grew rich from that trade, the landed nobility in the countryside allied with the church to rob the peasantry of their common land and find the means to extort the growing wealth of the merchants. In particular they made use of revenue-generating “indulgences”—the forgiveness of sins for cash—essentially as a form of extortion by threat of eternal damnation.

It became increasingly intolerable for the rising new classes—artisans, merchants, peasant smallholders—to bear the weight and insult of this idle and parasitic class. That impelled the revolt known as the Protestant Reformation. You can read about the German Peasant War, the first key confrontation which culminated in 1525, and its outstanding leader, the radical preacher Thomas Müntzer, in *The Peasant War in Germany* by Friedrich Engels, which I can’t get into here. Suffice it to say that the bloody end result of the first serious attempt at a bourgeois revolution was a victory for the other side—the old ruling class.

The fractious German nobility was then able to retrench itself in a constellation of decentralized and highly autocratic princely states, which retarded the political and industrial development of Germany.



**Jews being burned at the stake under Spanish Inquisition for refusing to convert, around 1492. Catholic church was at center of feudal reaction.**

Meanwhile, Charles V used a monstrous pile of cash from a family of German loansharks—the Fuggers—to get himself christened Holy Roman Emperor in 1519. Charles was the guy who really set to robbing the Americas and got the fires of the counterreformation cooking. I want to highlight the economic and political degeneration of the Spanish towns and cities under Charles V, as opposed to the situation of the towns in England and Holland which were flourishing. This is relevant to why Britain—not Spain, which was far richer—was first to industrialize.

The Spanish towns had been previously



Samuel Cooper



Hulton

**Left: Oliver Cromwell, leader of English bourgeois revolution. Right: Beheading of Charles I in 1649. Regicide marked overthrow of feudal order in England.**

compacted by the Moorish incursions, becoming centres of advanced manufacture and economic activity. That period ended with the completion of the *Reconquista*, a period spanning some 700 years and ending in 1492—the year Columbus sailed the ocean blue. That also marked the year of the Alhambra Decree by which the Spanish Inquisition forced the Sephardic Jews into hiding or exile from Spain and, later, Portugal. Most went to the more tolerant Ottoman Empire, but some made their way to Brazil where they later played a role in the spread of sugar production to the West Indies. Others, like the philosopher Baruch Spinoza’s folks, went north to Protestant Amsterdam.

The Spanish *Reconquista*, a piecemeal “liberation” from the North Africans, established a sort of realm where Catalonia, Castile, Aragon and such were all semi-independent kingdoms. From there, the kings of Spain dealt with councils, alliances through marriage, negotiations and all of that. Then along comes Emperor Charles V. He was having none of it. He well and truly smashed the independent power of the nobility and laid into the merchants with heavy new taxes to pay back the Fuggers and especially to finance his wars across Europe.

When the nascent bourgeoisie of the Spanish towns, bleeding from the pocketbook, rose up in revolt in the early 1520s, they were crushed. The local town councils were destroyed, and henceforth Spain suffered under an absolute monarch and was thoroughly drained of capital. The urban areas of Spain disintegrated as economic and political entities. The nobility lost

its power, but retained privileges totally dependent upon their support to the King. Then, inheriting a Spain which had been bankrupted by his father’s military ventures, Philip II proved to be very much his father’s son. He carried on absolutely, as it were. It’s from him that the Philippines, a Spanish colony for more than three centuries, got its name.

## The Reformation in Scotland

Unlike the furious retrenchment of the German nobility or the feudal impoverishment of Spain, the Reformation unravelled feudal relations in England and Scotland, culminating in the English Civil War of 1642-51, which Engels pointedly called the second great bourgeois upheaval. Thomas Müntzer was dead and Martin Luther’s half-hearted measures could not quench the human bonfires set by the Inquisition in Spain or Bloody Mary in England. The Reformers required a harder leader and doctrine, and that they found in John Calvin. In doctrine, the Calvinists loathed all tyranny, all dishonesty, pretty

much all moral wrongs of every sort so far as they could determine them. As Engels noted in his 1892 introduction to *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, “Calvin’s church constitution was thoroughly democratic and republican; and where the kingdom of God was republicanised, could the kingdoms of this world remain subject to monarchs, bishops and lords?”

The man who more than any other carried forward Calvin’s war on the corrupt feudal church, and who now moves to the centre of this story, is the totally fearsome figure of John Knox. Knox made it his personal holy mission to turn Scotland into the New Jerusalem. He believed political power was ordained by God but that the power was vested in the people, not in kings and especially not in the Catholic clergy. “Punishing idolatry and destroying tyranny” was a sacred duty God had placed on “the whole body of the people... and of every man in his vocation.”

That meant invading Catholic churches, smashing the religious artwork and driving off the papal clergy who rightly feared for their lives. Knox fiercely despised the political authority of the monarchy. He dismissed the divine right of succession and fervently preached that any monarch ruled by the consent of the people—all tyranny must be destroyed. In 1563 he famously brought Mary, Queen of Scots to tears when he told her as much to her face.

The Calvinists’ emphasis on reading the Bible was a great stimulus to literacy in Scotland. Their primary motivation was putting the common man in touch with the word of God, not seeding the ground for future scientific and engineering breakthroughs. Nevertheless, it is a notable fact that by the time of the Act of Union in 1707, most parishes in Scotland had a school paid for by the Reformed Church of Scotland, and those schools were open to both boys and girls regardless of social status. Scotland, with less than one-

quarter of the population of England and Wales, boasted five merit-based universities as opposed to England’s two upper-class institutions. Mind you, the Scottish Highlands remained economically more backward, less literate and more Catholic.

The Reformation in England

The ascension in 1485 of a new lineage in the English monarchy—the Tudor kings who were the victors in the Wars of the Roses—had effectively obliterated the old nobility. Henry VIII, the second Tudor king, broke from Rome and went on to expropriate and redistribute much Catholic property and wealth with the Dissolution of the Monasteries. Those nobles who profited from his favour became a sort of *nouveau riche*, much more closely aligned with mercantile enrichment than feudal land wealth.

The new nobles then proceeded to strip the land of people in favour of more profitable usage. Karl Marx put it this way in Volume One of *Capital*:

“The great feudal lords created an incomparably larger proletariat by the forcible driving of the peasantry from the land, to which the latter had the same feudal right as the lord himself, and by the usurpation of the common lands. The rapid rise of the Flemish wool manufactures, and the corresponding rise in the price of wool in England, gave the direct impulse to these evictions. The old nobility had been devoured by the great feudal wars. The new nobility was the child of its time, for which money was the power of all powers. Transformation of arable land into sheep-walks was, therefore, its cry.”

Engels succinctly captured the process in an 1881 letter to Marx’s daughter, Jenny Longuet:

“The whole Protestant reformation,... apart from its dogmatical squabbles and quibbles, was a vast plan for a confiscation of land. First the land was taken from the Church. Then the Catholics, in countries where Protestantism was in power, were declared rebels and their land confiscated.”

