

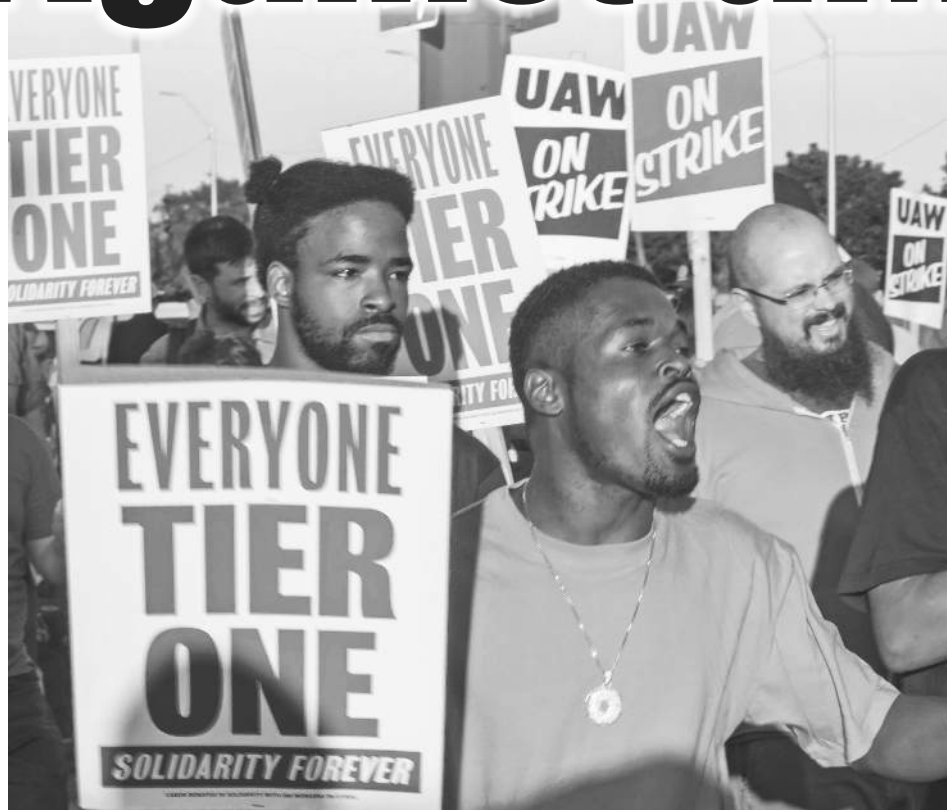
Democrats Are a Bosses' Party— We Need a Workers Party!

UAW Class Battle Against GM

OCTOBER 1—With the United Auto Workers (UAW) strike against General Motors entering its third week, union members remain as determined as ever to wage a fight on behalf of not only themselves but also future generations. The profit-gouging bosses, who demand ever more temp jobs, low-wage tiers and higher health care costs, must be made to back down. By acting together through the union to withhold their labor, auto workers have demonstrated a real collective strength. Production at struck facilities has ground to a halt, and both GM in Canada and parts producers across the U.S. have scaled back operations, inflicting on the auto giant up to \$100 million a day in losses. It is precisely by cutting off the flow of profits, the lifeblood of the employers, that labor can win real gains. Union members should settle for nothing less than the *immediate permanent hiring* of all temp workers and *equal pay for equal work at the highest level* for everyone, while holding their leadership to its promise to not call off the strike before the ranks vote to approve the terms of the contract.

A successful strike could change the playing field for workers far beyond the Big Three and help spark further battles to fend off the bosses' attacks. Already, this display of union power in defense of its multiracial membership's livelihoods has attracted support from working-class, black and Latino communities near the plants and is breathing new life into stalled unionization efforts. One Nissan worker in Mississippi, where the UAW lost a recognition vote two years ago, told labor reporter Mike Elk: "A victory at General Motors could really open the door for us to organize." It could also give impetus to organizing drives at parts suppliers and other manufacturers, as well as in the tech-based "new economy" with its gig jobs.

