

Democrats Pushed Mass Incarceration

Bill Clinton Lashes Out at Black Protesters

In Philadelphia on April 7, some Black Lives Matter protesters confronted Bill Clinton over his racist policies that have inflicted lifelong suffering on poor and oppressed black people as a result of mass incarceration. Clinton's subsequent tirade against "black on black" crime was aimed at not only the black and anti-racist youth present, but

also at any opponent of racist capitalist order. He mounted a vigorous defense of his policies as president. The *New York Times* (9 April) reported on Clinton's diatribe: "I don't know how you

would characterize gang leaders who got 13-year-old kids hopped up on crack and sent them out on the street to murder other African-American children," an animated Mr. Clinton said, waving a

finger. "Maybe you thought they were good citizens. She didn't," he said of Mrs. Clinton."

Evoking the spectre of neighborhoods of black demons running amok, Clinton's racist garbage was designed to target those standing up to cop terror (the main source of violence against poor black people),
continued on page 10

Democrats Are No Friends of Labor

Victory to Verizon Strike!

APRIL 18—Picket lines went up at Verizon locations from Massachusetts to Virginia on April 13, as some 39,000 members of the Communications Workers of America (CWA) and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) walked off the job after working without a contract since August. Verizon is demanding new health care and retirement concessions from the union. What has most enraged the workers is the company's attacks on job security—threatening to close call centers and to outsource work to non-union contractors—and its demand to be able to transfer workers more than 35 miles from their current work location for months at a time. All working people in this country have a stake in this struggle. A victory by Verizon workers could be the spark to begin a real fight-back against the one-sided class war waged by America's capitalist bosses against workers.

This is the biggest strike in the U.S. since the last Verizon strike in 2011. Verizon is not just aiming to get more concessions from the workers. It wants to *crush* the unions and to *gut* Verizon's unionized workforce altogether, overwhelmingly concentrated in the landline and FiOS broadband business. Since last July, Verizon has been training some 20,000 non-union employees to act as scabs. The contempt of the company for its workforce was exemplified on April 14 in Gaithersburg, Maryland, when a Verizon company lawyer hit two picketing CWA Local 2108 members with his Porsche, sending one to the hospital!

The telecommunications giant is geared up for war. But the workers are also determined to fight and win. *Workers Vanguard* salesmen have gone to the picket



Striking Verizon workers, fighting for their jobs, march across Brooklyn Bridge, April 14.

lines and rallies to express our support for the strike. Many workers told us that they had been itching to strike ever since their contract expired last year. They made clear that they didn't want a repeat of what happened in 2011, when workers were sent back to their jobs by the union leadership without a contract.

These workers understand that without their unions they would be left at the mercy of a capitalist boss that wants to treat the workforce like slaves on a plantation. Verizon raked in some \$39 billion in profits over the last three years and is hungry for more. Its heavily unionized wireline business is much less profitable than its wireless sector, which generates

over 70 percent of the company's total revenue. Verizon has received billions in government subsidies to expand its fiber-optic broadband service in the Northeast, but has stalled on doing so. Several striking workers told WV that the company is holding off on building out its profitable FiOS network because the workforce is unionized. Verizon wants to smash its unions so it can have a "flexible" workforce, akin to the 70,000 unorganized workers in its wireless section who get far lower wages and benefits.

While the strike has been solid among union members, managers and scabs have been able to work. It's vital that the ranks of the CWA and IBEW be mobilized to

build picket lines that no one dares cross. This is no easy task. Cops patrol picket locations and keep picketers in pens to ensure that managers and scabs can cross. When Verizon protested that Philadelphia pickets had prevented its managers from getting to work, a Court of Common Pleas judge promptly issued an injunction limiting pickets to only six spaced strikers per entrance.

In attacking the strike, the courts and cops are simply doing their job as defenders of the capitalist profit system against working people. The response of the labor movement must be to mobilize behind the Verizon strike. Strikers have garnered support from other unions. Teamsters drivers for UPS have received instructions not to cross Verizon picket lines to deliver packages. Unionized hotel workers honored CWA pickets at three New York City hotels and got Verizon's scabs thrown out of the hotels. This kind of union solidarity points the way: what's necessary is for the mass of the labor movement to come out on the streets and on the picket lines to shut Verizon's operation down.

Many workers made clear to WV salesmen that they recognize the importance of unionizing Verizon's wireless workers. Some expressed frustration about how difficult it is to organize these workers when those already unionized are under such constant attack. Others pointed to the nearly 80 workers organized in a half dozen Verizon Wireless stores in Brooklyn and at a store in Everett, Massachusetts. In addition, around 100 wireless technicians have joined the CWA. The company has refused to negotiate a contract with the wireless workers. The union should demand that its wireless workers get a decent contract as part of any strike settlement.

The retail workers have braved company intimidation to organize into the CWA, with one worker, Bianca Cunningham,
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In Honor of the Dublin Easter Rising

New York, NY
28 March 2016

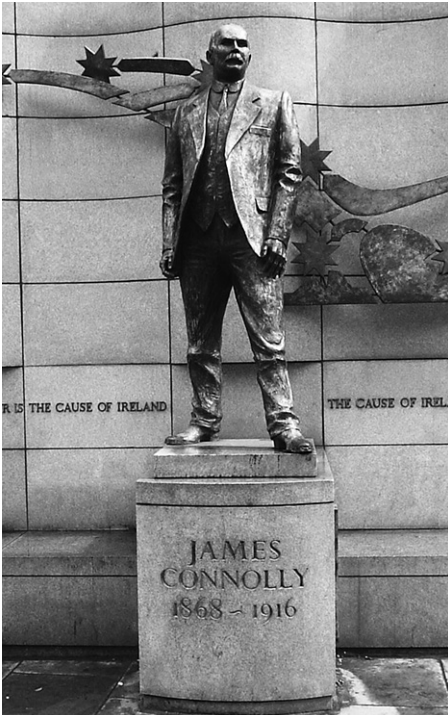
Dear Comrades,

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rebellion of the people who arose against the British occupation in 1916. They attempted to establish a Socialist Republic as part of the world-wide Socialist Revolution to overthrow capitalism. This was a major event of the workers' movement at the time, which inspired working people all over the world.

In Solidarity,
K.R.

WV replies: On 24 April 1916, over a thousand men and women of the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army (ICA) staged an armed insurrection in Dublin against British colonial rule. Patrick Pearse read the Proclamation of the Irish Republic outside the General Post Office (GPO), which the rebels occupied along with several other positions across the city. We honor the Easter Rising as a fight for independence of an oppressed nation from Britain amid the bloodshed of WWI. The republic that was declared was not, however, a socialist republic and the rising was not a socialist revolution. The Proclamation, which invoked God twice, said not a word about socialism or the working class.

Revolutionary socialist James Connolly, head of the ICA and general secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, was a signatory of the Proclamation and a leader of the uprising. The ICA was formed as a workers militia during the 1913 Dublin Lockout, when the city's employers locked out union members for five months, starving them into submission. Thus, working-class militants played a role in the 1916 rising, but the proletariat was not mobilized to fight to take power *in its own name* and served as an auxiliary to the bourgeois-nationalist Irish Volunteers. Connolly was known for his socialist internationalism, but the betrayal by social-



Dublin monument to Irish workers' leader James Connolly, executed for his role in 1916 Easter Rising.

democratic parties, particularly in Britain and Germany, in supporting the inter-imperialist war took a toll on Connolly. He began to despair about the prospects of British workers revolting against their own rulers and made a political bloc with Irish nationalists. Subsequently, the social-chauvinist British Labour Party leaders stridently denounced the Easter Rising.

After five days of fighting and heavy shelling from a gunboat that started fires and destroyed much of the center of Dublin, the insurgents were forced to unconditionally surrender to the British forces. Two hundred civilians had been killed by British troops, and the military authorities moved swiftly and mercilessly over the next two weeks to court-martial and execute the leaders of the Rising, whose bodies were buried in quicklime. Connolly

On the Formation of the Soviet Union

17 March 2016

Dear Comrades,

In "Australian Union Tops Push Chauvinism Against Trade Pact: Defend China!" (WV No. 1085, 11 March), we state: "In 1920, during the Soviet-Polish War, the Soviet Union began negotiations with imperialist Britain to conclude a trade pact." In fact, the entity known as the "Soviet Union" did not exist in 1920. It was voted into existence on 30 December 1922, more than five years after the October Revolution.

Stalin's move to form the Soviet Union involved large doses of national coercion. It is no accident that the same day the union was created, Lenin began to author his scathing letter on "The Question of Nationalities or 'Autonomisation'," singling out Stalin, Dzerzhinsky and Ordzhonikidze as exemplars of Great Russian chauvinism for their bullying of the Georgian Communists. As first proposed by Stalin, the autonomization plan called for the *formal entry* of the independent Soviet republics of Ukraine, Belorussia [now Belarus], Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia into the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic

(RSFSR). Under Lenin's pressure, Stalin changed this wording to *formal unification* with the RSFSR. But by the time of his letter, Lenin had come to view the whole business of autonomization as "radically wrong and badly timed."

Lenin defended the creation of a union of socialist republics, saying that it "is necessary for us and it is necessary for the world communist proletariat in its struggle against the world bourgeoisie and its defence against bourgeois intrigues." At the same time, he left open the possibility that this union might be retained only for military and diplomatic affairs, while in all other respects it might restore full independence to the individual People's Commissariats. It goes without saying that Lenin was for unity against imperialism, but he warned, "It would be unpardonable opportunism if, on the eve of the debut of the East, just as it is awakening, we undermined our prestige with its peoples, even if only by the slightest crudity or injustice towards our own non-Russian nationalities."

Comradely greetings,
Bert

was executed tied to a chair because the wounds he had suffered in the GPO had left him unable to stand. While popular support for the Rising had been limited at the outset—most people did not even know what was afoot—the brutal repression and mass arrests spurred many more to oppose colonial rule.

Despite its defeat, the Easter Rising was a signal event in the struggle for Irish freedom, which led to the independence of 26 of the 32 counties of Ireland in 1921. In this regard, there is a parallel to the heroic raid by John Brown and his fellow abolitionist fighters on the U.S. military arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, in 1859. Both were harbingers of events to unfold and were clarion calls for the liber-

ation of the oppressed. Harpers Ferry was the prelude to the American Civil War (1861-65) during which the Union soldiers who smashed the system of chattel slavery sang "John Brown's Body" on the march.

Lenin understood that the events in Dublin were part of the struggles unleashed by WWI and that under imperialism rebellions against national oppression could spark broader struggles (see "Lenin on the 1916 Irish Rebellion" below). This understanding was a key component of the program of Lenin's Bolsheviks, who led the working class to power in Russia in 1917, overthrowing the capitalists and landlords and beginning the liberation of the oppressed nationalities of the tsarist "prison house of peoples."■

FROM THE ARCHIVES OF MARXISM

Lenin on the 1916 Irish Rebellion

This April marks the centenary of the Easter Rising against British colonial rule in Ireland. Taking place amid the inter-imperialist World War I, the rebellion was brutally suppressed by the British rulers, who proceeded to execute the leaders of the Rising, including

the socialist James Connolly. V.I. Lenin stressed the need for Marxists to defend such national uprisings against imperialism. He sharply attacked renegades like German Social-Democratic leader Karl Kautsky and polemicized against more left-wing socialists like Karl Radek who

dismissed the Irish revolt as a "putsch" and refused to champion struggles for national self-determination. We print below excerpts from Lenin's "The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up" (July 1916).

* * *

The views of the opponents of self-determination lead to the conclusion that the vitality of small nations oppressed by imperialism has already been sapped, that they cannot play any role against imperialism, that support of their purely national aspirations will lead to nothing, etc. The imperialist war of 1914-16 has provided *facts* which refute such conclusions.