As Protestants like to say, “God helps those who help themselves.”

The whole process had been preconditioned by earlier population losses from the Black Death in the mid 1300s. That produced a high demand for labour. Naturally, the much smaller surviving population of peasants worked only the best and most productive land. Combined with an extended period of excellent weather, this likely resulted in bumper crops followed by a slump in grain prices and a corresponding higher cost of city manufactures. Feudal relations would become less and less remunerative to the lords and nobles.

That “Most Catholic” King Philip II, the absolute monarch of Spain, and his gigantic bureaucracy fought tooth and nail to retain the feudal Catholic political economic order. He waged wars against England, France and the Netherlands, wars which effectively and repeatedly emptied the royal coffers. The ill-fated “Spanish Armada” of 1588 was but one episode.

The armada was mostly savaged by a storm, a defeat celebrated in England with a commemorative medal embossed with the words *Flavit Jehovah et Dissipati Sunt*—Jehovah blew, and they were



Painting of Scottish Calvinist reformer John Knox preaching against feudal tyranny.

scattered. The very next year a similar armada was sent by the English Queen Elizabeth against the Spanish. It met a similar fate—being scattered and sunk in a huge gale—but they didn’t sing any songs or strike any medals about that one.

As with the Spanish crown, the wars depleted the wealth of the English queen. She depended financially upon the booty collected by her sea pirates like Francis Drake and also the granting of various monopolies like that of her land pirates of the East India Company.

On the continent, Philip II revived the Inquisition as an ideological terror weapon against the Reformation. If one considers the enormous parasitic bureaucracy of Spain, the vast military expenditures, including the escalating costs of extracting gold and silver from the New World (harried as they were by Drake and company), and the retrograde effort to constrain mercantile trade, etc., it is little wonder the Spanish empire eventually collapsed.

Comrade George Foster of the Spartacist League/U.S. mentioned another interesting factor which worked in both directions, bleeding feudal Spain and enriching the new merchant class. He pointed out that because Spain lacked manufacturing capacity, much of the gold and silver which that empire looted from the New World made its way into the hands of the great manufacturing and banking centres elsewhere. The Spanish people and towns were in fact quite poor. At any rate, whatever successes favoured Rome and Spain in defense of the feudal order were insufficient to stem the tide of history.

The English Civil War

Since the Norman Conquest of 1066, there had been a parliament or council of some sort in England ostensibly representing the “people” to the crown. Regardless of how much the parliament of the 1640s considered itself the representative of the people, it was, as Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky noted, “based on the most whimsical franchise” (“Where Is Britain Going?” [1925]). The king dissolved and recalled that body as ever he saw fit. Mostly he saw fit to recall it in order to provide funds for his military ventures. Those were not often, if ever, in the best interests of the city merchants who filled the Lower House, which Trotsky wryly notes was found to be three times as wealthy as the House of Lords.

In Scotland, the Calvinists were pressing for independence after a successful revolt in 1637 against taxation and insufferable religious interference by the government of Charles I. Charles recalled the English Parliament and put the squeeze on it to fund yet another foray against the Scots. Parliament resisted. The Royalist forces, short on cash, went ahead regardless. They got themselves badly spanked, and the Scottish army invaded in defense of Parliament—an intervention which accelerated the outbreak of the bourgeois revolution in England.

The English bourgeoisie then set about creating an army of its own in defense of its representative body, the Parliament. It was a bold and insubordinate act, one which posed a revolutionary insurrection

against the monarchy. And there’s the rub: as the bourgeoisie gained greater economic power, it became both necessary and possible to fashion a state apparatus better suited to its needs. The New Model Army, created by Parliament in 1645, concentrated in its ranks the most courageous and resolute elements. Very soon those elements far exceeded the determination of the bourgeois parliamentary representatives themselves. To the head of that Puritan army rose one Oliver Cromwell, the great Calvinist leader, a commoner who called to himself like-minded warriors to lead the revolution.

Cromwell’s task was to destroy the tyranny, the tyrant’s court nobility and the tyrant’s natural ally, the High Church,



Oliver Cromwell confronting Parliament in 1653, during short-lived English republic after execution of Charles I.

which had maintained a hierarchical form of church governance not much removed from the Catholic Holy See. That task required mobilizing the masses and building the New Model Army with professional soldiers representing the interests of the Parliament, as opposed to the personal interests of one or another lord or baron as had been the medieval practice. Those soldiers were “Roundheads,” that is, lacking the curly big hair wigs of the gentry. The revolutionary army pretty much pounded the gentry’s mercenaries wherever they met.

Charles I then hied-thee-hither off to Scotland of all places, where he promised heaven on earth, and somewhat surprisingly the dim leaders of the Scots said, “well, alright then,” shifted sides, marched off with Charles to mix it up with the New Model Army and basically got what they deserved.

In the fall of 1649, when Cromwell invaded Ireland, Royalist forces from outside were also converging there. The thing is, Cromwell’s campaign in Ireland was not only carried out to defeat the Royalists. It wasn’t simply an extension of the English Civil War on Irish terrain. From the time of the 1641 uprising in Ireland—before the Civil War—both Royalists and Parliament agreed that Ireland must be subordinated to England. The only question was which side would command the English army that would carry this out. As an added incentive for a military conquest,

Parliament had passed an “Adventurers Act” in 1642 inviting English money-men to “invest” in the army, in return for which they were guaranteed Irish land. Under this scheme Cromwell himself put in over £2,000 and had been promised land in Leinster.

Cromwell’s military campaign in Ireland was designed to colonize Ireland with settlers by seizing land from Catholic landowners, who were sent to Connaught. Along the way, he expropriated some 2.5 million Irish acres. Tenants were offered the choice of going with the landlord, or remaining to serve the new lord as “hewers of wood and drawers of water.” Cromwell also instituted severe repression for the earlier uprising; he shipped off a whole mess of the unrepentant Irish rebels to the West Indies as indentured servants.

Marxist historian Christopher Hill describes Cromwell’s conquest of Ireland as “the first big triumph of English imperialism and the first big defeat of English democracy” (*The English Revolution of 1640*). He’s echoing Karl Marx who wrote in 1869 that “English reaction in England (as in Cromwell’s time) had its roots in the subjugation of Ireland” (Letter to Engels, 10 December 1869). Cromwell’s army conquered Ireland, crushed the resistance and seized two-thirds of the land. In addition, Cromwell encouraged colonial settlement of Ireland, particularly from among the most radical regiments in his army, as a way of dispersing troublemakers.