For more than a decade, UAW members have had to swallow one concession after another. GM, bloated by \$35 billion in profits over the last three years, has made no secret of its objective to further slash labor costs to the bone, especially by increasing the number of temps in its plants. These union members earn far less while performing the same jobs as more senior workers. This situation can only fuel resentment and is highly corrosive to the union, as strikers are painfully aware. Many temp workers, known as perma-temps, are strung along for years with the unfulfilled promise of permanent employment, all the while receiving abysmal wages, few benefits and virtu-



Jim West/ZUMA

September 18: UAW strikers and supporters picket at Detroit-Hamtramck Assembly plant, slated for closure.

Permanent Jobs for Temps! End the Tier System!

ally no job protections. So-called flex-temps do not even have a set work schedule from week to week.

Horror stories abound of the brutal reality of temp work. In Lansing, a black temp worker suffered through various injuries during his first 90 days without getting medical attention for fear of being fired. Another temp who gave birth on a Friday reported to work the following Monday. *No second-class union membership!* A victory in the GM strike could be a spring-

board for a broader struggle against labor contracting and tiered wage systems.

A strike is an undisguised class confrontation between the workers and the capitalists, who make their profits from the exploitation of labor. As James P. Cannon, the founder of American Trotskyism, observed during the 1936-37 West Coast maritime strike:

"A good deal is said about strike 'strategy'—and that has its uses within clearly defined limits—but when you get down

to cases this strike, like every other strike, is simply a bullheaded struggle between two forces whose interests are in constant and irreconcilable conflict. The partnership of capital and labor is a lie. The immediate issue in every case is decided by the relative strength of the opposing forces at the moment."

—"The Maritime Strike," *Labor Action*, 28 November 1936, reprinted in *Notebook of an Agitator* (1958)

Picket Lines Mean Don't Cross

Prior to the contract expiration, GM went on the offensive, including by forcing overtime to increase vehicle inventory, paying for extra security goons and cracking the disciplinary whip. Several strikers described company harassment on the most trivial pretexts, especially targeting black and women workers, who are a major component of the union workforce. One union member in Michigan observed of this attempted intimidation: "I'm a woman and they think they can push me around." A couple of days after GM workers signaled their resolve to make a fight of it by walking off the job, management canceled their health insurance for a full week before restoring it under pressure.

A strike is won or lost on the picket lines, which must be honored as the battle lines in the class struggle. But the UAW leadership has the union fighting with one hand tied behind its back. Some UAW members have displayed a real appetite to stop scabs, especially the non-union truckers contracted by GM to remove vehicles from plant grounds and items from parts centers after Teamsters drivers refused to cross picket lines. Yet lines have been kept small and porous thanks to UAW officialdom, which has allowed truckers, maintenance contractors and others to enter struck facilities.

Even worse, the union tops have directed UAW members under separate contract to cross the picket lines, issuing them bogus "passes" for that purpose. In the same way, they instructed production workers to cross the lines of Aramark janitors at five GM plants the day before the

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Beware of Anti-Union "World Socialist Web Site"

A dubious outfit misnamed the World Socialist Web Site (WSWS) has been trolling the picket lines of the striking United Auto Workers (UAW). These are fake socialists who have long been virulently hostile to unions. Amping up its rancor against the UAW during this vital class battle, the WSWS claims that "the UAW is a criminal gang, bought and paid for by management" ("The GM Strike Is in Danger," wsws.org, 23 September)—a statement

that would be applauded by the likes of the National Right to Work foundation. UAW members, who are up against the profit-hungry GM auto giant and government forces waging an all-out war against their union, are rightfully angry at the presence of these scoundrels on the picket lines. WSWS's anti-union vitriol can only serve to aid the bosses' drive to smash the strike.

The Spartacist League supports the unions as the basic defense organiza-

tions of the working class against the capitalist exploiters. At the same time, we oppose the political program of the pro-capitalist union leadership, whose class collaborationism ties the workers to the class enemy, particularly through allegiance to the capitalist Democratic Party, and thereby weakens labor's power. Our purpose is to strengthen the fighting capacity and collective strength of the unions. The purpose of WSWS is to wreck the unions.