The war proved to be an epoch of crisis for the West-European nations, and for imperialism as a whole. Every crisis discards the conventionalities, tears away the outer wrappings, sweeps away the obsolete and reveals the underlying springs and forces. What has it revealed from the standpoint of the movement of oppressed nations? In the colonies there have been a number of attempts at rebellion, which the oppressor nations naturally did all they

could to hide by means of a military censorship. Nevertheless, it is known that in Singapore the British brutally suppressed a mutiny among their Indian troops; that there were attempts at rebellion in French Annam [name for Vietnam prior to 1945]...and in the German Cameroons (see the Junius pamphlet [by Rosa Luxemburg]); that in Europe, on the one hand, there was a rebellion in Ireland, which the "freedom-loving" English, who did not dare to extend conscription to Ireland, suppressed by executions, and, on the other, the Austrian Government passed the death sentence on the deputies of the Czech Diet "for treason," and shot whole Czech regiments for the same "crime."

This list is, of course, far from complete. Nevertheless, it proves that, *owing* to the crisis of imperialism, the flames of national revolt have flared up *both* in the colonies and in Europe, and that national sympathies and antipathies have manifested themselves in spite of the draconian threats and measures of repression. All this before the crisis of imperialism hit its peak; the power of the imperialist bourgeoisie was yet to be undermined (this

WORKERS VANGUARD

Marxist Working-Class Biweekly of the Spartacist League of the U.S.

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The Spartacist League is the U.S. section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

Workers Vanguard (ISSN 0276-0746) published biweekly, except skipping three alternate issues in June, July and August (beginning with omitting the second issue in June) and skipping the last issue in December, by the Spartacist Publishing Co., 299 Broadway, Suite 318, New York, NY 10007. Telephone: (212) 732-7862 (Editorial), (212) 732-7861 (Business). Address all correspondence to: Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116. Email address: vanguard@tiac.net. Domestic subscriptions: \$10.00/22 issues. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Workers Vanguard, Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116.

Opinions expressed in signed articles or letters do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.

The closing date for news in this issue is April 19.

No. 1088

22 April 2016

British Agent at Heart of 1993 Shankill Slaughter

The following article is reprinted from Workers Hammer No. 234 (Spring 2016), newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain.

WORKERS HAMMER

The early 1990s saw a dramatic rise in sectarian murders in Northern Ireland, with the oppressed Catholic minority bearing the brunt of these. The level of mass revulsion was such that it generated a rare moment of class unity, as the mainly Protestant workforce at Shorts aerospace walked off the job in protest against the Loyalist murder of a Catholic co-worker in October 1993. Two weeks later, in its own response to the wave of Loyalist murders, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) bombed a fish shop in the heart of Belfast's Protestant working-class Shankill district. [Pro-British] Ulster Defence Association (UDA) leaders were supposed to be meeting in a room above the shop. But the UDA was not there. Instead, nine Protestant civilians, including two children, were slaughtered, along with the IRA man carrying the bomb. Loyalist death squads responded in an all too predictable manner, killing two Catholic workers at a sanitation depot in West Belfast and then butchering another six Catholics and one Protestant in a machine-gun attack on a predominantly Catholic pub in Greysteel, County Derry.

Writing at the time, we stressed the urgent need for the workers movement throughout the British Isles to call for the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of all British troops from the North and to oppose the anti-Catholic murder machines of the British state, its Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and the various Loyal-



Aftermath of Shankill bombing, Belfast, Northern Ireland, October 1993.

ist paramilitary forces ("British Troops Out of Northern Ireland Now! Imperialist 'Peace' Fraud—Deadly Trap for Oppressed Catholics," *Workers Hammer* No. 138, November/December 1993). When the IRA struck a blow against the imperialist oppressor or the Loyalist fascist thugs, we defended the perpetrators against capitalist retribution, notwithstanding that such individual terror is antithetical to a proletarian strategy. However, the Shankill bombing was an act of indiscriminate terror, criminal from the standpoint of the working class. As we noted: "At bottom, this bombing cannot be divorced from the IRA's nationalist politics."

Now, adding a further dimension to the criminal character of the Shankill

bombing, the *Irish News* (25 January), a Belfast-based Catholic newspaper, has revealed that a British agent played a central role in this mass murder of working-class Protestants. The newspaper asserts: "The IRA commander who planned the Shankill bombing was a police informant who had told his handlers of the plan." The revelations are derived from top secret police files "liberated" by the IRA during a raid on Castlereagh Police Headquarters in 2001. The documents indicate that the intelligence provided by "agent AA" to his Special Branch handlers appears to have been passed on to the UDA leaders who had originally intended to meet above the fish shop, and that the bomb was in the agent's house the night before the bomb-

ing. This would have allowed the British agent to tamper with the timing mechanism, causing the bomb to explode prematurely and without warning.

Only two weeks after the *Irish News* broke its story, it emerged that "an IRA informant may have told police about the 1974 Birmingham pub bombs before they exploded" (BBC News, 10 February). The two IRA pub bombings resulted in the deaths of 21 people, with another 182 injured, and was used to justify a storm of anti-Irish chauvinism and state repression. The British state has adamantly refused to launch a public inquiry into the bombings, even after it was forced to release six men in 1991 who had been framed up and imprisoned for more than 16 years for the bombings. Now Ashley Underwood, an attorney for families of some of the victims, has appealed to the Birmingham coroner for a resumption of the inquests that were halted following the conviction of the Birmingham Six in 1975. According to the BBC, "Underwood said West Midlands police officers may have wrongly prosecuted" the Birmingham Six "knowing they were innocent in order to protect their 'mole' and cover up their prior knowledge of the attacks." "There is reason to believe," he added, that "the police had sufficient time, between the telephone warnings and the first bomb going off, to evacuate" the two pubs.

The British state's history of collusion with Loyalist anti-Catholic death squads is a matter of public record. A 2003 report by Metropolitan police commissioner John Stevens acknowledged security force collusion in multiple murders, including that of courageous lawyer Pat Finucane in 1989. The collusion was not restricted to a few bad apples, as Stevens implied, but was, rather, business as usual. It is more than reasonable to believe that the arrogant imperialist rulers had few qualms in overseeing the murders of some of their Protestant and British wage slaves in pursuit of their divide-and-rule strategy. We are committed to the fight for a victorious workers revolution that will finally put paid to blood-drenched British imperialism.

Imperialist Peace Fraud

The immediate backdrop to the spiralling sectarian terror surrounding the Shankill bombing was the talks between Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams and John Hume, then leader of Northern Ireland's Social Democratic and Labour Party, to lay the basis for an imperialist-imposed

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may be brought about by a war of "attrition" but has not yet happened) and the proletarian movements in the imperialist countries were still very feeble. What will happen when the war has caused complete exhaustion, or when, in one state at least, the power of the bourgeoisie has been shaken under the blows of proletarian struggle, as that of tsarism in 1905?

On May 9, 1916, there appeared in *Berliner Tagwacht*, the organ of the [socialist antiwar] Zimmerwald group, including some of the Leftists, an article on the Irish rebellion entitled "Their Song Is Over" and signed with the initials K. R. [Karl Radek]. It described the Irish rebellion as being nothing more nor less than a "putsch," for, as the author argued, "the Irish question was an agrarian one," the peasants had been pacified by reforms, and the nationalist movement remained only a "purely urban, petty-bourgeois movement, which, notwithstanding the sensation it caused, had not much social backing."

It is not surprising that this monstrously doctrinaire and pedantic assessment coincided with that of a Russian national-liberal Cadet, Mr. A. Kulisher (*Rech* No. 102, April 15, 1916), who also labelled the rebellion "the Dublin putsch."

It is to be hoped that, in accordance with the adage, "it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good," many comrades, who were not aware of the morass they were sinking into by repudiating

"self-determination" and by treating the national movements of small nations with disdain, will have their eyes opened by the "accidental" coincidence of opinion held by a Social-Democrat and a representative of the imperialist bourgeoisie!!

The term "putsch," in its scientific sense, may be employed only when the attempt at insurrection has revealed nothing but a circle of conspirators or stupid maniacs, and has aroused no sympathy among the masses. The centuries-old Irish national movement, having passed through various stages and combinations of class interest, manifested itself, in particular, in a mass Irish National Congress in America (*Vorwärts*, March 20, 1916) which called for Irish independence; it also manifested itself in street fighting conducted by a section of the urban petty bourgeoisie **and a section of the workers** after a long period of mass agitation, demonstrations, suppression of newspapers, etc. Whoever calls *such* a rebellion a "putsch" is either a hardened reactionary, or a doctrinaire hopelessly incapable of envisaging a social revolution as a living phenomenon.

To imagine that social revolution is *conceivable* without revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without revolutionary outbursts by a section of the petty bourgeoisie **with all its prejudices**, without a movement of the politically non-conscious proletarian and semi-proletarian masses against oppression by the landowners, the church, and

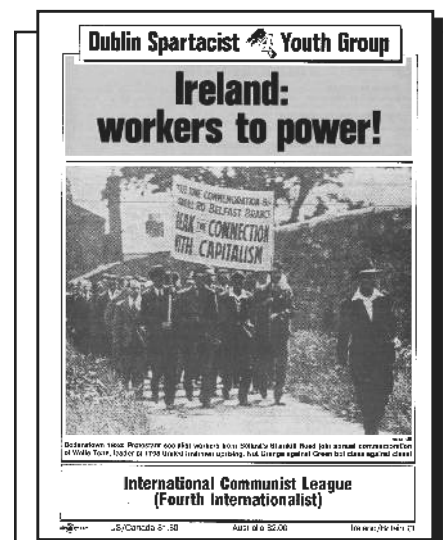
the monarchy, against national oppression, etc.—to imagine all this is to **repudiate social revolution**. So one army lines up in one place and says, "We are for socialism," and another, somewhere else and says, "We are for imperialism," and that will be a social revolution! Only those who hold such a ridiculously pedantic view could vilify the Irish rebellion by calling it a "putsch."

Whoever expects a "pure" social revolution will *never* live to see it. Such a person pays lip-service to revolution without understanding what revolution is...

We would be very poor revolutionaries if, in the proletariat's great war of liberation for socialism, we did not know how to utilise **every** popular movement against **every single** disaster imperialism brings in order to intensify and extend the crisis. If we were, on the one hand, to repeat in a thousand keys the declaration that we are "opposed" to all national oppression and, on the other, to describe the heroic revolt of the most mobile and enlightened section of certain classes in an oppressed nation against its oppressors as a "putsch," we should be sinking to the same level of stupidity as the Kautskyites.

It is the misfortune of the Irish that they rose prematurely, before the European revolt of the proletariat had *had time* to mature. Capitalism is not so harmoniously built that the various sources of rebellion can immediately merge of their own accord, without reverses and defeats.

On the other hand, the very fact that revolts do break out at different times, in different places, and are of different kinds, guarantees wide scope and depth to the general movement; but it is only in premature, individual, sporadic and therefore unsuccessful, revolutionary movements that the masses gain experience, acquire knowledge, gather strength, and get to know their real leaders, the socialist proletarians, and in this way prepare for the general onslaught. ■



September 1991 \$1.50 (48 pages)

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Verizon...

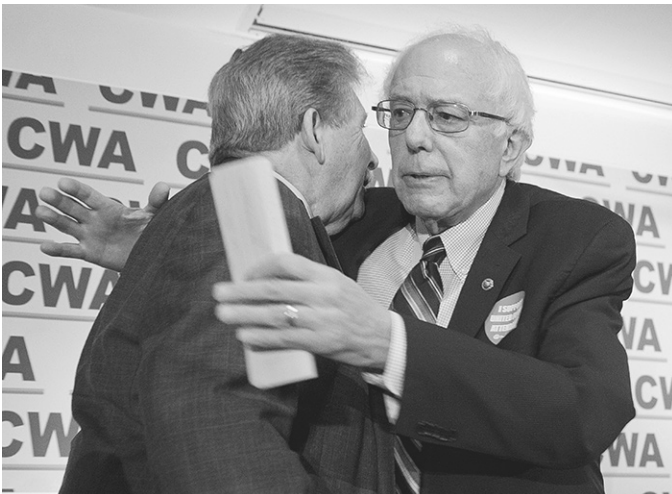
(continued from page 1)

fired for being one of the main organizers. The CWA has held rallies calling to “Bring Bianca Back!”; we join the union in demanding that she be reinstated immediately with full back pay! The CWA workers at the six Brooklyn stores are walking the picket lines alongside their union sisters and brothers in the wireline division.