So, to recap, under Cromwell’s leadership the revolution conquered England, smashed a recalcitrant Scotland and defeated rebellious Ireland. The British Isles were thus unified through force of

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## SYC Defends Marxism at Finkelstein Talk

**City College of  
New York**

### Down With Zionist Terror Against Palestinians!

### For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!

This last December, anti-Zionist historian Norman Finkelstein spoke at the City College of New York (CCNY) to kick off a “Palestine Awareness Week” organized by the Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP). This came at the end of a semester that had opened with protests against a bloody bombing campaign and invasion of the Gaza strip by the Israeli army, which killed over 2,000 Palestinians.

Though mostly unspoken, there was palpable tension between the speaker and his hosts. Much of the crowd at the event stood for a “one-state solution”—that is to say, Israelis and Palestinians living in a single bourgeois-democratic state, supposedly with rights for all. Finkelstein argues that pro-Palestinians must stand for two separate states based on the 1967 borders.

The New York Spartacus Youth Club attended Finkelstein’s talk to present our revolutionary Marxist program for the Near East. We recognize that both the one- and two-state “solutions” of the SJP and Finkelstein are in fact impossible. The “two states” that Finkelstein proposes would deny the Palestinian people the right to at least a large chunk of their historic homeland, while “one state” as envisioned by its supporters would necessarily be governed by the Palestinian majority, thus denying the right to self-determination of Israeli Jews, who constitute a nation. In fact, what exists now is the sort of “one state” foreseeable under capitalism—one ruled by the Zionists with the Palestinians confined to increasingly smaller occupied areas whose fate is entirely in the hands of the Israeli military.

As one of our comrades said during the discussion: “Only through the establishment of a *socialist federation of the Near East* can the national claims of the Palestinians, as well as the myriad other oppressed peoples of the region, be equitably resolved. The peoples of the Near East will never know justice, peace or prosperity until a series of working-class revolutions overthrow bourgeois rule throughout the region. For this we need revolutionary workers parties in countries throughout the region linked to internationalist class struggle against capitalist rule. This is the only realistic solution.”

Despite the fact that Finkelstein and “one state” supporters engage in sometimes-heated arguments, their politics share key premises. Both place their faith in the capitalist rulers of the U.S., Europe and

the Near East. Seeking answers within the framework of capitalist rule, neither have an answer to alleviate the truly desperate economic conditions in Gaza and the West Bank.

In fact, many in the SJP—including leading members of the Maoist Revolutionary Student Coordinating Committee (RSCC)—promote the Boycott, Divest-

favor among some activists for calling BDS a “cult” that seeks to “destroy Israel,” he was nonetheless sponsored for his long history of exposing Israeli atrocities and those who apologize for them. He has been targeted for persecution by Zionists because he is a Jewish historian, the son of Holocaust survivors, who defends Palestinian rights. His refusal to back



Reuters

**Gaza, November 2012: Palestinians gather around site of house destroyed in Israeli air strike.**

ment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. BDS is organized to pressure various capitalist institutions, such as universities, local governments, corporations and the “international community,” to force Israel to act on behalf of the Palestinians. In particular, the BDS movement appeals to the United Nations and “international law,” which they, no less than Finkelstein, portray as the court of last appeal for the Palestinian masses.

Though Finkelstein has fallen out of

down in the face of accusations of support to terrorism, censorship campaigns, and drives to have him fired have earned Finkelstein the respect of many activists. Over the years, we have defended Finkelstein and other academics that have come under attack for their anti-Zionist politics (see “Protest DePaul University Attack on Norman Finkelstein!” WV No. 895, 6 July 2007). The witchhunts against Finkelstein and others, duplicitously equating opposition to Zionism with anti-Jewish bigotry, have been conducted by a well-funded, well-oiled machine, supported on various levels from university administrations to state governments. These reactionary attacks are of the same mold as the recent campaigns against BDS supporters and SJP groups (see “‘Boycott Israel’ Campaign and Illusions in Democratic Imperialism,” WV No. 1045, 2 May 2014).

### Marxism vs. Bourgeois Pressure Politics

Finkelstein’s talk included a highly compressed history of Zionism from the late 19th century to the present. To his credit he included the fact that many European Jews were opposed to the Zionist project, choosing instead to fight for the liberation of the Jews as part of the fight for socialism and the liberation of all humanity. The talk challenged the Zionist myth that Palestine before 1948

was a land without a people and also denounced how Zionists have used the horror of the Holocaust to justify the theft of Palestinian land and all manner of their own crimes enacted against the Palestinian people. However, when it came to proposing a way forward to end the misery of the Palestinians and address the myriad forms of national and ethnic oppression that plague the region, Finkelstein had nothing to offer except demoralization. He directed the assembled students to throw themselves at the feet of the bourgeoisies of the world in the form of the UN General Assembly, and pushed a two-state settlement as the only aim with a “connection with reality” because it is what the majority of UN member states have voted for.

During the discussion round, one speaker from the floor argued that a two-state solution was impossible at this point given the large and numerous Israeli settlements that divide the West Bank. He also observed that it would leave Arabs within Israel without any legal protections. In response Finkelstein admitted that establishing a separate Palestinian state would not solve the question of the settlements, nor do anything for the oppressed Palestinian citizens of Israel, and would in fact do very little to change the conditions of the Palestinians overall. Nonetheless, he averred that it would at least do something to relieve the enduring misery of the people of Palestine. An SYC comrade from the floor argued:

“As far as a two-state solution goes, in our opinion this solution means confinement in ghettos and ongoing terror at the hands of the Zionist rulers. No Palestinian state will ever be viable in the face of a nuclear-armed Israel. It can only be a cruel joke on the starving, suffering Palestinians.... There can be no just solution to the Palestinian/Israeli conflict within the framework of capitalism. Two nations claim the same small piece of land, and under capitalism, the exercise of national rights for one necessarily comes at the expense of the other... [Finkelstein] is building illusions in the UN, which is a den of imperialist thieves and their victims. The UN has only been a tool for the domination of the Palestinians—look at who presided over the 1947 partition of Palestine.”

Our speaker raised the 1917 Russian Revolution as our model for the overturn of capitalist rule. At this point Finkelstein cut in: “You’re not going to the Russian Revolution!” He insisted that the call for a socialist federation of the Near East was “nonsense” and “morally despicable” because it would never happen and therefore we would be responsible for prolonging the suffering of the Palestinians.

Emboldened by Finkelstein’s anti-communism, an Islamic fundamentalist got up to hail the reactionary, anti-woman, CIA-backed *mujahedin* forces who fought the Soviet Union in Afghanistan during the 1980s: “Last time socialists tried to suppress Muslims, we saw what happened to the Soviet Union. Don’t bring socialism on us when we don’t want it. We fought the Russians; we’ll fight socialists again if we have to.” Low murmuring and nervous laughter rolled over the crowd—heavily composed of observant Muslims, with men and women seated separately and many women in headscarves.