Drop Charges Against Leftist Anti-Trump Protesters!

LAPD Spying Operation Exposed

We print below a September 19 leaflet issued and distributed by the Los Angeles Spartacist League. The trial of the UCLA activists began Wednesday, September 25.

In a frontal assault on the right to assemble and protest, the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and the L.A. City Attorney’s office have been waging a two-year campaign of persecution against Refuse Fascism and the Revolution Club, both associated with the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP). A trial is now pending against seven supporters of these organizations for engaging in anti-Trump protests between September 2017 and March 2018. Ominously, court records revealed that the LAPD Major Crimes Division launched an investigation and spied on Refuse Fascism meetings at Echo Park United Methodist Church on four occasions in 2017. According to a defense attorney, the spying was initiated by the division’s Anti-Terrorism Intelligence Section. Using a hidden recorder, an informant coordinating with an LAPD detective captured audio of the meetings and a conversation with one of those charged.

In the 2017 protests, eight activists were arrested for blocking traffic on the 101 Freeway. A ninth, Michelle Xai, was swept up even though she was not there. The other accused were arrested a few months later for vocally protesting inside and outside a meeting at UCLA that featured Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin (see “Anti-Trump Leftists Targeted by UCLA Administration, Cops,” WV No. 1135, 1 June 2018). The #Freeway9 and #UCLA5 activists were slapped with over 50 misdemeanor charges, including failure to disperse, refusal to comply with a



NoBS Media

September 2017: Anti-Trump protest on L.A. freeway initiated by Refuse Fascism. Its meetings were later spied on by cop informant.

police officer, obstructing the free movement of a person, disturbing the peace and trespassing. Some of the remaining seven defendants face years in prison and thousands of dollars in fines.

In an August 8 letter to L.A. city attorney Michael Feuer, the Partisan Defense Committee, a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League, wrote: “These charges and the LAPD surveillance are an attempt to intimidate and silence any protest against U.S. government policies and representatives. Criminalizing political protest is a draconian suppression of democratic rights.” Such moves are a threat to the workers movement, black people, Latinos and all the oppressed.

Two activists singled out for being leaders of Refuse Fascism, University of Southern California professor Perry Hoberman and Michelle Xai, were originally charged with various counts of criminal con-

spiracy. Such charges have historically been used to go after labor militants and political dissidents when the state has no evidence of criminal activity. The prosecution, with an eye toward future spying operations, dropped these charges after a judge ruled that to proceed, the identity of the informant would have to be disclosed and the recordings turned over. The conspiracy rap lays bare the state’s case as a “coordinated, political persecution,” as one of the defendants said.

While a trial in June of two of the protesters ended in a mistrial, with a majority of the jurors voting to acquit, the prosecution is doubling down and trying them again. *Drop all charges now!*

Cop Spying and Capitalist Rule

In a *Los Angeles Times* op-ed piece (24 July) on the LAPD spying revelations, Mark Nakagawa, L.A. district superintendent of the United Methodist Church, which provided Refuse Fascism with its meeting venue, wrote: “As a Japanese American, I hear echoes of the infiltration of Japanese community organizations by the FBI in the aftermath of the Pearl Harbor attack in December 1941. Those actions led to the incarceration of about 120,000 Japanese Americans from the West Coast during most of World War II.” This crime was the doing of the liberal Democratic administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Similarly in the present case, the LAPD has for years been overseen by liberal Democrats in city office and their handpicked police chiefs.

In racist capitalist America, government infiltration of perceived opponents is not an aberration but the norm. As guard dogs of capital, L.A. cops have over the decades spied on the Industrial Workers of the World (Wobblies), Communist union organizers, the Socialist Workers Party, the Progressive Labor Party, the RCP and the American Indian Movement, among others. By the mid 1970s, the LAPD had amassed mountains of secret files on everyone from “the Wobblies of the Twenties to the labor agitators of the Thirties, the interned Nisei [ethnic Japanese born in the U.S.] of the Forties, the alleged subversives of the Fifties and some antiwar demonstrators of the Sixties” (Frank Donner, *Protectors of Privilege: Red Squads and Police Repression in Urban America*, 1990).