This strike provides an opening for the unions to wage an all-out battle to organize *all* the wireless workers. Armed with the determination of the workforce, and backed by the rest of the labor movement, the unions can put Verizon on the defensive by launching a drive to organize the company’s unorganized workers.

Break with the Democrats!

Above all, in waging any struggle, workers must know who their friends and enemies are. The capitalist government and its politicians, including those who posture as the friends of working people, are the workers’ class enemies. It is hardly a coincidence that the union leadership timed the strike to coincide with the April primaries in New York and five other East Coast states. This move has certainly given the strike more visibility. Democratic contender Bernie Sanders, who was endorsed by the CWA in December, walked the picket line and expressed his support for the strikers, including during the April 14 Democratic



Washington, D.C., December 17: Communications Workers of America president Chris Shelton embraces Bernie Sanders after union gave him its endorsement. Union bureaucracy chains workers to Democratic Party, their class enemy.

president of the union, Larry Cohen, became a senior campaign adviser for Sanders. For her part, Hillary Clinton also has had some photo ops on the Verizon lines, though her “support” for the strike has been far more muted than Sanders’s. Whatever his position on the strike, and notwithstanding his “democratic socialist” pretensions, Sanders is a capitalist politician committed to the maintenance and growth of American capitalism, a system necessarily based on brutal exploitation and racial oppression.

Several Verizon strikers explained to WV salesmen their support for Sanders by likening him to Franklin D. Roosevelt, with one worker asking, “Didn’t Roosevelt grant concessions?” In fact, FDR was *forced* to grant those concessions because of the tumultuous class battles of the early

Aviation in 1941 in Inglewood, California. During WWII the union misleaders agreed to a no-strike pledge with the government. When the United Mine Workers defiantly walked out during the war, FDR unsuccessfully sought to “outlaw” the coal strikes. The mother of anti-union legislation, the Taft-Hartley Act, was passed in 1947 with the support of a majority of Congressional Democrats. Taft-Hartley and similar anti-strike legislation have been used not only by Republican but also by Democratic Party presidents, from Truman to Carter to Clinton and Obama.

The mass industrial unions were built in the 1930s using such tactics as flying pickets, plant occupations, secondary labor boycotts and mass pickets that defied court rulings and the cops’ scabherding. These kinds of tactics should be utilized by the labor movement today. But to do this you need a union leadership that does not bow down to the bosses’ property “rights” and the capitalist state’s anti-labor laws. As we explain in our pamphlet, “Then and Now,” which has been distributed to Verizon picketers, the three strikes in 1934 that laid the basis for organizing the industrial unions were led by reds committed to the class struggle. In other words, the key is leadership.

At bottom, today’s union tops promote the lie that capitalism can be “fair” to working people. The CWA leadership has been promoting a letter sent last month by 20 Senators calling on Verizon CEO Lowell McAdam to “act as a responsible corporate citizen.” At the same time, the CWA has been calling on regulators to push Verizon to expand FiOS and other wireline services, seeking to ensure work for its members. But capitalism cannot be “fair” to working people. It is a system of production for profit, and that profit comes from the exploitation of the working class. While the capitalists talk of unions as “dinosaurs” of a bygone era, union-busting remains a multibillion-dollar industry, with more than 10,000 lawyers and consultants employed by firms dedicated to “union avoidance.” Verizon itself has used such firms to try to defeat the CWA’s attempt to organize workers at its wireless stores. The reason is simple: the weaker the unions, the lower the wages and benefits, the greater the profits.

No doubt, many workers are attracted to Sanders’s calls for free tuition, free medical care and a higher minimum wage. But the reality is that this is hot air. Such concessions will only be wrung from the bourgeoisie through class and social struggle. And whatever reforms the cap-

italists are compelled to grant, they will try to reverse. As the former slave and radical abolitionist Frederick Douglass put it, “Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.”

Labor can beat back the capitalists’ assaults only by relying on its numbers, organization and class solidarity. But that necessary solidarity is undermined by the politics of the union tops. At an April 14 rally of over 500 workers who marched across the Brooklyn Bridge, a CWA official ended his speech by declaring, “Keep jobs in America!” As we wrote after the 2011 strike was called off:

“Verizon’s strikebreaking efforts were ‘Made in the U.S.A.’ The scabs crossing the picket lines on the Atlantic seaboard were ‘fellow Americans.’ There is no question that Verizon and other corporations have used outsourcing as a way to weaken or bust the unions. But the answer is not the labor bureaucracy’s class-collaborationist chauvinism, which poisons workers’ consciousness by promoting the lie that workers in the U.S. share common interests with their



1937: During Flint sit-down strike against General Motors, militant workers together with the Women’s Auxiliary (seen in background) defended pickets against strikebreaking cops. Militant class battles in 1930s built the CIO industrial unions.

debate. But a program of reliance on the Democrats is a losing one.

The pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy has long promoted a strategy of seeking to elect “friend of labor” Democrats who would enact laws in the interests of workers. In reality, this strategy has served to demobilize the power of the workers and their unions, resulting in one defeat after another and laying the basis for the decimation of the unions.

Last year, even before the CWA officially endorsed Sanders, the outgoing

1930s. The aim of Roosevelt’s reforms was to quell class struggle and to lull the workers into the belief that the government would protect their interests. The result was to tie the unions to the Democrats and to the capitalist state through labor boards and court arbitration.

Contrary to the mythology pushed by the union leaders, the Democratic Party is not “pro-labor,” but is in fact a capitalist party. Roosevelt himself used federal troops to break a strike of United Auto Workers members at North American



Mass picket outside Renaissance hotel housing Verizon strikebreakers in Midtown Manhattan. Hotel workers honored picket and scabs were thrown out of hotel.

red-white-and-blue exploiters.... A class-struggle labor leadership would support workers’ struggles internationally to organize into unions against the capitalists, of all flags.”

—“Union Tops Call Off Verizon Strike,” WV No. 985, 2 September 2011

It will be in the course of hard-fought class struggle that union militants will be able to forge a new, class-struggle leadership in the unions that stands for the complete independence of the working class from the capitalists’ government, parties and politicians. Forging such a leadership will be crucial in building a workers party that fights for a workers government, which would expropriate the capitalist class, including the telecommunications industry, and build a planned socialist economy. When those who labor rule, technological advances will not mean workers being thrown onto the scrap heap, but rather reduced workdays, higher pay, better working conditions and more leisure—a world where the wealth of society would be used for the benefit of all. *Victory to the Verizon strike!* ■

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A Spartacist Pamphlet

1934 Strikes

Class-Struggle Leadership Made a Key Difference

Then and Now

Minnesota, May 1934. At the Battle of Duponts Run, thousands of strikers and supporters routed cops and smothering special deputies.

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Verizon Workers

Beware of Anti-Union World Socialist Web Site

We print below a contribution from a longtime supporter of the Spartacist League and former phone worker.

David North's self-styled "World Socialist Web Site" (WSWS) faces a conundrum which they have yet to confront. For years they have gone beyond the normal revolutionary socialist criticism of the union bureaucracy as sellouts, reformists who restrict the workers' struggles within the confines of capitalist politics. Years ago the WSWS wrote off the entire trade-union movement worldwide as simply tools of the bosses that no longer are working-class organizations in any sense. It is "a worldwide phenomenon, embracing the unions in the advanced capitalist centers of North America, Europe and Asia, as well as those in so-called 'less developed' countries," they wrote:

"Under the impact of globalization, the unions have been transformed from organizations that pressured the ruling elite and the state for concessions to workers into organizations that pressure the workers for concessions to the employers. They do so in order to strengthen the global competitive position of 'their' national ruling elites and induce 'their' corporations to keep jobs at home—and thereby stanch the collapse in union membership and resulting decline in the bureaucracy's dues revenues."

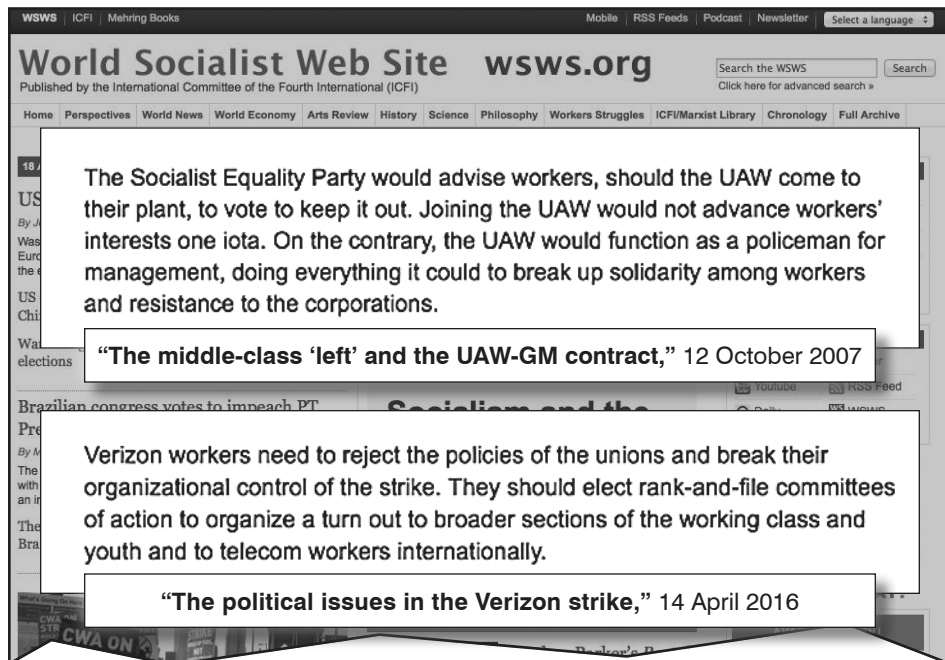
—"The Middle-Class 'Left' and the UAW-GM Contract," 12 October 2007

According to this analysis, the only thing the labor bureaucrats are interested in is preserving their dues revenue and other privileges. So how explain the launching of a strike of 40,000 workers by the CWA and IBEW against Verizon?

The strike is the fundamental, elementary basis of class struggle, sending the capitalist class into fits of desperate anger and fear. This is not the action of simple servants of capital, and could actually jeopardize the dues base of the bureaucracy, not to mention cost a bundle to sustain in the face of capitalist hostility. One can only conclude that at bottom, the CWA and IBEW really are based on the organization of workers and feel threatened by the intransigence of Verizon in the contract negotiations.

Northite arguments about the treacherous policies of the bureaucrats—the kowtowing to the Democratic party, the attempt to keep the strike contained and minimized, the impulse to surrender for peanuts, the desire for class collaboration, etc.—none of that is new behavior or a brilliant discovery by WSWS. Socialists have denounced the bureaucrats for that going back over a century. Daniel DeLeon rightly denounced the bureaucrats of Samuel Gompers' American Federation of Labor (AFL) in the late 19th century as "labor lieutenants of the capitalist class."

What caused the rottenness of the trade-union bureaucracy was analyzed by Leon



Website of Socialist Equality Party political bandits echoes bosses in calling to smash the unions.

Trotsky in the 1930s. He pointed out that it was the growth of world imperialism, and the union bureaucrats' attempt to survive by accommodating the imperialists, that distorted the unions. The unions could no longer profit by competition between the different enterprises:

"They have to confront a centralized capitalist adversary, intimately bound up with state power. Hence flows the need of the trade unions—insofar as they remain on reformist positions, i.e., positions of adapting themselves to private property—to adapt themselves to the capitalist state and to contend for its co-operation. In the eyes of the bureaucracy of the trade union movement the chief task lies in 'freeing' the state from the embrace of capitalism, in weakening its dependence on trusts, in pulling it over to their side. This position is in complete harmony with the social position of the labour aristocracy and the labour bureaucracy, who fight for a crumb in the share of super-profits of imperialist capitalism. The labour bureaucrats do their level best in words and deeds to demonstrate to the 'democratic' state how reliable and indispensable they are in peace-time and especially in time of war. By transforming the trade unions into organs of the state, fascism invents nothing new; it merely draws to the ultimate conclusion the tendencies inherent in imperialism."