In the late 1970s, when a modernizing Afghan government moved to implement modest reforms for women such as lowering the bride price and instituting education, the tribal *mujahedin* (holy warriors) erupted in violence and terror. Faced with the threat of CIA-backed fundamentalists on its border, in late 1979 the Soviet

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### Near East, 1950s: Permanent Revolution vs. Bourgeois Nationalism

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### Near East, 1950s Permanent Revolution vs. Bourgeois Nationalism



**For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!**

**Two-Stage Revolution:**



# Montreal: Campus Feminists Fail to Gag Marxists

The following article is reprinted from Spartacist Canada No. 183 (Winter 2014/2015), newspaper of our comrades of the Trotskyist League of Canada/Ligue Trotskyste du Canada.

We Marxist revolutionaries drew the ire of the feminist student bureaucrats at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) this fall when we organized a public meeting titled “Marxism or Feminism: For Women’s Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!”

The fight against women’s oppression is a major issue in Quebec as it is in every capitalist society. Until well into the 20th century the English Canadian rulers maintained the oppression of the Québécois through an alliance with the deeply anti-woman Catholic church. For women this

**SPARTACIST** CANADA

mostly meant being baby-making machines until either menopause or premature death. The hold of the church was shattered through the social struggles of the 1960s and ’70s, but the legacy of this profound oppression is deeply felt in Quebec.

This history has helped to sanctify the ideology of feminism with a status akin to a secular religion. From the bourgeois parties and the petty-bourgeois nationalists of Québec Solidaire (QS) to the reformist left, it is unavoidable. Falsely deemed synonymous with the fight for women’s rights, feminism is all that is on offer to young activists concerned about women’s oppression. For Marxists, however, the struggle to emancipate women is inseparable from the perspective of working-class revolution to overthrow the capitalist system.

## The Roots of Women’s Oppression

The oppression of women is rooted in the institution of the family, which arose with the advent of private property as the mechanism for passing property from one generation to the next—the monogamous wife is supposed to ensure the paternity of the heirs. The family serves in general as the social mechanism for rearing the next generation, and under capitalism, where the masses of youth are slated for wage slavery, it seeks to instill obedience to authority. Organized religion and the family enforce social conservatism and conformity to the “family values” ideal. The institution of the family reinforces, as Friedrich Engels put it, “the supremacy of the man over the woman, and the individual family as the economic unit of society” (*The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, 1884).

The private property system, upheld by the state, and the family are the most basic and deeply intertwined aspects of class society. They cannot be “reformed” away. To succeed in winning freedom for women requires a workers socialist revolution to overturn capitalist property relations. While we fight to defend every gain wrested through hard struggle from this ruling class, the inescapable conclusion must be that the entire capitalist system must go, and a workers state created, which will rest on a collectivized and planned economy where production is for human need, not profit.

Feminism is an obstacle to the struggle for women’s liberation because it places the sex line (men vs. women) above the class line (workers vs. capitalists), necessarily tying workers—women and men—to their class enemies. Our meeting challenged the political hegemony of this agenda. In response, our posters were torn down and our event was vilified by the student bureaucracy in a blatant attempt at censorship.

# For Women’s Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!



Dietz Verlag

**Above: Communist women’s demonstration in Moscow, July 1920. Banner reads “Better to fight, suffer and win than to rot for centuries as slaves of the bourgeoisie.” Right: Ligue Trotskyste poster counterposing Marxism to feminism was targeted for censorship by student bureaucrats at Montreal campus.**

At UQAM, in order to display any posters, one must obtain the approval of one of the student associations, a bureaucratic hurdle with which we complied. We didn’t have to wait long for the blowback. When our posters were vandalized, our comrades returned to the AFESH social sciences student association to get more posters approved. We were met by a flat “no” from the student bureaucrats, under the pretext that AFESH could only endorse activities that were “progressive” and feminist.

When we raised the absurdity of blocking an event that supports women’s liberation, one student hack replied: “Go put your posters up without stamps and get them torn down.” Invoking its “feminist mandate,” AFESPED (which represents students in political science and law) also refused to approve the posters. Reflecting the pervasive anti-communism of this milieu, a student bureaucrat even came out against Karl Marx’s call, “Workers of the world, unite!” These associations, which are seen as strongholds of student activism in Quebec, chose to censor us

rather than politically debate a strategy for the liberation of women.

We object to the whole conception that student associations should adopt “mandates” and political charters since these are inevitably used to censor dissenting ideas. We stand for the democratic right of free expression for all student groups, not least ourselves. We have no interest in silencing our political opponents, including those who uphold this capitalist system which we seek to do away with through socialist revolution. It is precisely through the clash of political opinion that one can actually learn something.

Refusing to be censored, we continued to distribute our Marxist newspapers and promote our meeting. We clearly polarized a section of the campus left. One student activist told us that “everyone is talking about the meeting” and that it had created a real stir. We also took the fight to student general assembly meetings. On September 17, a Ligue trotskyste/Trotskyist League supporter presented a motion to the AFESPED General Assembly which affirmed: “Since advertising and holding



Hugues/La Presse

**Montreal, October 2013: Feminist contingent at reactionary protest backing “Charter of Quebec Values” that targeted Muslim women, banning the wearing of headscarves by public employees.**

a public meeting is a democratic right and part of freedom of expression, AFESPED should approve the posters for the public meeting on ‘Marxism or Feminism: For Women’s Liberation Through Socialist Revolution.’ Over repeated interruptions by the chair, our comrade denounced the political censorship against us and explained that it is only the program of revolutionary Marxism that can open the road to the emancipation of women. Our motion only lost by a narrow margin.

In any case, the censorship bid flopped. Our meeting, held on September 20, was a success, attracting 25 people and featuring lively discussion. The feminists who opposed it stayed away, content to fraudulently denounce us as indifferent to women’s oppression rather than accept our invitation to defend their views in political debate.

## Why Marxists Oppose Feminism

Feminism—including its “socialist” or “materialist” variants—is not premised on the destruction of the capitalist system that is the main source of women’s oppression today. Rather, it is a bourgeois ideology that seeks to transform the status of women *within this society*. Indeed, many feminists hope merely to advance a layer of women into the boardrooms and the upper reaches of academia and the media.

As the comrade who gave the main talk at our UQAM meeting explained:

“If you divide society between men and women, as do the feminists of all stripes, you necessarily seek an alliance with all women, including women who are in power, who tenaciously defend capitalism, and who have nothing much to do with women’s liberation. Are you really close to the interests of women like [former Parti Québécois premier] Pauline Marois, Michelle Obama, Hillary Clinton, Margaret Thatcher? Do you think that when the bourgeois government seeks to ban prostitution, this is in order to liberate women?”

The logic of feminism is class collaboration. It also means relying on the bourgeois state to “defend women.” The role of the capitalist state is to defend the interests of the capitalists. It has nothing to do

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## Finkelstein...

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Union sent its Red Army into Afghanistan at the invitation of the left-nationalist government in Kabul. The Soviets were not militarily defeated on the battlefield. Rather, in order to appease imperialist pressure, Mikhail Gorbachev criminally withdrew the Soviet troops in 1989. This was a huge betrayal of Afghan women, workers and leftists. It paved the way for the triumph of Washington's woman-hating cutthroats, and for handing the Soviet Union itself over to counterrevolution two years later—a colossal defeat for the workers of the world.