The Black Panther Party was met with the full-blown state terror that is prepared by the shadowy routine of police snooping, harassment and disruption. Under the FBI’s covert COINTELPRO campaign to “neutralize” radical organizations, over 30 Black Panthers were killed and hundreds more railroaded into prison. In 1972, L.A. Panther leader Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt) was convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison based on the perjured testimony of Julius Butler, an informant for the LAPD, FBI and District Attorney’s office. Geronimo ended up spending 27 years in prison hell for a crime the government knew he did not commit.

In the same vein, an effort by cops and prosecutors to frame up supporters of the Chicano-nationalist Brown Berets in 1969 revolved around accusations from an LAPD infiltrator, Fernando Sumaya, that they had set fires in a hotel where Ronald Reagan was speaking. In fact, it was Sumaya who was implicated in the arson.

The capitalist rulers, regardless of whether Democrats or Republicans are in charge, deploy spies to help maintain their system of exploitation and racial oppression. No amount of reform will ever change this reality. Only victorious proletarian revolution can put a halt to capitalism’s covert police activity, as part of sweeping away the entire existing state machinery.

RCP/Refuse Fascism: “Fight the Right” Liberals

While we defend the RCP and Refuse Fascism/Revolution Club against state repression, we sharply oppose their liberal program, which both prettifies bourgeois democracy and sows illusions in the Democratic Party. Their alarmist frenzy that Trump is a fascist who “will effect a thoroughly reactionary restructuring of society” retails the lie that he is qualitatively different from prior presidents. In fact, Trump gained office and has governed entirely through the institutions of the democratic American republic.

Trump’s unabashed racism and male chauvinism are merely the raw face of the U.S. capitalist order. In denouncing Trump as a fascist, the RCP and its cohorts echo the Democrats who fret over his doing damage to the “democratic” credentials of the capitalist state, which are but a facade to conceal the bourgeoisie’s dictatorship over the workers and the oppressed. These reformists, who paint the repressive state apparatus as somehow more benign under the Democrats, have gone so far as to rush to the side of Obama-appointed FBI director James Comey after he was fired by Trump in 2017 (see “RCP on FBI: ‘Communists’ for Comey,” WV No. 1112, 19 May 2017).

Marxists oppose all capitalist parties. Not so the RCP and Refuse Fascism. Swimming in the stream of the Democratic “resistance,” they scream, “This Nightmare Must End: The Trump/Pence Regime Must Go!” The Democrats could not agree more. The RCP also sought to aid the Democrats during the previous Republican George W. Bush administration by branding it fascist and initiating a “World Can’t Wait” campaign to “Drive Out the Bush Regime!” To make things crystal clear, the RCP’s *Revolutionary Worker* (29 August 2004) advised: “Go ahead and vote for [Democratic presidential candidate John] Kerry if you feel you really have to.”

The two Republican administrations that the RCP calls “fascist” were separated by eight years during which a black Democrat occupied the White House. While at the helm, Obama bailed out the banks and auto giants at the expense of workers and the poor, deported millions of immigrants, oversaw a society riddled with cop terror against black people and Latinos, waged imperialist wars, assaulted democratic rights and expanded the surveillance state. Predictably, the RCP mounted no comparable effort against this regime.

The RCP’s strategy of militant liberalism upholds the very capitalist order that has them in its sights. There is a force in society with the power to bring the capitalist rulers to their knees: the multiracial working class, whose hands are on the levers of production. What is needed is to mobilize the workers in their own class interests and in opposition to the Democrats and their reformist hangers-on. Our commitment is to build a revolutionary workers party that can lead the working class in the fight for a socialist future. ■



TROTSKY

On the Revolutionary Party

In greetings to a public meeting of the then-revolutionary Socialist Workers Party in 1938, Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky stressed the need for an international, revolutionary, proletarian party forged in opposition to the reformist parties that had betrayed the working class. Today, the Marxist program of the International Communist League represents the continuity of Trotskyism as we fight to reforge the Fourth

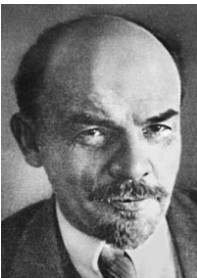
International, the necessary instrument to lead the working class to power worldwide.