—Leon Trotsky, "Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay" (1940)

This analysis holds true today because the system of world imperialism continues. Attempts by the Northites to invent some new analysis due to "globalization" offer nothing new in reality. And when some trade unions occasionally are forced into a corner and call a strike, the Northite "analysis" falls silent.

In America the labor bureaucracy shamelessly sells its soul for partial gains

for a relatively small layer of the working class, while openly sacrificing the rest. And lately, they even give away past gains just to hold onto their fiefdoms. In his final years as leader of the AFL-CIO, the crusty old George Meany was asked in 1972 why the percentage of unionization

percent, today it is about 10 percent and even lower in the private sector.

In 1929 Trotskyist leader James Cannon, speaking of the AFL, noted that the distinguishing feature of the American labor leaders is that they believe in capitalism and openly espouse it:

"The labor bureaucracy is a part of the capitalist rationalization and war machine—its 'labor' wing. DeLeon's classic definition of the reactionary labor leaders as 'labor lieutenants of the capitalist class' holds doubly good today. The distinctive features of these labor leaders in comparison to the social-reformist leaders of Europe consists in the fact that they are outspoken defenders of the whole capitalist regime and all of its institutions, without 'socialistic' pretense or class-struggle phraseology. Their program is a program of stark reaction. They repudiate the class struggle in words as well as deeds. They oppose any kind of independent political action. They support the whole military program of American imperialism and will indubitably be a powerful ally of the capitalists in lining up the workers for the coming war and demoralizing the struggle against it."

—"Platform of the Communist Opposition, February 15 and 22, 1929," by James Cannon, Arne Swabeck, Martin Abern and Max Shachtman, republished in *The Left Opposition in the U.S. 1928-31*

What's needed is a revolutionary upheaval inside the unions, ousting the old bureaucracy on a revolutionary program of world socialist revolution. Trotsky argued for a transitional program in this regard, including: 1) complete and unconditional independence of the trade unions in relation to the capitalist state, and 2) trade union democracy. He concluded:

"The trade unions of our time can either serve as secondary instruments of imperialist capitalism for the subordination and disciplining of workers and for obstructing the revolution, or, on the contrary, the trade unions can become the instruments of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat."

But this requires a revolutionary party



WV Photo

April 18: Spartacist supporters join march of striking Verizon workers in NYC.

of the U.S. working class keeps declining every year. "I don't know, I don't care," was his terse reply, reflecting the smug attitude of the entire bureaucracy. While in the 1950s the percentage was about 35

with an understanding of history. As Trotsky famously said, "Those who cannot defend old positions will never conquer new ones." This applies as well to the Northites as to the crusty AFL-CIO. ■

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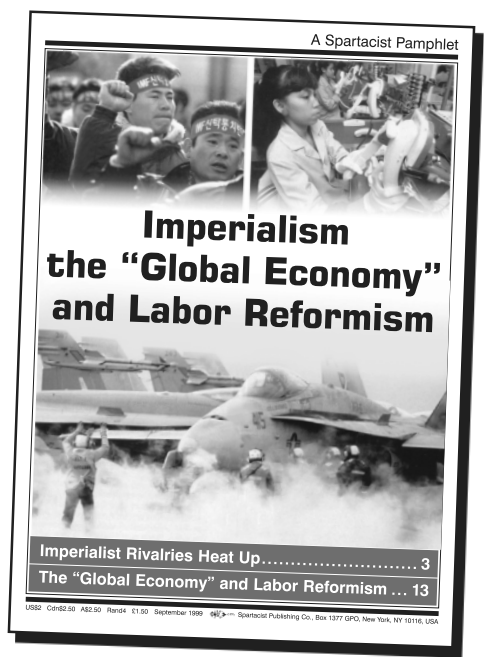
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This pamphlet assesses changes in the world economy in a historical perspective, from the origins of modern imperialism in the late 19th century through the capitalist counterrevolution in East Europe and the former USSR and its aftermath. Reformist ideologues of "globalization" seek to obscure the role of the capitalist nation-state and the danger of interimperialist war which is inherent in capitalism, while amnestying the refusal of the labor bureaucracies to wage class struggle against their respective bourgeoisies.

Exploitation, poverty and social degradation can be eliminated only through proletarian revolutions in the imperialist centers as well as the neocolonial countries, laying the basis for an international planned socialist economy.

\$2 (32 pages) September 1999

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Spartacist League 14th National Conference

The Spartacist League, U.S. section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), held its 14th National Conference on the West Coast in December 2015. The national conference, the highest decision-making meeting of the section, is charged with critically reviewing our past work, assessing disputes and electing a Central Committee to lead the SL until the next conference. In the period before the conference, a number of differences had been resolved through internal struggles against political adaptations to the relentless barrage of bourgeois propaganda. Hence the conference was able to focus much of its work on examining the situation in the U.S., particularly the state of the working class and the outbreak of protests against racist cop terror.

In addition to the main political reports, and the work of amending and adopting the main conference document (“Fighting for Revolutionary Continuity”), a number of commissions were held. These included a presentation and debate on Engels’ pioneering analysis of the development of the family and its central role in the oppression of women. Another commission was a panel critically examining aspects of the work of the American Trotskyists in the mid 1930s during the period of the entry into the Socialist Party. Internal bulletins had been produced to prepare both commissions.

Helping to set the framework for the deliberations of the American section, a plenum of the International Executive Committee of the ICL preceded the conference. There, comrades from Europe and Australia presented reports on Greece, the European Union and China.

Revolutionists today face the pressures of this general historical period shaped by the destruction of the Soviet Union through capitalist counterrevolution in 1991-92, which ushered in social reaction worldwide. Ideologically, communism is viewed in most countries as utopian, at best. In the U.S. the working class has been battered by decades of defeats; as the trade unions have drastically declined in membership, the union tops have all but ceased to fight for basic principles such as equal pay for equal work. As workers’ gains such as the eight-hour day fade into memory, the rights of black people, women and other oppressed groups are under constant attack. There is a lot of social tinder accumulating at the base of this racist capitalist society, but even those who want to fight see little hope for change and lack any understanding of the central role of the working class in putting an end to capitalism once and for all. They even less understand the need for a proletarian vanguard party.

The document adopted at the conference noted that the great distance between our political program and the existing level of consciousness among workers and the left “creates a tremendous contradiction for us: we want to effect change, but have few means to do so.” As Marx put it: “Men make their

Fighting for Revolutionary Continuity



L.Y. Leonidov

Above: Bolshevik leaders V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky at Red Square, Moscow, on second anniversary of October Revolution, 1919. Below: SL banner at demonstration against racist police terror, New York, December 2014. With our comrades in International Communist League, SL struggles to reforge Trotsky’s Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution.



WV Photo

own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past” (*The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* [1852]). The central task of the SL/U.S. in this period is to maintain the continuity of revolutionary Marxism today, i.e., Trotskyism, based on the hard-won lessons of past struggles.

Our last national conference, held in 2009, grappled with a series of political adaptations to forces hostile to our proletarian and revolutionary purpose, including black nationalists and elements of the capitalist Democratic Party (see “Fighting for Programmatic Integrity in a Reactionary Period,” *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 62, Spring 2011). These political departures flowed from a false perspective based on the idealist view that we could overcome difficult objective conditions simply through our own efforts, and were accompanied by a frenzy of activism and disdain for Marxist theory and history. A prime focus of such liquidation was the attempt to substitute our small forces for a nonexistent mass movement to free black political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. Political struggle against these departures led to the split of a small minority. Repeatedly in this post-Soviet period, we have had to fight against tendencies to substitute idealism and exhortation for a sober analysis of reality and our relationship to it.

The document from our preceding national conference was necessarily focused centrally on the then-raging factional struggle. In contrast, “Fighting for Revolutionary Continuity” has a more external focus. In particular the document

discusses changes in the manufacturing economy, the geographical and ethnic composition of the U.S. working class and the state of the labor movement. Excerpts from this section of the document are published on page 9 (see “Labor and the U.S. Economy”). The document was the product of many months of investigation and discussion and reflects a series of fights over the need for *Workers Vanguard* to deal with the American reality and produce timely articles on issues arising in the American labor movement; in the absence of big class struggles, such articles were often considered “too difficult” to produce or unimportant.

The conference again underscored our commitment to the production of the biweekly *Workers Vanguard* as the central work of the organization. The document stated: “WV is essential to our existence as a *fighting* propaganda group: its frequency allows us to intervene and be a factor as events unfold, influencing the consciousness of the few thousand people who read or peruse our press every two weeks.” Greetings to the conference from other ICL sections stressed the importance of WV, which seeks to uphold revolutionary Marxism in the world’s bloodiest imperialist power, as the flagship newspaper of our international tendency.

U.S. Imperialism: Crazy and Deadly

Comrade Henderson, reporting on U.S. imperialism and its place in the world, highlighted the contradiction between the U.S.’s overwhelming military power and its downsized manufacturing base and decaying infrastructure. The somewhat crazed quality of American imperialist ambitions reflects this contradiction. Although the scale of its economy and its relative stability make the U.S. a major force, its manufacturing prowess and technology have declined relative to its major imperialist competitors, Germany and Japan. The counterpart to expanding U.S. militarism abroad has been increased repression at home, as once supposedly emergency measures become the norm as part of the bourgeoisie’s “war on terror.”

Support at home for the U.S. wars in the Near East is lukewarm, as they seem endless and the bourgeoisie can’t articulate a policy that makes any sense. But the imperialists have succeeded in channeling justified repugnance for the reactionaries of ISIS into popular acceptance of the U.S. drone strikes and other acts of war. It is the U.S. imperialists who are by far the most dangerous and reactionary terrorists on the planet. The conference document reaffirmed: “Every time one of U.S. imperialism’s tentacles is weakened or cut off, every time a blow is struck against the American imperialist monster and its local agents and allies, working people and the oppressed around the world benefit, not least in the U.S. itself.” Over Syria and Iraq, this has meant that revolutionists take a military side with the Islamic State in those instances when it is targeted by the American forces and their local proxies, while not giving any political support to these reactionaries.

The bourgeois political establishment and media are united in beating the drums against capitalist Russia. After the U.S. backed a fascist-led, anti-Russian coup in Ukraine in spring 2014, Russia reincorporated Crimea, with the support of its mostly Russian and Russian-derived population. This marked the first time since the fall of the USSR that a major capitalist country with a significant military stood up to the U.S. The conference document noted: “Although we were initially wrong in making military support for the Russian intervention in Crimea conditional on the Russians recognizing special rights for the Tatars, our line that ‘Crimea is Russian’ was correct, both in taking a clear stand against U.S. imperialist machinations and in affirming an objective truth.”



Reuters

Protesters against racist cop killing of Michael Brown confronted by police, Ferguson, Missouri, October 2014.

We give no political support to Vladimir Putin’s capitalist regime, which enforces miserable conditions on the working people and brutally oppresses Muslim and other minorities as well as gays.

We seek to swim against the tide of bourgeois opinion, but as regular readers of WV will be aware, we have had to correct political errors on issues including Russia/Ukraine and China. These and other programmatic questions had been vigorously debated at times before becoming largely resolved. However, one individual, ex-comrade Wood, whose increasingly pro-imperialist views had found no support despite his many, many documents circulated internally, instigated his own expulsion by committing a gross provocation during pre-conference discussion.