In the face of the fundamentalist's pro-mujahedin rant, Finkelstein could not resist a quip: "I'm afraid I may end up with the Spartacist League at that point." Fat chance! In fact, another SYC member tried to respond to this anti-communist attack, but Finkelstein silenced him. The SYC comrade then appealed to the audience: "I have been on this campus defending the Palestinians at every instance, every massacre, every incursion by the Israeli state into the Occupied Territories, and I demand the right to speak right now." This was answered with calls of

"let him speak!" and we gained the floor. We received applause for standing up to Finkelstein's demagoguery. But things took an abrupt turn when we addressed the fundamentalist and were met with a cacophony of heckling and shouting. Over the ruckus, our speaker explained: "It was the CIA who backed the Islamic fundamentalists and the Taliban and opposed the Soviet intervention there—so if that's who you want to side with, then that's your business, but *we take a side with the international working class!*"

On this point, he argued: "There's going to be no justice for the Palestinian people until the Zionist garrison state is destroyed from within, and the only people who have the power to do that are the Israeli working class." While we understand that nationalism and anti-Palestinian racism runs very deep in the Jewish Israeli working class, we also know that the interests of the Israeli workers are fundamentally counterposed to their exploiters, the Zionist capitalist class. It is in the interests of Jewish Israeli workers to unite in struggle with foreign-born workers in Israel, the oppressed Palestinian masses and the proletariat of the surrounding Arab states to overthrow their common oppressors. This possibility seems remote at present, but nevertheless joint working-class revo-



Young Spartacus  
**Spartacists at 1980 New York City anti-draft protest hail Red Army intervention in Afghanistan against CIA-backed Islamic reactionaries.**

lutionary struggle is the only way to cut the Gordian knot of the current conflict, and it is the goal to which fighters for lib-

eration of the Palestinian people must set themselves. Furthermore, serious class struggle in a neighboring country, for example Egypt, could effect a change in consciousness very quickly.

Afterward, several people came up to us and said they had defended our right to speak and opposed those shouting us down. But what of the RSCC Maoists? True to form, these self-proclaimed revolutionaries reacted to the "spectre of Communism" at the event by joining the attempt to silence us. In fact, prominent RSCC member Taffadar Sourav came across the room in an attempt to do just that as our comrade was defending the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Perhaps such despicable antics are meant to assure its SJP cohorts that, when push comes to shove, the RSCC would prefer to embrace anything—from liberal illusions in the UN to religious fundamentalism—other than Marxism.

It is fitting that the new generation of Maoists made a bloc with Finkelstein, a former Maoist who now denounces his past, against the Spartacists. Finkelstein might have thrown away his little Red Book, but he shares with the Maoists a program of bowing before existing consciousness and making liberal appeals to the imperialists. ■

## Montreal...

(continued from page 9)

with ending the misery of the oppressed!

A perfect illustration of the bankruptcy of this strategy, which can only reinforce the repressive forces of the state, is the former [bourgeois nationalist] Parti Québécois government's Charter of Quebec Values. Cynically touted as a defense of secularism and equality between men and women, this proposed law would have banned the wearing of "conspicuous" religious symbols by anyone who works in public or publicly funded institutions. It would have meant the firing of large numbers of Muslim women workers and would have barred the few Muslim women in Quebec who wear the full-face veil (*niqab*) from receiving government services.

The Charter unleashed a wave of anti-Muslim bigotry and also exposed divisions within the Québécois feminist milieus. A "March of the Janettes"—named for the elderly pioneer feminist Janette Bertrand—brought out thousands of [Quebec flag] fleur de lys-waving Charter supporters. The main feminist group, the Fédération des Femmes du Québec (Quebec Federation of Women), opposed banning women wearing religious garb from

government jobs but said that fully veiled women should be banned because their *niqabs* "hinder communication."

For its part, Québec Solidaire backed the proposed ban on public services for women wearing the *niqab*. The feminist sisterhood may be powerful, as the saying goes, but it doesn't include fully veiled Muslim women. In their embrace of nationalist reaction, these feminists clearly have nothing to offer minority and working-class women. As we noted in our article opposing the Charter:

"Despite important gains like abortion rights and formal legal equality, the secular *bourgeois* Quebec that emerged from the [1960s-'70s] Quiet Revolution remains a ruthlessly exploitative society that offers no road to the liberation of women (or anyone else)."

—"No to Reactionary 'Charter of Quebec Values!'" SC No. 179, Winter 2013/2014

Among the groups that give a more leftist colouration to feminism is the reformist Front d'Action Socialiste (FAS), with origins in the Montreal student milieu. Formed in spring 2014, FAS is not part of QS, but a FAS member was on the communications team for this petty-bourgeois populist party in the recent elections. So much for FAS's socialist pretensions!

FAS declares that it is "resolutely femi-

nist," asserting that "patriarchy" is a "structure of oppression" that "does not depend solely on capitalism" and that "specific struggle against patriarchy is necessary to end the oppression that women experience" (FAS, April 2014). Another FAS statement affirms: "Feminism is a movement of emancipation that seeks to abolish the inequalities between men and women, like those we have confronted in the workplace. To be a feminist is to refuse to be submissive and docile" ("The Reality of Women in the Workplace," undated).

This is a purely *individualist* response to the *social* fact of women's oppression. It cannot be ended through a "struggle against patriarchy" or a fight against "docility." To quote Marx and Engels, "'Liberation' is an historical and not a mental act." The liberation of women can only be achieved by overthrowing capitalist rule. This alone will lay the material basis for replacing the family and its functions.

### Marxism: The Program for Women's Liberation

Our model is the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, which overthrew capitalism and laid the foundations for an egalitarian society. The Bolsheviks understood that without qualitative economic development, the liberation of women was a utopian fantasy. Nevertheless, the new workers state did all that it could to implement the promise of women's emancipation (see "The Russian Revolution and the Eman-

cipation of Women," *Spartacist* [English edition] No. 59, Spring 2006). A new law provided for fully paid maternity leave and nursing breaks, while public nurseries were instituted in workplaces. Two decrees established civil marriage, as well as divorce at the request of either partner. As well, homosexuality and abortion were legalized. Many of these achievements are lacking even today in the most advanced capitalist societies. The Russian Revolution did more for women's liberation than 100 years of feminism, and this is despite its later Stalinist degeneration which reversed many of the gains made by women.