Dear friends, we are not a party like other parties. Our ambition is not only to have more members, more papers, more money in the treasury, more deputies. All that is necessary, but only as a means. Our aim is the full material and spiritual liberation of the toilers and exploited through the socialist revolution. Nobody will prepare it and nobody will guide it but ourselves. The old Internationals—the Second, the Third, that of Amsterdam, we will add to them also the London Bureau—are rotten through and through.

The great events which rush upon mankind will not leave of these outlived organizations one stone upon another. Only the Fourth International looks with confidence at the future. It is the World Party of Socialist Revolution! There never was a greater task on the earth. Upon every one of us rests a tremendous historical responsibility.

Our party demands each of us, totally and completely. Let the philistines hunt their own individuality in empty space. For a revolutionary to give himself entirely to the party signifies finding himself.

—Leon Trotsky, “The Founding of the Fourth International” (October 1938)



LENIN

WORKERS VANGUARD



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The closing date for news in this issue is October 1.

No. 1162

4 October 2019

UAW: ¡Huelga hasta vencer!

We publish below a Spanish translation of an earlier Workers Vanguard article, “UAW: Strike to Win!” (No. 1161, 20 September), which was produced as a leaflet by the Grupo Espartaquista de México. In solidarity with the UAW strike in the U.S., our comrades distributed the leaflet at GM and Ford auto plants outside of Mexico City.

* * *

A continuación presentamos una traducción al español de un artículo previo de Workers Vanguard (No. 1161, 20 de septiembre), publicado como volante por el Grupo Espartaquista de México. En solidaridad con la huelga del UAW en EE.UU., nuestros camaradas distribuyeron el volante en plantas automotrices de GM y Ford a las afueras de la Ciudad de México.

ESPARTACO

Publicación del Grupo Espartaquista de México

17 DE SEPTIEMBRE—Unos 50 mil obreros automotrices se sumaron a las líneas de piquete, que han parado las plantas de General Motors a lo largo del país. Dos grandes fuerzas de clase antagónicas se enfrentan de manera abierta, y el impacto podría sentirse entre los productores de autopartes y en otros sectores de la economía estadounidense, así como en el resto del imperio de GM en Canadá y México. Los miembros del sindicato United Auto Workers (UAW), hartos de años de sacrificios forzados, le están plantando cara a un gigante manufacturero que, sólo en los últimos tres años, ha obtenido más de 30 mil millones de dólares de ganancias, amasadas con la sangre y el sudor de los obreros. El fabricante, como los demás capitalistas, no está satisfecho. GM quiere exprimir aún más a sus obreros, endilgándoles mayores costos de atención médica y concediéndoles un miserable aumento de sueldo por debajo de la inflación. Hay que detenerlo. Una huelga sólida que resulte victoriosa podría revitalizar otras luchas sindicales para repeler a los codiciosos patrones en otras partes, empezando por Ford y Fiat Chrysler.

Como quedó claro en discusiones con obreros en las líneas de piquete, los trabajadores automotrices resienten profundamente el tóxico esquema de salarios escalonados y el siempre creciente número de empleados temporales. Los obreros temporales y los de categoría salarial inferior trabajan al lado de sus hermanos y hermanas sindicalizados a cambio de una retribución muy desigual. Los obreros que entraron a GM antes de 2007, y cuyo número disminuye cada vez más, ganan

aproximadamente 31 dólares la hora, mientras que la gran mayoría de los que han sido contratados desde entonces gana mucho menos, y los temporales, que están en el fondo, llegan a ganar menos de la mitad de eso. Es frecuente que esos puestos temporales se les den a obreros negros y mujeres, como parte de un plan de los patrones destinado a sembrar una mayor división entre la fuerza laboral. La última vez que los miembros del UAW pararon contra GM, por un par de días en 2007, se les impuso un acuerdo que incluía un salario menor a quien fuera contratado a partir de entonces. ¡No más traiciones! Hay que luchar para acabar con esta afiliación sindical de segunda clase y obtener pago y prestaciones iguales por trabajo igual, al nivel más alto, para todos.