America and Its Discontents

The eight years following Wall Street’s 2008 economic meltdown have been brutal for working people. But the bitter discontent among workers and youth was not expressed in increased class consciousness, instead giving rise to the diffuse Occupy protests focused on unequal distribution of incomes. Claiming to speak for the “99 percent,” Occupy’s bourgeois-populist outlook dissolved the working class into a sea of have-nots, mixed in with cops, priests and bourgeois politicians. As we predicted at the height of its popularity, this amorphous movement was channeled into the Democratic Party. Today Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders deliberately makes use of Occupy’s well-worn “1 percent” terminology as he seeks to appeal to disaffected voters. The fake-socialist left has



Boris Yeltsin and fellow capitalist-restorationists on Moscow barricades, August 1991. Today’s reactionary political period is conditioned by the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92.

protesters, and circumstances have not up to this point created a left-moving layer of activists. For now, our task is to propagate a Marxist worldview and seek to recruit individual students and young workers.

Of course, it is not a new phenomenon that the cops shoot down black people. The document adopted at our 1994 national conference observed that “cop terror is increasingly the means by which the capitalist class resolves the contradiction between black people’s achievement of formal legal equality and capitalism’s need to forcibly segregate this race-color caste at the rock bottom of society.” Speakers at the conference addressed the need to raise demands that pose collective struggle for integration—such as low-rent, quality, integrated public housing

of the struggle of the working class as a whole, is more than that struggle.” Due to their position as both the most oppressed and also the most conscious and experienced section of the working class, revolutionary black workers are slated to play an exceptional role in an American workers revolution.

From the inception of our organization, we have been guided by our understanding that reaching specially oppressed layers of the working people requires special organizational efforts. The understanding of the need for transitional organizations as a bridge to the revolutionary party goes back to the early, revolutionary Communist International. In the 1980s, the Spartacist League was able to initiate a number of militant labor-black united-front mobilizations spiking the efforts of the KKK and other fascists to stage provocations in major cities. Black trade unionists and youth were the core of the demonstration of thousands which drove the Klan off the streets of Washington, D.C., on 27 November 1982. In the aftermath of this demonstration, we launched the Labor Black Leagues for Social Defense. But in the absence of broader, sustained class and social struggles, the LBLs were only sporadically active. This conference recognized that the LBLs are moribund at the present time, but we would look to reconstitute such transitional organizations to meet a future upsurge in struggle.

The conference adopted a significant change in describing our perspective of building “a 70 percent black party,” which we will now express as “a 70 percent black, Latino and other minority party.” The original formulation was adopted at our national conference in 1983 to express the centrality of the black freedom struggle in building a revolutionary party in this country. Recent decades of immigration have changed the demographics of especially the South and Midwest. This fact is both demographic and political. Immigrants bring their own traditions,

which are often of trade-union and leftist militancy, to their native-born class brothers and provide as well a human bridge to workers internationally.

This modified formulation of a “70 percent black, Latino and other minority party” does not alter our understanding of the centrality of the black question in America, as expressed in our program and codified in our slogan for “black liberation through socialist revolution.” Built on the bedrock of black slavery, which was overthrown only by a Civil War, this country has black oppression woven through its history, its economy and every social institution.

As comrade Singer pointed out, if you imagine soviets in the U.S. (that is, workers councils like those that emerged in the Russian Revolution) they would be disproportionately made up of these minority layers, and a mass revolutionary workers party would reflect that. Such a social composition is necessary to overcome the deep racial and ethnic divisions in the working class. In 1892 Friedrich Engels



Imperialist airstrike on Syrian city of Kobani, October 2014, as part of war on ISIS. Revolutionaries in U.S. have special responsibility to defend victims of American imperialist depredations abroad.

been debating whether to explicitly support Sanders or just go on pressuring the Democrats from outside.

In his report on the labor movement, comrade Coburn observed that latent fury is building in the workforce after years of concessions. Last fall the UAW tops’ sellout deal with Detroit’s “Big Three” automakers came close to being rejected, with workers demanding “No More Tiers.” A comrade from the Midwest noted that workers in the parts plants are “very black, very young and very angry” and that the older guys are sympathetic to the young workers. A fighting leadership for the unions will be built through class battles, a task tied to forging a mass revolutionary party of the working class.

In her report on the situation in the U.S., comrade Singer noted that the first black president has presided over worsening conditions: “For the majority of black people, the socioeconomic situation today is comparable to the situation prior to the civil rights movement. Now we have seen blowback over the last year—mass protests all over the country against wanton police terror.”

Intersecting some of these demonstrations, we argue that the cause of black liberation must be linked to the struggle of the multiracial working class against capitalist exploitation. However, our tiny propaganda group does not have the social weight to influence the mass of

and free, quality, integrated public education for all—as an essential part of the fight for socialist revolution in America.

Comrade Singer’s report also took up Ta-Nehisi Coates and his best-selling book *Between the World and Me*. Her remarks (which informed our subsequent article on Coates in WV No. 1083, 12 February) refuted the myth of “white skin privilege” which Coates purveys:

“In the context of necessary anger at racial oppression in America, the theory serves a powerful purpose in obscuring the class line and, importantly, equating the white poor and working class with the white ruling class, united in ‘privilege’—all guilty, if you will. We all know that black people are a race-color caste, subject to worse conditions than whites in general in this country. But this understanding has nothing to do with the argument that whites materially benefit from black oppression. The latter is a program to absolve the capitalist class that does materially benefit off the oppression of black people.”

The conference document noted: “Most black workers continue to have the hardest jobs at the bottom of the pay scale. But blacks continue to be unionized at higher rates than whites (13.6 percent versus 10.8 percent) and are also represented disproportionately in key occupations: longshore, manufacturing and transit.” It remains true that, as we noted in “Black and Red” (*Spartacist* No. 10, May-June 1967): “The struggle of the Black people of this country for freedom, while part



U.S. Navy Destroyer USS Russell carrying out provocation against Chinese deformed workers state in South China Sea, March 10.

observed that the American bourgeoisie was a master at playing off successive layers of immigrants against each other.

Women’s Liberation, Marxism and the Family

At the conference, special attention was given to the causes of a liberal flinch last spring over a draft of the article “Communism and the Family” (subsequently published in WV Nos. 1068 and 1069, 15 and 29 May 2015). At that time, opposition emerged to the article’s polemical explanation of our historic position on women and the family, particularly on the question of collectivization of childrearing.

continued on page 8

ICL Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program

The Declaration of Principles of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) is a concrete expression of our purpose: to build national sections of a democratic-centralist International which can lead the struggle for worldwide socialist revolution. This important document, which was adopted at the Third International Conference of the ICL in early 1998, was published in the four language editions of *Spartacist* and additionally in eleven other languages.

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SPARTACIST 4!

NUMBER 54 ENGLISH EDITION SPRING 1998

For New October Revolutions!

Third International Conference of the ICL

SEE PAGE 2

Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program

International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

SEE PAGE 9

SPARTACIST 4!

NUMERO 55 AGOSTO DE 1998 EDICIÓN EN ESPAÑOL

¡Por nuevas revoluciones de Octubre!

III Conferencia Internacional de la LCI

PÁGINA 2

Declaración de principios y algunos elementos de programa

Liga Comunista Internacional (Cuartainternacionalista)

PÁGINA 10

SL Conference...
(continued from page 7)

As the article explains, we stand for the creation of a global communist society, that is:

“a fully free, communal society in which sexual life is independent of access to food, shelter, education and every daily need and comfort. When the family has withered away along with classes and the state, the communal upbringing that replaces it will lead to a new psychology and culture among the people that grow up in those conditions. Patriarchal social values—‘my’ wife, ‘my’ children—will vanish along with the oppressive system that spawned them. The relationship of children to one another and to the persons who teach and guide them will be many-sided, complex and dynamic. It is the institution of the family that ties sex and love to property, with anything other than the straitjacket of heterosexual monogamy branded as ‘sin’.”

Some comrades argued that the polemics in the draft article would be beyond the comprehension of our political opponents or that arguing with them about such fundamentals meant taking their socialist posturing for good coin. Underlying those arguments was a reluctance to defend the uncompromising program of our Marxist forebears on the family and the road to women’s liberation.

The historic Marxist position that the family is the central social institution oppressing women is drawn from Engels’ 1884 work, The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State. Drawing on pioneering anthropological work of the time, especially the work of Lewis Henry Morgan, Engels showed that in the organization of early human society, men’s and women’s work and social roles were equally valued, but that with the development of economic surplus, the female sex was dispossessed alongside the rise of private property, classes and the state. This was “the world-historic defeat of the female sex.” Engels stressed that the emancipation of women could come about only through socialist revolution.

In the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the Russian working class destroyed the class rule of the landlords and capitalists and established a workers state, the beginning of liberation for all the working masses including the doubly oppressed women toilers. The early Soviet regime took immediate steps toward liberating women from ignorance, inequality and the hold of religion. The old legal code governing matters such as marriage and divorce was overthrown; all laws against consensual sexual activity, including homosexuality, were immediately abolished. Insofar as they were able amid poverty, backwardness and the massive destruction caused by the civil war, the revolutionary regime established communal institutions—not only childcare but also communal kitchens and laundries—aimed at liberating women from stultifying individual household labors. The effort to replace the functions of the family by collective institutions was the most radical aspect of early Communist progress on the woman question.

In this post-Soviet period, the woman question has been a huge lightning rod for reaction generally. The document adopted at the SL/U.S. conference examined the domestic social context in which the opposition to the draft WV article arose: “Much as the gains of the working class have been attacked, so have basic rights for women, as seen in the rollback of abortion rights and the bourgeoisie’s puritanical anti-sex campaigns. While we defend the right of gay marriage (and divorce), it’s a sign of the times that liberals fought for it under the banner of ‘family values,’ ideologically unifying them with the Republican right wing and the reactionary Supreme Court.”

At the commission meeting on Origin of the Family, Amy Rath, the editor of the Women and Revolution pages in Spartacist, summarized some controversies going back many years concerning aspects of Engels’ book and the scholarship on which it was based. Other comrades presented their differing views. A focus of controversy was the relationship between women’s childbearing role and the development of their subordination within the institution of the patriarchal family. Comrade Rath observed: “Engels drew from Morgan and other non-Marxist scholars of the time.... Like most pioneering studies, Origin makes some guesses that in the light of subsequent knowledge need to be revised to a closer approximation.” She reaffirmed that Engels “laid the theoretical basis for the Marxist understanding of the woman question and how to achieve her emancipation through proletarian, socialist revolution.” The conference endorsed comrade Rath’s 1999 letter



Decaying American capitalism seethes with discontent: Protest in Lansing, Michigan, against lead poisoning of water supply in Flint, January.

“On the Origins of Women’s Oppression” (see WV No. 727, 14 January 2000) and projected a future article incorporating this rich material.

The discussion on the woman question also underscored that our propaganda needs to constantly make clear that “reforms are not our goal—not even a workers government is our goal, but a means to our goal, which is a global communist society,” as comrade Rath stated. At the conference, comrade Joseph Seymour addressed this point in a special presentation on propaganda. He underscored that leftist intellectuals and reformist socialist organizations today do not even claim to share our goal of liberating human potential through a global communist society. He observed: “Our polemics are not informed by the fact that the mainly student youth who now join the Workers World or the ISO [International Socialist Organization] are not attracted to, and do not even understand, the concept of a global communist civilization in the Marxist sense. They have joined these groups because they agree with the policies that they advocate, or alternatively oppose, within the existing capitalist-imperialist system. That defines their mental framework.” Rather than polemicalizing against reformist left organizations the same way we did in the 1960s and 1970s, comrade Seymour argued: “To adequately explain the various aspects of a future communist society, and a transi-



Labor Action, edited by Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon (inset) during Trotskyists’ entry in Socialist Party.

tion to it, requires a substantive, multifaceted body of party literature.”

The Struggle for Continuity

The Fourth International, founded in 1938 under the leadership of Leon Trotsky, based its program on the lessons drawn from the experience of the first four Congresses of the Communist International. We seek to carry forward this program today; our perspective is to reforge the Fourth International, destroyed in 1951-53 by a revisionist current that denied the need for Trotskyist proletarian vanguard

eration of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the Trotskyist organization in this country until its political convergence with revisionism (see “Genesis of Pabloism,” Spartacist No. 21, Fall 1972). For a period of more than five decades, half of it under the adverse historical circumstances marked by the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, the Spartacist tendency has maintained a revolutionary program, longer than any other Marxist formation in history.