From the earliest years of our tendency, the struggle for women's liberation has been central to our perspectives. This included publication of the journal *Women and Revolution* (which today appears in the International Communist League's theoretical journal, *Spartacist*). On the front page of the first issue, a "Women's Revolutionary Manifesto" declared: "Our goal is not equality in slavery, but an *end* to slavery! We don't seek liberation *from* men, but liberation *with* men!... To struggle for the liberation of women is to struggle for socialism" (May-June 1971). We are dedicated to building a revolutionary party that will lead the struggle for socialist revolution. Women will play a leading role in constructing such a party, the necessary instrument for the liberation of the working class and all the oppressed. ■

## Spartacus Youth Club Events

### LOS ANGELES

Wednesday, March 4, 7 p.m.

**U.S. Imperialism  
Hands off the World!  
Down With U.S. War  
Against I.S.I.S.**

UCLA, Bunche Hall, Room 3150  
Information and readings:  
(213) 380-8239 • slsycla@sbcglobal.net

### NEW YORK CITY

Monday, March 9, 7 p.m.

**The Russian Revolution  
of 1917, Part 2**

CCNY, NAC Room 1/209  
138th St. and Amsterdam Avenue  
(Take #1 train to 137th St.-City College)  
Information and readings:  
(212) 267-1025 • nysl@tiac.net

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

### TORONTO

Thursday, February 26, 6:30 p.m.

**Down With Ottawa's "Anti-Terror" Laws!  
"War on Terror":  
Marauding Abroad,  
Repression at Home**

U of T, OISE, Room 2199  
252 Bloor St. West  
(at St. George subway)  
Information and readings:  
(416) 593-4138 • spartacan@on.aibn.com

### VANCOUVER

Wednesday, February 25, 6:30 p.m.

**From Ferguson to Vancouver:  
Down With Farcical Cop Terror!**

Wednesday, March 18, 6:30 p.m.

**Marxism vs. Feminism:  
What Way Forward for  
Women's Liberation?**

University of British Columbia  
Irving Barber Learning Centre, Rm. 315  
Information and readings: (604) 687-0353  
trotskyist\_vancouver@shawcable.com

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# Imperialism...

(continued from page 7)

on stock trading or banking or tea, coffee, chocolate, ostentatious spending and high living...well that was Amsterdam all over, not London. And for venal exploitation, corruption and brutal colonialism, you couldn't top the Dutch East India Company. But the rising British bourgeoisie was a quick study. Eventually the Dutch were beaten, blockaded and otherwise forced to accept Cromwell's Navigation Act. The English bought up, captured or sank scads of Dutch merchant ships.

And while I am on the subject, that was another advantage the British possessed: they were able to concentrate on building up their navy. Whereas the continental powers had to maintain huge land-based armies, the British could get by with much smaller and less costly strategic forces. And they could be rapidly deployed as fast as the wind—literally—as they were carried by the navy with its big guns and dropped practically anywhere. The British perfected naval military warfare through a century and more of practice against the Dutch, Spanish, Ottoman pirates and privateers, but mostly against the French. That power to project the armed might of the British ruling class anywhere in the world loomed large with the later rise of British imperialism.

## The Restoration and After

The landed nobility derisively called the bourgeoisie Whigs, which is thought to come from the Scottish *whiggamor* or cattle driver, because they had mobilized the plebeian masses during the Civil War. And that became the name associated with

bourgeois liberalism—the supporters of a constitutional monarchy in which the monarch shared power with a parliament representing wealthy men of property. As comrade Joseph Seymour noted, “liberalism represented the interests of the bourgeoisie as against the landed nobility on the right and the workers and peasants on the left” (*Enlightenment Rationalism and the Origins of Marxism*, Spartacist pamphlet, 1998). The landed nobles resented the wealth and power of Parliament and supported a strong monarchy against that.

The English bourgeoisie learned something from gaining political power with Cromwell's Commonwealth and then losing it after his death when the nobles succeeded in restoring the monarchy and placing Charles II on the throne. Charles inherited Cromwell's navy, renamed it the Royal Navy and promptly dispatched it to capture New Amsterdam (New York). By

the by, Charles II is the guy who signed off on the Hudson's Bay Company monopoly in 1670. The monarchist party of the landed nobility then came to be known derisively as Tories from the Irish word *tórait*, which meant a robber. That was not because of the Hudson's Bay Company—it was because they stole the power from “the people.”

The Royalists exhumed Cromwell's body, and he and his confederates, both living and dead, were most gruesomely executed. Cromwell's head was stuck on a spike above Westminster Hall and put on display for a quarter century. But the restoration of the monarchy didn't end well for the nobility. Their guy proved a little too sympathetic to the Catholic church. The Scots in particular had a rough time. I mean, first they got beaten with a stick by Cromwell, then when their guy finally gets on the throne he decides to force the

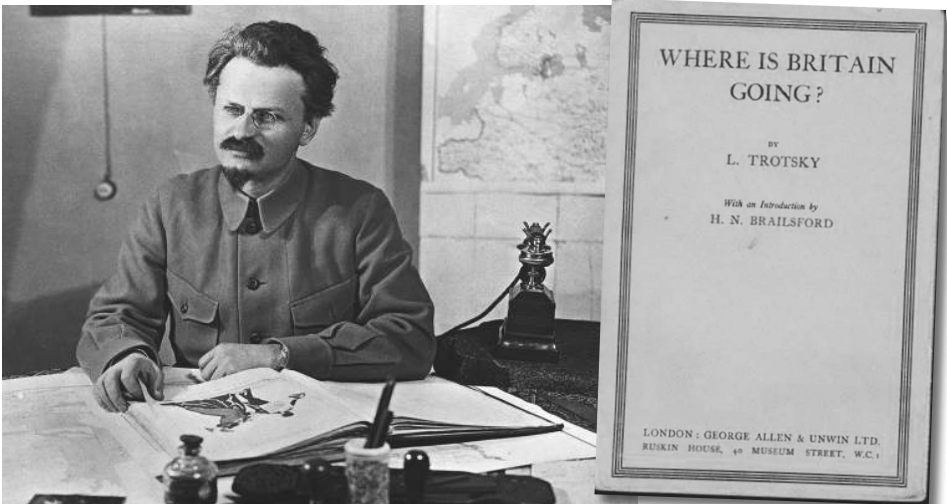
Presbyterian Scots to kiss his royal arse, as it were. Well, these were John Knox's people—who were not well known for supplicating any worldly monarch. It is not for nothing that Charles II's gruesome repression of the 1680s was known as “the Killing Time” in Scotland.

Meanwhile, the English bourgeoisie regroups and enlists the aid of the Dutch Protestant William III of Orange to put down Charles' successor, the Catholic James II. William is only too happy to oblige, providing Parliament will help with his ongoing war with France. So, William is invited to take the English throne; he comes to town with a gigantic armada, four times the size of the earlier Spanish one. They have a gigantic party; he assumes the throne and signs all sorts of proclamations securing Parliament's position in governance. James meanwhile is allowed to scurry off across to the continent.

This, the so-called Glorious Revolution, is henceforth lauded as the foundation of the modern constitutional monarchy which enshrined by law a Protestant succession to the crown, and moreover, the constitutional supremacy of Parliament over the king.