La huelga ha recibido un torrente de solidaridad de los trabajadores de todo el país, y el presidente de los Teamsters [sindicato de transportistas] ya prometió que sus afiliados no transportarán vehículos de GM mientras dure la huelga. En las horas anteriores al inicio de la huelga, sin embargo, las cosas parecían muy distintas en las cinco plantas de GM donde los trabajadores de intendencia, sindicalizados en el UAW, estaban ya en huelga y habían instalado líneas de piquete, sólo para que los funcionarios sindicales ordenaran a sus afiliados en las líneas de producción que las cruzaran y se reportaran a sus turnos. “¡Eso no es solidaridad!” comentó un obrero del UAW con amargura.

En efecto, esta orden fue un golpe a todos los involucrados. Las líneas de piquete deben respetarse. Son las líneas de batalla de la lucha de clases. Los sindicatos industriales se construyeron sobre principios básicos como “si para uno, paramos todos” y “las líneas de piquete significan no cruzar”. Ahora que tanto los trabajadores de intendencia como los de producción están en huelga, deben seguir en huelga unidos hasta que se cumplan todas sus exigencias. La movilización de las bases obreras, especialmente los miembros del UAW en Ford y Fiat Chrysler así como en las fábricas de autopartes, debe reforzar aún más sus líneas de piquete.

Igualmente, es crucial forjar vínculos de solidaridad a través de las fronteras nacionales. Actualmente, GM lleva a cabo en México más de una cuarta parte de su producción en Norteamérica. Quienes trabajan en sus plantas mexicanas son aliados naturales de los miembros del UAW. A principios de este año, decenas de miles de obreras y obreros sindicalizados de las maquiladoras de la ciudad fronteriza de Matamoros llevaron a cabo huelgas exitosas contra varias empresas, incluyendo un fabricante de autopartes de vehículos de GM. La lucha unida de los obreros automotrices de EE.UU., México y Canadá infligiría un duro golpe a los planes de la

gerencia de mantenerlos a todos subyugados, independientemente de la ubicación de sus plantas.

Esta perspectiva ciertamente no es la de la burocracia del UAW, que promueve la mentira de que los empleos en Estados Unidos pueden salvarse apelando a los patrones y a los políticos como Donald “America First” Trump para que tomen medidas que les costarían sus empleos a los obreros en México. El pasado noviembre, cuando GM anunció sus planes de cerrar cinco plantas, el presidente del UAW, Gary Jones, despotricó contra las compañías que “prefieren a los obreros extranjeros sobre los estadounidenses”. Este chovinismo ha permeado a los trabajadores, de tal forma que algunos huelguistas dijeron a reporteros de *Workers Vanguard* que los obreros mexicanos tienen la culpa de la pérdida de empleos. El proteccionismo es veneno, ni más ni menos. Impide la solidaridad obrera internacional mientras que retrata a la patronal como posibles “socios” del sindicato.

El sindicato puede poner un alto al recorte de empleos y a los otros ataques de la patronal contando sólo con sus números, organización y solidaridad. Como hace siempre que hay revisión contractual, hoy GM insiste en cerrar lo que llama “la brecha del costo laboral” que lo separa de otras plantas automotrices no sindicalizadas de capital extranjero en Estados Unidos. Pues bien, ya es hora de que el sindicato cierre esa brecha en su propio beneficio, lanzando una campaña concertada para sindicalizar al mar de obreros no sindicalizados de esa industria, para que todos los obreros automotrices puedan disfrutar de los mejores salarios y de condiciones de trabajo decentes. Una campaña así llevaría por fuerza a enfrentar directamente el sistema de opresión y segregación racial, que históricamente ha servido para dividir a los obreros y mantener lejos a los sindicatos, especialmente en el Sur.