The core of our cadre was won to Trotskyism in the period of radicalization spurred by the civil rights movement and then by the U.S.’s losing war in Vietnam. In subsequent decades, new recruits came more slowly, creating our current generational problem. Forging a new generation of revolutionary leaders is fundamental to maintaining our revolutionary continuity. As comrade Henderson observed in his report: “The struggle for continuity is twofold: in the first instance, maintaining our revolutionary program here in the most powerful imperialist country on the planet, and, second, effecting a leadership transition to a new generation which does not have the political depth and experience of the historic leaders of our tendency.” He noted that “senior comrades still play a crucial, and often decisive, role in sorting out knotty political questions, but the day-to-day central leadership functions are mainly carried out by a younger generation of comrades.”

We also have a promising layer of younger cadres, but our affiliated youth groups, the Spartacus Youth Clubs, are small and only sporadically active. The recent near-disappearance of Young Spartacus pages in WV reflected this reality. The conference voted to disband the Youth Commission, the body that had

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been responsible for overseeing the production of the youth pages. In the next period, WV editorial will oversee the production of youth- and campus-related propaganda, using a *Young Spartacus* masthead as appropriate. Our young cadres, who in another period might have been writers for the youth press, are taking on party responsibilities in WV and as organizers, treasurers, trade unionists and on international assignment. In light of our paucity of resources, a meeting of the incoming Central Committee following the conference authorized the production, in cases of emergency, of eight-page issues of *Workers Vanguard*, rather than our usual 12 pages.

The SL is faced with a generational transition in a period characterized by a regression in political consciousness and a low level of class and social struggle. The document noted:

“Since we are in an unusually deep trough, the experiences that are immediately available to us are not very good. It helps to look to the experiences of the workers movement in 1917-21 when it stood on a relative mountain in order to critically assimilate the lessons codified by the Communist International. In the ICL we trace our con-

tinuity from this period through the SWP and the Revolutionary Tendency. Comrade Robertson once observed:

“It’s very thin, comrades, this continuity. And it seems to me and has always seemed to me that to be a good communist requires two components, each of which is necessary. One is akin to the university students, that is the mastery of the texts: to know, to read, to study, to be able to have the historic precedents through book learning at one’s fingertips. And the other is analogous to the apprenticeship program where you learn by doing under the direction and supervision of those who know better than you.”

“We are thin on both counts. Given the extended trough in social and class struggle, for the new generation of cadres book learning is especially necessary, but has been rather insufficient.”

Our international theoretical journal *Spartacist* remains key, particularly in the extension, application and clarification of the lessons of the history of the Marxist movement. The Prometheus Research Library (PRL), our archive and the laboratory for *Spartacist*, containing politically invaluable holdings of our party, its antecedents and the workers

movement, is crucial to help us understand our place in history.

A highlight of the proceedings was the panel on the American Trotskyists in 1936-37, during the period of entry in the Socialist Party, which has been little documented. The discussion was informed by documents discovered in various archives, including the PRL, but to date we have been able to examine only a small fraction of them. It is becoming clear that in this period, the seeds were planted for the 1939-40 faction fight in the SWP, where the majority led by James P. Cannon defended Trotskyism against a petty-bourgeois opposition led by Max Shachtman, James Burnham and Martin Abern, who repudiated the unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union. The panelists addressed the SP entry and other aspects of the Trotskyists’ work at that time: trade-union work, notably in the Sailors Union of the Pacific; and political bending toward the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party, a two-class party. Some initial impressions were offered concerning the approach to the question of black oppression.

At the end of its deliberations, the conference elected a Central Committee including both senior, authoritative leaders and the younger leaders now running the organization on a daily basis. James Robertson was elected National Chairman (Consultative). In recognition of her leading role, comrade Williams was elected National Chairman; among other officers, comrade Singer was elected National Secretary. John Blake was appointed Editor of *Workers Vanguard*.

In our commitment to reforge the Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution, we stand on the words of Leon Trotsky:

“To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one’s program on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour for action arrives—these are the rules of the Fourth International.”

—*The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International* (1938)

The conference concluded with the singing of the “Internationale.” ■

Excerpt from Conference Document

Labor and the U.S. Economy

The following is an excerpt from the document adopted by the 14th National Conference of the SL/U.S. in December 2015. It has been edited for publication.

Changes in Manufacturing

In the fall of 2014, the United Auto Workers (UAW) bureaucracy held a heavily orchestrated one-day strike at the Lear parts plant in Hammond, Indiana, designed to let workers blow off steam, and claimed it was a victory because it supposedly got rid of the two-tier wage system. In fact, the lower-tier workers were recategorized, moved to another plant and had their wages cut. This sellout was a continuation of the UAW bureaucrats’ class-collaborationist “partnership” with the Big Three and another step on the road to ruin.

The recent Big Three contract negotiation was the first time since 2007 that the UAW bureaucracy has had to contend with strike sentiment, given that it had agreed to a six-year strike moratorium in the Obama-engineered bailout of the industry. The workforce at the Big Three expressed strong opposition to the tier system and the proposed contracts negotiated by the UAW bureaucracy, which the union tops eventually pushed through. Contrary to their promises, the UAW leadership maintained and reinforced tiers in the industry. Our sales to this industry intersected quite a bit of anger within this workforce.

Already, the UAW bureaucracy has encouraged so-called insourcing, i.e., enticing the domestic automakers to bring jobs previously contracted out to third-party companies back under the Big Three umbrella by offering wages even lower than the second-tier wages. Here is the entire strategy of the UAW bureaucracy to fight outsourcing: acting despicably as labor brokers and pushing “buy American” protectionism coupled with anti-Communist China-bashing. This protectionist poison, which scapegoats foreign workers, helped spur the growth of the non-union auto industry. To avoid trade restrictions, Japanese and later German and South Korean automakers set up shop in the U.S. In turn, the UAW leadership agreed to concession after concession at the Big Three so that the American auto bosses could “stay competitive” with the foreign-owned factories.

The leveling of labor costs in the U.S., and the doubling of wages in China since 2008, combined with the wide availability of cheap land, energy and raw materials as well as ready access to the American market, has changed the cal-



Watkins/Times of Northwest Indiana

Hammond, Indiana: Auto workers during brief strike at Lear parts plant, September 2014.

culus on where goods are manufactured. Numerous Chinese-owned textile plants have recently sprung up in the Carolinas, both a testament to the lower yarn production costs in the U.S. and a pre-emptive measure to minimize the impact of the TPP trade pact. Meanwhile, American industrial giants have returned some production to this country. Overall, the U.S. is both the world’s largest direct investor abroad (roughly \$400 billion in 2013) and the largest recipient of direct investment (\$150 billion), spending from one country into another that involves establishing operations or acquiring tangible assets.

Deindustrialization of large parts of the U.S. disproportionately affected the unionized working class and the black population in particular. But we also must keep in mind that the U.S. retains a manufacturing core. The U.S. share of global manufacturing output in value added remains about 20 percent (down from approximately 60 percent in 1950), underlining that this country’s industrial proletariat is still strategic. The face of U.S. manufacturing has changed substantially over the last half century, and we need to strive to better understand it in order to intersect those workers and address the issues they confront more effectively in our propaganda.

In the place of large factories have arisen many smaller, capital-intensive facilities, often in far-flung locations. The history of Ford River Rouge outside Detroit is illustrative. The original massive complex (with its own steel mill, glassworks, electricity plant and internal railroad) could turn raw materials into running vehicles. As many as 100,000

workers were employed there in the 1930s and over 30,000 in the 1970s before the company decentralized its operations, spinning off the steelmaking, contracting out parts production to suppliers, etc. Today, the Rouge site is a model of “lean production” and highly automated manufacturing. The Ford Rouge Center, the automaker’s largest industrial complex with roughly 6,000 employees, is supplied by hundreds of parts manufacturers. Technological improvements, coupled with “flexible” hours and speedup, have translated into large increases in labor productivity as the total workforce shrinks.

Although the manufacturing workforce has been sliced and scattered, furthering the atomization of the workers and negatively impacting class consciousness, it retains tremendous social power in core industries. In the case of auto, “just in time” production, a growing emphasis on speed to market and the extensive network of parts manufacturers supplying each assembly plant comprise an arrangement with a lot of potential vulnerabilities. For example, at the Ford Rouge Center, no more than two hours of parts are stacked along assembly lines, and just 12 hours of inventory are on site. One strike by a small group of workers would shut down the whole operation, as happened in the then-GM Delphi parts plant in 1998. Thus, maintaining class peace and enforcing strict labor discipline are essential for the automakers, which receive invaluable assistance on that score from the rotten UAW leadership.

Particularly in manufacturing, the rise in temporary workers is a significant shift

from what we saw even 15 years ago. Temporary employment offers poverty wages and no benefits and creates a more vulnerable workforce, insulating companies from workers’ compensation claims, new health care taxes and unionization drives. In many assembly plants, an estimated 10 percent to 30 percent of the workers are temporary. Temporary workers make less than permanent hires and part of their wages goes into the pocket of the temp agencies.

The “Southernization” of Labor

The American labor movement is paying the price to this day for the failure to organize the South. For example, Boeing moved to the South in response to a string of IAM machinists union strikes at its Washington State facilities. This move was reminiscent of the textile industry, the iconic (and then largely white) Southern industry that started as “runaway shops” set up by Northern textile barons in search of a cheaper and more pliable workforce. Buckling under to predictable blowback from the company, the IAM postponed a recognition vote early in 2015 at the Boeing facility in North Charleston, South Carolina. Furthermore, low-wage production in the South has driven down the wages of workers more broadly—the wage and benefit gap between Midwestern and Southern workers narrowed from \$7 in 2008 to \$3.34 by the end of 2011. This “southernization” of American labor is testament to the race to the bottom fueled by the betrayals of the union bureaucrats. “Right to work” laws, passed to prevent the rise of integrated unions in the South, have taken firm root in former bastions of industrial unionism in the Midwest, including Indiana, Michigan and Wisconsin.

A massive organizing drive in the South is vitally necessary. The last major attempt, the CIO’s 1946-53 “Operation Dixie,” added 800 locals and 400,000 members in its first 18 months. These gains soon evaporated, since the organizing drive was predicated on not antagonizing the Southern business elite and ruling Dixiecrats; the CIO maintained silence on matters of racial oppression and excluded black organizers and reds. The Communist Party, despite joining Roosevelt’s New Deal coalition and helping stave off the independent political organization of the working class, had in various Southern locales successfully recruited black and white workers together to the unions, in defiance of segregation laws and the pervasive threat of Klan terror.

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Clinton...

(continued from page 1)

notwithstanding real fears of violence in the ghettos and barrios, born of desperate conditions and hopelessness. Clinton’s ranting was to conceal the systematic racist oppression that has thrown thousands of black and Latino youth into total destitution and despair—and his huge contributions to that. On top of this, he contemptuously dismissed the protesters as showing up to just get their faces on TV. Clinton’s arrogant, unbridled racist contempt is despicable.

These young protesters are one big distraction for Bill/Hillary Clinton and their beloved “liberal” supporters spanning from the Congressional Black Caucus to bourgeois feminists to Wall Street. Nothing is more important to all of them than getting another Democrat in the White House to continue murderous imperialist aggression abroad and vicious austerity at home.

From a “progressive” capitalist perspective, the Democrats figure they’ve already got most of the black vote locked in place, so now they perhaps can gamble on a few strategic moves to “let Bill be Bill.” Even if Clinton had “lost it” or even “apologized,” with some manufactured tears, and a pained look added to the mix, it would all be a pretense and more crap, no less than that of the proven mythical epidemic of crack babies (see “‘Crack Babies’ Furor Was Big Lie—Down With Racist ‘War on Drugs’!” WV No. 933, 27 March 2009).