This process is mythologized by the ruling class as the “glorious” dawn of true British democracy. However, for black Africans, it represented something else again. By ending the Duke of York's Royal African Company monopoly on the African slave trade in 1698, the “Glorious Revolution” heralded not the broadening of freedom but the massive expansion of slavery, horrendous servitude in the broiling sun of the British sugar colonies. And that is what truly began to build up the wealth that underwrote the British Empire.

[TO BE CONTINUED]



Hulton-Deutsch

**Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky emphasized historical importance of English bourgeois revolution in 1925 pamphlet “Where Is Britain Going?”**

# ILWU...

(continued from page 12)

2014). Stabbed in the back by the labor traitors at the head of the S.F. Central Labor Council who ended the general strike, the longshore workers were forced into the very arbitration process they had repeatedly rejected. But they returned to work armed with confidence in their power as a class.

Through subsequent job actions, longshore workers established work rules and conditions in defiance of the terms of the arbitrated settlement. These actions and further strikes also solidified the union's control of the hiring halls, a gain of the 1934 strike. From 1934 to 1948, there were four coastwide strikes, more than 20 major port strikes and some 1,300 minor local work stoppages. It was not until after the 1948 strike that the bosses were able to impose a ban on strikes during the life of the contract.

## The 1948 Strike: Union-Busting and Anti-Communism

The 1948 strike broke out not long after the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act in June 1947. The shipping bosses had seized on one of the act's provisions, which outlawed the closed shop, in an attempt to dismantle the union hiring hall, but the 1948 ILWU strike spiked this effort. Uniquely, the strike also beat back the Taft-Hartley mandate that union leaders sign anti-Communist affidavits.

After nearly 90 percent of the union membership voted to strike, Harry Truman's Democratic Party administration ordered an 80-day “cooling off” period under Taft-Hartley. As part of this directive, the National Labor Relations Board put the employers' final offer to the membership for a vote. *Not one ballot was cast by the more than 26,000 longshore workers.* When the ILWU put that offer from the bosses to its own vote, it was rejected by close to 97 percent. In the same ballot, 94 percent of the membership also voted against the demand that ILWU president Harry Bridges and other union leaders swear an oath of anti-Communism, rebuking the red scare tactics of the bosses.

The 95-day strike began on 2 September 1948. Throughout, the ILWU ranks

maintained a solid front in the face of the employers' redbaiting frenzy. The threat to the profitability of West Coast shipping did, however, provoke increasing divisions among the employers, then grouped in the Waterfront Employers Association (WEA). The anti-Communist, union-busting war horse who headed the WEA was shunted aside by employers who saw a greater percentage in trying to co-opt the union.

The settlement was heralded as the beginning of a new spirit of cooperation between the ILWU and the shipping bosses. Key was the inclusion of a provision banning any strikes or work stoppages during the life of the contract. A new system of arbitration, which included a coastwide arbitrator chosen jointly by the union and the employers and empowered to make the final decision on any dispute, was put in place. Labor peace was effectively secured. There would not be another ILWU coastwide strike until 1971, 23 years later.

That strike was essentially forced on the Bridges leadership by a union membership seething over massive job losses resulting from the 1960 Mechanization and Modernization Agreement (M&M), which Bridges had negotiated and shoved down the workers' throats. Although winning a retroactive wage increase, the 1971 strike lost on the central issue of abolishing the “steady men” category introduced with containerization. These skilled workers report directly to stevedoring companies, bypassing and undermining the union hiring hall.

## Labor's Gotta Play Hardball to Win!

The introduction of container shipping in the late 1950s and early '60s brought a sea change at the ports. The amount of cargo skyrocketed and the man-hour requirements dropped dramatically. The M&M agreement gave the PMA a virtual free hand in eliminating longshore jobs in exchange for a pay guarantee plan for those workers still lucky enough to have a job. The longshore membership of the ILWU was slashed from 65,000 in 1959 to 10,500 in 2001. It now stands at 14,000, reflecting the expansion of West Coast shipping. The present negotiations also take place amid big changes in shipping and automation at the U.S. ports.

The ILWU is today up against even

larger conglomerates of shipping magnates who are looking to corner the market with new mega-ships that can carry the equivalent of 19,000 twenty-foot containers. On the ground, the TraPac stevedoring company at the L.A./Long Beach port is building an extensively automated terminal where remote-controlled cranes able to stack containers as well as guided carts that move containers into the yard will do work once handled by longshoremen. Many of these innovations have already been introduced at various ports worldwide.

The ILWU leadership's answer to increasing automation has been to demand that the union have exclusive jurisdiction over maintenance and repair of equipment. The 2008 contract included language conceding these jobs to the union (except at the few terminals where other unions already did the work). ILWU members have long inspected and repaired the chassis that move containers into and out of the yards. But over the last year, the shipping companies have sold off their chassis to leasing companies who maintain their fleets at off-dock facilities. In its latest contract offer, the PMA accedes to the union's demand that ILWU members continue to inspect and repair chassis leaving the terminals. But that may well be an empty promise since the trucking and chassis leasing companies have vowed to fight the provision in court.

Although largely skirmishes, such actions as the ILWU has taken at the West Coast ports demonstrate the union's continued power. At the same time, the ILWU increasingly looks like a man desperately trying to go up a rapidly descending escalator. Merely trying to hold on isn't going to cut it. Although the PMA may currently be biding its time, claiming to offer “generous” increases in wages and benefits, its appetite was whetted by the ILWU's recent contract settlements with grain-shipping companies in the Pacific Northwest, which essentially gut the union hiring hall (see “Showdown Brewing at West Coast Ports,” WV No. 1056, 14 November 2014).

The very concentration and centralization of the shipping industry that the ILWU is up against also gives longshore workers enormous potential power. But to realize that power, the ILWU must flex its muscle in a fighting alliance with other

port unions, as opposed to the all-sided jurisdictional warfare engaged in by the trade-union misleaders to preserve their piece of a greatly shrunken dues base. A case in point is the mutual backstabbing of the ILWU and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) bureaucrats in the Pacific Northwest. Union electricians crossed the picket lines of ILWU members locked out by United Grain in Washington State two years ago, while the ILWU in cahoots with the PMA has sought to poach IBEW jobs in Portland.

Any serious fight to restore the power of the ILWU must begin with the understanding that the workers have common interests that are irreconcilably counterposed to those of the employers. The answer to jobs lost to automation is to fight to restore the six-hour day, one of the union's first achievements, at no loss in pay to spread the available work around. There must be a fight to organize the growing mass of unorganized workers at the ports, such as the port truckers and intermodal rail facility workers, who are crucial to the movement of cargo. To build working-class unity, the union must combat the anti-immigrant racism that is wielded to enforce the brutal exploitation of workers, from port trucking to the vast inland warehouses.