Diversos políticos del Partido Demócrata han expresado su apoyo a la huelga. ¡Mucho cuidado con estos “amigos”, que en realidad son enemigos! Los líderes del UAW atan la suerte del sindicato a la elección de estos demócratas que, tanto como los republicanos, son sirvientes de los explotadores capitalistas. Los vítores a la huelga que actualmente lanzan los demócratas que aspiran a la postulación presidencial del 2020 no son más que un intento transparente por ganar votos. Joe Biden era parte del gobierno de Obama, que en 2009 dejó caer el martillo sobre el sindicato para rescatar a los patrones automotrices. La dirección del UAW tuvo parte en el asunto, incluso se comprometió a no estallar huelgas, y hasta la fecha alega que la orgía de despidos masivos y recortes salariales salvó empleos. Otros demócratas, como Bernie Sanders, no

son fundamentalmente mejores. Este supuesto progresista es un proteccionista de viejo cuño, cuyas medidas económicas favoritas se basan en enfrentar a los obreros entre sí sobre líneas nacionales.

El gobierno de Obama también dejó su marca en el UAW al lanzar la ahora expandida investigación del gobierno federal sobre supuestas malversaciones por parte de funcionarios sindicales. Esa investigación constituye un peligro inminente para el sindicato, calculada para ir tras más miembros de la dirección durante las negociaciones contractuales. En vísperas de la huelga, el director regional del UAW, Vance Pearson, se sumó a la lista de funcionarios sindicales (actuales y antiguos) arrestados hasta ahora. Esta injerencia en el sindicato debería dejarle claro a todo afiliado al UAW que la policía y las demás autoridades estatales son agentes represivos de los patrones. *Gobierno, ¡manos fuera del UAW! ¡El movimiento obrero debe limpiar su propia casa!*

Expresando un sentimiento muy extendido, un huelguista describió a la dirección sindical como “corrupta y nepotista”. Hacer negocios turbios para beneficiarse personalmente es una cosa. Pero el problema subyacente es la corrupción política de la burocracia sindical, cuyo punto de partida es la colaboración de clases, que entre otras cosas la lleva a exaltar a un demócrata tras otro. La colaboración de clases es una receta para la derrota del sindicato.

Un oscuro grupúsculo, que se hace llamar “World Socialist Web Site”, ha aprovechado el escándalo de corrupción para afirmar que “el UAW ha quedado totalmente desacreditado” (wsws.org, 14 de septiembre). Hay que tener cuidado con estas sabandijas antisindicales, que equiparan a las organizaciones de defensa básica de la clase obrera con sus falsos líderes procapitalistas. Nuestro propósito al denunciar la colaboración de clases es facilitar la lucha que fortalecerá a los sindicatos.

Lo que hace falta es una dirección clasi-sista de los sindicatos, forjada en la lucha contra los demócratas y todos los demás partidos capitalistas. Armado con el conocimiento certero de que la clase obrera no tiene ningún interés en común con los patrones, un sindicato como el UAW podría cumplir un papel dirigente en la lucha amplia contra las depredaciones del capitalismo, atrayendo a otros obreros y a los desempleados, así como a la población negra y los inmigrantes que están en la mira de los gobernantes capitalistas. Para sostener esa perspectiva contra todos los obstáculos que la burguesía pondrá en el camino, se requiere construir un partido obrero comprometido con la expropiación de la clase capitalista y el establecimiento de un gobierno proletario que represente a los trabajadores y responda ante ellos.■

Spartacist League/SYC Forums



No Illusions in the Democratic Party!
For Free, Quality, Integrated Public Education for All!

School Segregation and the Legacy of Slavery

CHICAGO

Saturday, October 26, 3 p.m.

Quaker House • 5615 S. Woodlawn Ave., Chicago
For information: (312) 563-0441 • chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net

NEW YORK CITY

Saturday, October 5, 3 p.m.

Brooklyn Friends Meeting House • 110 Schermerhorn St., Brooklyn
(2, 3, 4, 5 to Borough Hall Station or A, C, F, R to Jay St./Metrotech)
For information: (212) 267-1025 • nysl@tiac.net

70th Anniversary of the Chinese Revolution

Defend, Extend the Gains of the 1949 Chinese Revolution!