What we see is a division of labor: Hillary pouring out her “love” for black people and hubby Bill slapping them upside the head at the appropriate time to show white racists that the Clintons will keep on being tough on black people.

A similar “signaling” to the racists was done by Clinton during his run for the presidency in 1992. Many people remember the Rainbow Coalition conference that June when he attacked black rap artist Sister Souljah (today an author) as being supposedly anti-white in order to embarrass Jesse Jackson, then the leading black figure in the Democratic Party. The “man from Hope,” Arkansas, thinks he can keep black people in their “place”—except when he can’t, which was the case with the Black Lives Matter youth in Philadelphia.

How Clinton got to be a “brother” or America’s “first black president”—mainly for an older generation of black capitalist

politicians, celebrities, petty-bourgeois entrepreneurs, etc.—flowed from his social interactions and some appointments to his cabinet of a few black people. Meanwhile, thousands were shoved into hellhole prisons as a result of his ratcheting up of the “war on drugs.”

Given how the capitalists lie, cheat, steal and kill to perpetuate their obsolete, anarchic profit system, it’s necessary to foresee and prepare for their assaults. The burning question of the moment is: How do we go forward in forging our party, a multiracial revolutionary workers party

contain and repress such struggle. The road forward is not to “pressure” the oppressors to reorder their priorities. The profit-bloated capitalists’ only priorities are to forcibly hold down workers and the oppressed.

It is vital to mobilize the only class in society that has the social power and the interest in smashing all forms of oppression: the workers at the point of production, the producers of profits for the exploiters. Black workers will be a crucial component of the vanguard leadership of the struggles of all those trampled by this



Bill Clinton bares his fangs at anti-racist protesters during rally for Hillary, Philadelphia, April 7.

fighting on behalf of all the oppressed and exploited? That is what the Marxist Spartacist League, since its inception over 50 years ago, has been consistently fighting to build.

As part of this preparation we combat illusions in the benevolence of the ruling class and their parties under this decaying capitalist system, which impoverishes and murders the oppressed and exploited here and throughout the world. President Obama, Chicago mayor Rahm Emanuel and the Clintons are in the same party—the capitalist Democratic Party, the historic party of slavery. Not to mention current Democratic presidential aspirant Bernie Sanders, who notably also voted for Clinton’s 1994 omnibus crime bill. Each covers for the other.

In the face of any serious struggle that threatens to go outside the bounds of capitalism, the ruling class will unite to

system. They are a key unionized part of the labor movement and, organized in a revolutionary workers party, are slated to play an exceptional role in an American workers revolution.

In this brutal racist capitalist system—a dictatorship of the rich—black people have historically been the recipients of extra special oppression. Anti-black racism is a weapon of the exploiters to keep the working class divided and weak. The tiny group of fabulously wealthy capitalists feasts on these divisions. To break its chains, the multiracial labor movement, including white workers, has a giant stake in combating black oppression to overcome divisions fostered by the capitalists and their various mouthpieces. Labor is weakened even further when its natural allies in the ghettos and barrios stand alone in battling for their rights. The primary responsibility for this state of affairs

Economy...

(continued from page 9)

Even as their own unionization campaign foundered, the anti-Communists atop the CIO worked to destroy these integrated union locals, like that at R.J. Reynolds in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

The South—a bastion of anti-black and all-sided reaction in U.S. society and long home to the bulk of the officer corps—is crucial to the American workers revolution, which will finish the Civil War. A majority of the black population since 2000 once again lives in the South. Manufacturing job losses have been a significant factor pushing black people to migrate back. Notably, most of the states that were the biggest Great Migration destinations—New York, Illinois, Michigan and California—are now among the greatest contributors to the new Southern migration gains.

Our distance from the South and the auto industry made addressing the UAW bureaucracy’s class collaboration at VW’s Chattanooga, Tennessee, plant more difficult. While anti-union propaganda has compared the UAW to the invading Union Army, the union bureaucracy has openly renounced the “adversarial unionism” of the 20th century and embraced partnership with the bosses through so-called “co-determination.” Union authorization cards read: “We, the employees of Volkswagen, are joining together to create the



Workers at Volkswagen plant in Chattanooga, Tennessee, 2013. About half of all auto workers make under \$15 an hour.

most successful Volkswagen Chattanooga facility possible.... We choose to be represented by the UAW because, by working together, we can make the Passat the #1 car in the United States.”

Central to their self-defeating organizing effort at Chattanooga, the UAW bureaucrats signed a “neutrality agreement” that ceded jurisdiction over various shopfloor issues to a joint labor-management “works council,” which would also oversee at least the first stage of the grievance process.

This undercuts the union, whose purpose is *supposed to be* to defend workers against the company. The UAW’s “neutrality agreement” at Chattanooga was nothing new. The union bureaucracy has long sought to add members to its rolls by negotiating such agreements with employers. In exchange for claiming it will not interfere in union organizing, management insists on a sweetheart deal committing the union to concessions even before a single member is organized.

lies with the pro-capitalist labor leaders who have for decades tied labor to its class enemies.

Overturning capitalist rule will be an arduous task. It took a series of tumultuous struggles to finally get rid of black chattel slavery. It ultimately required a civil war—a social revolution—to eradicate slavery and, to the bitter end, the slaveholders and their apologists proclaimed that their rule was divinely ordered. The capitalists today believe something equivalent to the slaveholding class they replaced.

Our class won its greatest victory when the Bolshevik-led 1917 October Revolution—the only successful workers revolution in history—proved that the capitalists are not invincible! Following decades of betrayals by the anti-internationalist, anti-Marxist Stalinist leadership in the former USSR, capitalism was restored in 1991-92. We uniquely fought that. These and many other vital questions and lessons must be studied and assimilated to go forward.

As long as the capitalist system exists, the possessing class will pit different sections of the oppressed against each other. That’s why the fight for black liberation through socialist revolution is bound up with the struggle to emancipate the working class from capitalist exploitation. There are common interests between exploited workers and oppressed minorities—from the need for quality, low-cost, integrated housing and free education to jobs for all. Militant multiracial class struggle can break down seemingly permanent divisions. A fighting Leninist vanguard party acting as a tribune of the people will lead these struggles to the overthrow of capitalism.

A socialist revolution (and we’re not talking about Sanders’s “political revolution” to put lipstick on a pig) will rip the power and wealth out of the hands of the capitalist exploiters. Those who labor must rule! Capitalism cannot be reformed.

Don’t believe the myth of the harmony of interests between the oppressed and their oppressors. This lie is spouted by charlatans including the labor fakers and various “socialists” backing Sanders, all of whom hiss and sneer at our revolutionary program calling for workers socialist revolution. A workers government, a workers America, will be a big step toward putting an end worldwide to the last class-divided, barbaric society in history: capitalism. Black oppression will be uprooted with it. Then we will have the resources to begin to create living conditions worthy of human beings. ■

After the UAW lost its recognition vote at Chattanooga last year, VW instituted guidelines for meeting with sanctioned employee groups. Both the UAW *and a company union* now regularly sit down with the company. This scheme is based on the concept of “minority unionism,” where a union represents those employees who sign up, whether or not they have majority support, thus writing off the union as an exclusive bargaining agent for a given plant. Having rejected a class-struggle perspective, union officialdom and social democrats champion this model as a way to get around existing restrictive anti-labor legislation.

Today, the “strategic shift” of the AFL-CIO away from building unions, including proposals that workers join its “Working America” organization *as individuals*, is another symptom of how the union tops have abandoned class struggle. Leon Trotsky’s observations in the article “The Trade Unions in Britain” (September 1933) apply with full force to the U.S. today:

“Capitalism can continue to maintain itself only by lowering the standard of living of the working class. Under these conditions trade unions can either transform themselves into revolutionary organisations or become lieutenants of capital in the intensified exploitation of the workers. The trade union bureaucracy, which has satisfactorily solved its own social problem, took the second path. It turned all the accumulated authority of the trade unions against the socialist revolution and even against any attempts of the workers to resist the attacks of capital and reaction.”■

Chicago...

(continued from page 12)

the unremarkable verdict that the Chicago Police Department is plagued by systemic racism. Not surprisingly, the report did not indict Rahm or his Democratic Party mayoral predecessors for their role in covering up and perpetuating the cops’ ongoing racist mayhem. The race-caste oppression of black people is an integral component of the American capitalist system and will not be reformed away. At the April 1 rally, Lewis responded to hecklers about police violence by intoning, “Cops are not our enemies.” In fact, the cops are the armed enforcers of the racist capitalist system. The next speaker, Page May, a representative of Assata’s Daughters, responded profanely and justly, “Fuck the police!” Sharkey later denounced Page for having “condemned police in a way our Union does not condone, and we regret what was said.”

It seems that there are a lot of fires for Lewis and Sharkey to try to put out. In January, Lewis tried to push a sellout contract deal that would have gutted pension benefits and jacked up health care costs, but that offer was unanimously rejected by the CTU bargaining committee. CPS fired back with a threat to stop making pension payments for CTU members. But in the face of the April 1 walk-out, the city backed down and made the payments as scheduled. Meanwhile, the *Chicago Tribune* waged a gutter press scabherding drive, ludicrously predicting thousands of scabs would cross the CTU picket lines. In fact, the strike was solid, with even CPS admitting that less than 1

percent of teachers reported to work.

In justifying limiting the strike to just one day, the CTU bureaucrats moan about “legality,” claiming a full strike would be against state laws that require a four-month “fact finding” period after the December strike vote before a strike can begin. Criminally, back in 2012 Lewis *supported* Senate Bill 7, which imposed these union-busting requirements, including mandating a 75 percent supermajority to approve a strike. This is an outrageous government interference in internal union affairs.

City Hall and the CPS were calling the solid April 1 strike “illegal” too, and are seeking a court order to prevent another one from happening. To that end, Emanuel and his flunkey Forrest Claypool, who now runs CPS, cried crocodile tears about the children who would miss a day of school when the teachers walked out. That is rich coming from politicians who have already closed the schools for three furlough days this spring to save money, who have shut down ghetto schools by the score and who cram the overwhelmingly black and Latino students into crowded classrooms without enough school supplies. It’s no wonder that a recent poll showed that the majority of Chicagoans favor the union over Emanuel as a force to improve public education. As one high school senior said before the strike rally, “Any kid who shows up to today’s protests is going to learn a lot” (InTheseTimes.com, 2 April).

The attacks on Chicago’s public schools are part and parcel of an all-sided drive to gut public education, falling heavily on the city’s black and Latino populations. For decades, Chicago State University (CSU) has served the improv-

erished ghetto masses, who can get a college education there at an “affordable” \$12,000 a year. Close to half of its overwhelmingly black student body of 4,500 are mothers. With a campus shutdown threatened for April 30, the administration demanded that all the campus workers turn in their keys in anticipation of mass layoffs. Spring break was canceled and commencement was moved up to April 28. At Northeastern Illinois University, workers are being forced to take one furlough day per week, a 20 percent pay cut. “It’s aimed at hurting minorities,” said a black junior at CSU. “Other schools here would never close” (*New York Times*, 9 April).

In January, when there were widespread demands for Emanuel’s resignation for his cover-up of McDonald’s murder, we wrote: “The crisis now rocking his regime and reverberating up to the highest echelons of the Democratic Party opens the door for *our* class—the multiracial working class—to launch some real struggle not only in its own interests but also in the fight against racist cop terror and in defense of all the oppressed” (“We Need a Multiracial Workers Party!” WV No. 1081, 15 January). That observation is still true today. Chicago’s working and poor people would rise in support of an all-out CTU strike.

Open condemnations of such action come, not surprisingly, from the virulently right-wing governor and the anti-labor *Chicago Tribune*. But it is reliance on the Democratic Party, from City Hall to the state assembly in Springfield, pushed by its allies in the trade-union bureaucracy that poses the biggest roadblock to strike action. The trade-union bureaucracy subordinates the interests of

the workers to the interests of the capitalist rulers, mainly through its support to the Democratic Party which, no less than the Republicans, is a party of the class enemy. This is just as true of “progressive” bureaucrats like Lewis, Sharkey, and their Caucus of Rank and File Educators (CORE) that runs the CTU as of more conservative officials.