What made the difference in the 1934 longshore and Minneapolis truckers strikes—as well as strike battles by auto parts workers in Toledo that same year—was that the workers were politically and organizationally armed by leaders who understood that the only possibility for victory lay in mobilizing their power as a class against the capitalist class enemy. As we wrote in Part Two of “Then and Now”:

“The 1934 strikes showed what militant unions could accomplish in a period of growing class and social discontent. Under a leadership that grasped the class nature of American capitalist society and the social power of those whose labor makes it run, the workers fought against improbable odds and won. These are the kind of battles that will need to be waged today to organize the growing masses of unorganized workers. For the workers to prevail over their exploiters, it is essential to win them to a Marxist political program that links labor's fight to the building of a multiracial revolutionary workers party capable of leading the struggle to do away with this whole system of wage slavery through socialist revolution.”■

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## Semi-Lockout on West Coast Ports



# Shipping Bosses Escalate Offensive Against ILWU

FEBRUARY 16—Seven months after the expiration of its contract with the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA), representing West Coast shipping and terminal bosses, is trying to force the union into submission by slashing work for longshoremen. In early January, the employers canceled most night shifts loading and unloading ships. Defying logic, the PMA argued that stopping such work was necessary to “relieve congestion” at ports up and down the coast where unloaded ships are at anchor. For the past two weeks, this semi-lockout has been extended to weekends and holidays, shifts for which longshore workers earn overtime pay. Ranting that the ILWU had orchestrated work slowdowns, a PMA spokesman declared: “What they’re doing amounts to a strike with pay, and we will reduce the extent to which we pay premium rates for such a strike.”

As attested to by no less an authority than the head of the Federal Maritime Commission, the growing gridlock on the docks owes much to the shipping bosses themselves. They invested in building container ships that can carry almost double the load without ensuring that there was adequate rail, trucking and other infrastructure to move the cargo out of the ports. But in truth, the PMA’s howls over congestion are largely an invention. Photos taken by the ILWU show acres of empty space at port terminals where containers could readily be offloaded.

The employers’ purpose is to provoke a sense of crisis in West Coast shipping and blame it on the union. Most of the bourgeois media is on board, trying to stoke a public outcry against “greedy” longshoremen by reporting vastly inflated annual wages and benefits. With members of Congress demanding that Obama “use all tools at his disposal” to end the showdown, including the slave-labor Taft-Hartley law, the Democratic Party president dispatched his labor secretary to broker a settlement. One need look no further than the armed Coast Guard ships that the Obama White House readied to use against the ILWU in its 2011-12 battle with the union-busting EGT grain consortium in Longview, Washington, to dispel any illusions that the Democrats are on the union’s side.

Promoting what it describes as a “gen-

February 12: Cranes stand idle in Los Angeles port.

erous contract,” the PMA is squeezing union members by denying them work, hoping to provoke disgruntlement in the ranks in order to divide and defeat the ILWU. As the *Journal of Commerce* (10 February), the industry’s publication of record, commented: “The employers’ strategy is to convince the rank and file that ILWU negotiators do not have their best interests in mind.” The ILWU International leadership has played right into the PMA’s hand. Keeping their membership on the job ever since the July 1 contract expiration, the union bureaucrats have also kept the ranks completely in the dark about negotiations and failed to prepare them for any kind of actual struggle.

Farrell Dobbs, one of the Trotskyist leaders of the 1934 Minneapolis strikes that laid the basis for forging the Teamsters as an industrial union, insisted on the importance of an informed and mobilized membership during contract negotiations, writing in his book *Teamster Rebellion* (1972):

“It is a mistake under any circumstances for union negotiators to deal with bosses or government mediators on the basis that they have authority to make a compromise. Once a concession has been made under heavy pressure, which comes especially from the boss-controlled government agents, the action can be reversed only with the greatest difficulty, if at all.... Consequently, whenever any question of a compromise arises, negotiators should always say they will have to take the matter back to the union for a decision. This procedure is not only a safeguard against bureaucratic malpractice, it is the best course for union representatives who want to do the right thing.”

Every year, the ILWU memorializes “Bloody Thursday,” the day when striking workers were killed by police trying to break the 1934 West Coast waterfront strike. But the ILWU bureaucracy today, as it has for many decades, foreshadows the methods of independent class struggle that forged the union. Far from looking to mobilize the power of the ILWU in alliance with other port unions and workers, the labor misleaders are busy lobbying Democratic Party Congressmen. At the same time, the ILWU International’s split from the AFL-CIO in 2013—the outgrowth of increasingly ugly jurisdictional turf wars—combined with its American-chauvinist rants against “these foreign-

owned companies” have only further isolated the longshore union from its potential *class allies* in the U.S. and internationally.

### The Trap of Arbitration, the Bosses’ Tool

The PMA’s latest charge is that the ILWU is threatening to sink the contract talks by demanding the right to unilaterally fire area arbitrators currently appointed by joint ILWU-PMA area committees. While railing against the ILWU, a PMA spokesman pointed to the arbitration system as “an essential check-and-balance against illegal labor actions.” And so it is. The purpose of these purported “neutral” arbitrators is to enforce class peace on behalf of the employers by putting a halt to work actions. According to PMA statistics, from 2008-14, the life of the last contract, there were some 250 disputes involving allegations of work slowdowns or stoppages. The arbitrators ruled against the union in more than 85 percent of these cases.

Of course, no one, including the ILWU ranks, has any idea what the union leaders are demanding, because they’re not saying. Nonetheless, even by the PMA’s own account the ILWU negotiators are merely asking that arbitrators be appointed only for the life of a contract and that both the union and the PMA have the right to veto their reappointment. That is, the ILWU leadership is merely trying to tinker with

the system of arbitration, which along with the no-strike provision in the contract has no other purpose than to prevent the union from exercising its power. The idea of a pro-union arbitrator is as big a fraud as the trade-union bureaucracy’s promotion of the capitalist Democratic Party as the “friend of labor.”

At the core of such scams is the lie that the workers have interests in common with the capitalist rulers, whose profits are secured through relentlessly trying to drive up the rate of exploitation of labor. The main weapon that the workers have is to cut off the flow of profits, the bosses’ lifeblood, by withdrawing their labor power in strikes and other actions based on the collective strength and solidarity of their class. Which side prevails in any battle is determined by the relative strength of forces on either side.

The class battles of 1934 that forged a mighty West Coast longshore union were waged in defiance not only of the strike-breaking forces of the capitalist state but also of demands that the workers submit to arbitration. Instead of putting their fate in the hands of an arbitrator, they fought back by mobilizing their class power with such militancy and determination that the maritime strike inspired an avalanche of support from the rest of labor, culminating in the four-day San Francisco general strike (see “Then and Now,” WV Nos. 1050 and 1051, 8 August and 5 September

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San Francisco, 1948: During longshore strike, ILWU members picket government hearings targeting union leaders in anti-Communist witchhunt.