Lewis and her CORE operation continue to be darlings of the left. None are more fulsome in their enthusiasm than the reformist International Socialist Organization (ISO), which has acted as CORE’s chief press agent, particularly touting Sharkey. For years, ISO supporters both inside and outside the CTU have promoted CORE with nary a word of criticism. The online *Socialist Worker* (4 April) lambastes the Republican Rauner as a “different bad guy on the scene this time around” without even mentioning, much less criticizing, the CTU’s endorsement of Rauner’s partner in crime, the Democrat Madigan.

These types advise the workers to put their trust in the very forces that have led and continue to lead the attacks on their wages and benefits. The collusion of the trade-union bureaucrats with the bosses goes hand in hand with their abandonment of union militancy. It has opened up their members to the unending attacks on their well-being while perpetuating the demoralization that has led to the decline in union membership nationwide. What the unions need is a genuine class-struggle leadership that is dedicated to fighting against all capitalist exploitation and oppression. It is necessary to begin to build the revolutionary workers party that will fight to overturn the racist American capitalist order. ■

Shankill...

(continued from page 3)

“peace” deal. In our 1993 article, we warned:

“Sections of the bourgeoisies in London and Dublin, together with their Labour and social-democratic lackeys, have seized upon the widespread fear, revulsion and despair over sectarian violence as an opportunity to foist an imperialist-imposed ‘peace’ deal on Northern Ireland. Any imperialist ‘deal’ will be bloody and brutal and will *necessarily be at the expense of the oppressed Catholic minority*. And it would not do any good for working-class Protestants either.”

In December 1993, less than two months after the Shankill bombing, the London and Dublin governments announced a joint “peace” declaration; the following August, the IRA declared a unilateral ceasefire. The “peace process” culminated in the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, which endowed Sinn Fein with the facade of “power-sharing” in Stormont [seat of provincial government]. The ink had barely dried when prominent Catholic lawyer Rosemary Nelson was murdered by a Loyalist bomb in 1999. A few years later, the IRA agreed to the “decommissioning” of its arms. The “demilitarisation” of the North promoted by Sinn Fein began and ended with the IRA, leaving intact not only the heavily armed state forces but also the Loyalist death squads.

Demonstrating their touching faith in the avowed neutrality of the capitalist state, various reformist groups added their voices to the chorus of imperialist hosannas that greeted the London-Dublin deal. The Militant, predecessor of the Socialist Party, which consistently refused to call for the withdrawal of British troops from the North, claimed that “peace” would be seen as a “great step forward” (*Militant*, 17 December 1993). In a similar vein, the Socialist Workers Party, while professing to be “sceptical about the deal,” wrote: “Socialists welcome the prospect of peace” (*Socialist Review*, January 1994); these “socialists” had also welcomed the deployment of the British army to the North in 1969!

Bloody British imperialism was no more interested in peace then than before or since—witness, among other things, its massacre of 14 civil rights protesters



Workers Hammer

London protest shortly after IRA prisoner Bobby Sands died on hunger strike in 1981. Spartacist contingent advanced revolutionary perspective against British imperialist butchers.

in Derry’s Bloody Sunday in 1972 and its later role in the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq and its bombing of Syria today. Economically, Britain was beginning to see Northern Ireland as a net drain, while the cost of direct military occupation had become increasingly intolerable. To this day, Northern Ireland remains a sectarian hell-hole premised on the continued subjugation of Catholics. Shredding illusions in the “neutrality” of the imperialists, we wrote following the Shankill bombing:

“Today they adopt a racist and arrogant pretence that they are just trying to stop the tit for tat barbarities of the ‘uncivilised Irish’ of all hues. All of John Hume’s initiatives, including the talks and proposals with Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams, are based on the premise that British imperialism is somehow ‘neutral’. All history and the graves of many Irish Catholics say otherwise.”

—*Workers Hammer* No. 138, November/December 1993

And, we might add, the graves of more than a few British and Ulster Protestant workers!

For Leninist Vanguard Parties!

While the level of all-sided killing has declined, two decades after the beginning of the imperialist “peace” process the Protestant and Catholic communities are more segregated than they were

in the 1960s. Almost 20 “peace walls” were built in the aftermath of the Good Friday Agreement: over 90 per cent of public housing in the North—and 98 per cent in Belfast—is segregated along religious lines, while only seven per cent of children attend an integrated school. Yet a 2008 survey found that four out of five people expressed a desire to live in a mixed neighbourhood. For many poor and working-class Protestants, the historic privileges in jobs and housing were marginal, at best, and have only declined as the economy has gone to hell; the former Shorts aerospace factory, now owned by Bombardier, recently announced a thousand redundancies [layoffs]. The wretched living conditions and high unemployment that are byproducts of capitalist exploitation fuel the flames of sectarianism, which helps prevent the working class from recognising capitalism as the root cause of the problem.

The oppressed Catholic minority shares the same territory as the Protestants, who fear becoming an oppressed minority themselves in the event of unification with the South. The Protestants do not constitute a separate nation, but they are a distinct community defined in large part against the Irish Catholic nation,

North and South, as well as distinct from the Scottish and English nations. Marxists oppose the forcible reunification of Ireland, which would only compact the Protestants behind the Loyalist bigots, precluding the development of class consciousness across the sectarian divide and instead laying the basis for a communal blood-bath and forced population transfers. The conflicting claims of these interpenetrated peoples can be resolved equitably only in the context of a voluntary federation of workers republics in the British Isles.

A Leninist vanguard nucleus would fight to transcend the sectarian divide, opposing all manifestations of anti-Catholic discrimination in jobs, housing and schooling while seeking to intersect those rare episodes of united class struggle with a programme of transitional demands in the interests of the whole of the working class. Among these would be the fight for jobs for all through work-sharing on full pay and a sliding scale of wages and hours; for affordable, quality, integrated housing; for quality healthcare for all free at the point of use, including the right to abortion. It is necessary to fight for the full emancipation of women and for strict separation of church and state, breaking the Catholic clerical power in the South and the bigoted Unionist stranglehold over Protestant workers in the North. Such demands point inexorably to the need to break from the profit-driven dictates of the capitalist system. Working-class rule would establish a collectivised and centrally planned economy, which would reorganise society in the interests of all who labour and provide a decent living standard for all.

For this perspective to be realised there must be socialist revolutions that sweep away the capitalist order and replace the murderous capitalist state apparatus with workers states that expropriate the bourgeoisies in Britain and Ireland, North and South. The key to victory for the down-trodden masses from Belfast and Dublin to Glasgow and London lies in the forging of revolutionary vanguard parties of the proletariat, built in the struggle to reforge a world party of socialist revolution, the Fourth International. This is the task to which the Spartacist League, British section of the International Communist League, is dedicated. ■

WORKERS VANGUARD

Chicago: Union Tops Try To Put Lid on Struggle Teachers One-Day Strike Draws Wide Support



WV Photo

Chicago: Rally of over 10,000 teachers and supporters during one-day strike, April 1.

On April 1, the 27,000 members of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) waged a one-day strike against the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) system. The strike culminated in a downtown rally of well over 10,000 red-shirted teachers and working-class, black and Latino parents angered by the city's boarding up of public schools in their neighborhoods. Working without a contract since last June, the rank-and-file teachers are ready to fight. Turnout on the picket lines was solid, well in the 90 percent range at many schools. The CTU members also attended joint rallies at several of the city's public universities and colleges that are threatened with layoffs, furloughs and April shutdowns because the state government has cut off funding.

At the rally were contingents of auto workers, members of the SEIU and nurses in union jackets as well as Fight For \$15 McDonald's workers. Auto workers have had the recent experience of having a sell-out contract with the Big Three rammed down their throats by the UAW bureaucrats in the face of widespread sentiment for a strike. The SEIU has seen its membership in CPS decimated since the 2012 teachers strike, when the CTU and SEIU union bureaucrats colluded to allow SEIU members to scab on the striking teachers. SEIU scabbing was again allowed during the recent one-day strike.

Notably present were members of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Locals 241 (bus) and 308 (rail) who have been working without a contract since January 1. Under the grinding conditions at the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), bus drivers are forced to work split shifts spanning 13 hours while getting only eight hours' pay—or less for part-timers. Drivers are hounded by the CTA's more and more bloated layer of supervisors, who write them up even for being one minute ahead of schedule. The intense appetite evident in the CTU ranks for a full-on strike, if realized in deed, could well ignite similar sentiments in the ranks of the ATU.

CTU vice president Jesse Sharkey's observation in the aftermath of the strike that "the city is on fire and we are the catalyst" brims with an undesired self-satisfaction but captures a sense of the impact that the teachers' militancy is having on Chicago's working and poor people. In fact, CTU president Karen Lewis and Sharkey are trying to douse the flames. They are working overtime to contain the anger of the membership in the service of avoiding upsetting the apple cart in this Democratic Party stronghold in an election year. When the union delegates approved the one-day strike in March by a lopsided 486 to 124 vote, Lewis acknowledged that the opposition was mainly from delegates who "feel like why don't we just do it now, do a real strike now, and be done with it, as opposed to just a one day strike."

Thus, the strike on April 1 was orchestrated by Lewis and Sharkey with the hope of allowing the angry ranks to let off some steam in lieu of an open-ended strike. Not a word was said by the CTU

tops at the rally about an all-out strike against the Chicago Public Schools system, although Lewis continues to toy with the ranks by tossing around possible dates for strike action. Instead, the labor tops, themselves a central component of the Democratic Party vote machine, go out of their way to aim their fire at the Republicans. "This strike is targeted primarily to Bruce Rauner," Karen Lewis made clear, referring to the state's Republican governor, who has issued threats to take over the Chicago schools and throw them into bankruptcy in order to bust the CTU and zero out the teachers' pensions (InTheseTimes.com, 2 April). What the union should be doing today is preparing for an all-out strike. The reality is that as of now the union's leadership has no plans for a real struggle. The only scheduled event is an April 20 "day of action" crawl to Springfield, the state capital.

Rauner's threats are in fact toothless because the Democrats are by far the dominant party in Illinois, including controlling the state legislature. While

lambasting Rauner with "fight the right" rhetoric, the CTU bureaucrats endorsed the re-election of Democrat Mike Madigan, Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives. In the aftermath of the 2012 CTU strike, Madigan tried to ram through a bill capping Illinois teachers' pensions outside of Chicago. From Chicago mayor Rahm Emanuel to Madigan to Rauner, all the capitalist politicians are looking to bail out the state on the backs of the unions and the oppressed by gutting everything from workers' pensions to public services. In pushing to bust the CTU, Emanuel has simply been carrying out the school "reform" policies of his former White House boss, Barack Obama. These policies are designed to help spur state governments to shutter supposedly failing inner-city public schools, roll out the welcome mat to non-union charter schools and launch anti-union attacks on seniority and tenure. Going to Springfield to beg from these enemies of labor is simply an exercise in masochism. Chicago's teachers are more than ready to show the CPS and the bourgeois politicians a real display of labor's power.

At the beginning of this year, Emanuel's Democratic Party administration was on the ropes because of his cover-up of the dash cam video of black youth Laquan McDonald being gunned down in cold blood by a Chicago cop. On January 6, as the bully Emanuel's popularity plummeted, the CTU House of Delegates passed a resolution calling for his resignation. But Lewis was quick to distance herself: "That was something that came from the membership and we respect our democratic process. Personally, I don't care" (*Chicago Tribune*, 16 January). Since that time, demands for Emanuel's resignation have dwindled, doubtless reflecting pressure from Democratic politicians to not make life difficult in the presidential election year.

But the cop murders of black people have not subsided a whit. A recent Emanuel-appointed task force delivered

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Chicago State University rally in support of teachers, against education cuts, April 1.