Down With Imperialist Provocations—
No to Counterrevolutionary Rampage in Hong Kong!
For Workers Political Revolution!

BAY AREA

Saturday, October 12, 3 p.m.

Oakstop • 1721 Broadway, 2F, Oakland
For information: (510) 839-0851 • slbayarea@fastmail.net

LOS ANGELES

Friday, October 11, 7 p.m.

Immanuel Presbyterian Church* • 3300 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles
For information: (213) 380-8239 • slsycla@sbcglobal.net

*The views expressed by the participants are not necessarily those of the Immanuel Presbyterian Church.

James Robertson, a founding leader of the Spartacist League/U.S. and its long-time National Chairman, died at his home in Northern California on April 7, at the age of 90. A member of the workers movement for more than 70 years, comrade Robertson remained an essential component of the leadership of the SL/U.S. and the International Communist League until the last weeks of his life. He leaves behind his wife and comrade, Martha; his two sons, Douglas and Kenneth; two stepdaughters, Rachel and Sarah; and his grandchildren.

Historically, revolutionary Marxist parties have not outlived their founding leaders with their program and purpose intact. Comrade Robertson's aim was to do his level best to reverse that verdict. In the last major political struggle of his life, Jim was key to the fight to correct a longstanding perversion of Leninism on the national question in the ICL, particularly as it applied to relatively advanced multinational states. Out of this struggle emerged a new generation of leaders who have become a key component of the ICL's International Executive Committee, along with senior cadre who are critical to preserving our slender threads of revolutionary continuity.

Speaking at a memorial gathering of comrades and sympathizers following Jim's death, the current National Chairman of the SL/U.S. noted that revolutionary continuity "is primarily programmatic but is also personal because program is embodied in human beings." In party educationals and countless informal discussions, Jim gave a living sense of his political history and the factional struggles that were key to finding his way to the program of Lenin and Trotsky's Bolshevik Party. This history took him from the Communist Party (CP) to Max Shachtman's Workers Party/Independent Socialist League (WP/ISL), to James P. Cannon's Socialist Workers Party (SWP), and then to being a central leader of the Revolutionary Tendency (RT). Expelled from the SWP in 1963-64, RT cadre went on to found the Spartacist League/U.S.

Later in his life, Jim remarked that what he learned, and had to learn, in the course of the factional battles he waged was that the "Russian question" is *the* defining criterion of revolutionary Marxism in the imperialist epoch. This issue encompasses both an understanding of the Bolshevik Party that led the conquest of power by the working class in the 1917 Russian Revolution and the need to defend the gains of that revolution despite the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet Union.

From the early days of the SL/U.S., this programmatic understanding was central to our intervention into the Vietnam anti-war movement. Against the social-patriotic call to "Bring Our Boys Home," we fought for the defeat of U.S. imperialism and raised the call "All Indochina Must Go Communist!" In a 7 February 1965 cablegram to Ho Chi Minh, sent the day the U.S. began bombing North Vietnam, we declared: "Heroic struggle of Vietnamese working people furthers the American revolution" (printed in *Spartacist* No. 4, May-June 1965). In the 1980s, when the winds of the imperialists' anti-Soviet Cold War II drive were blowing red-hot, we

stood out for our sharp-edged Soviet defensism, calling to "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan! Extend social gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples!" and demanding "Stop Solidarność Counterrevolution" in Poland.

Comrade Robertson initiated some of our most hard-hitting and angular slogans, propaganda and actions. He was a central architect of the largest and most significant mobilization of our international tendency, as we intervened into an incipient proletarian political revolution in the East German deformed workers state (DDR) in 1989. As masses of workers, soldiers, students and others marched under banners reading "For Communist Ideals" and "No Privileges," we raised the call for a "Red Soviet Germany" through socialist revolution in West Germany and proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist misleaders of the DDR.

We were in a political battle, although one marked by a disproportion of forces, with the abdicating Stalinist regime over the future of the DDR. We were defeated when Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev gave the green light for the capitalist reunification of Germany. But we fought with everything we had! Jim would later draw an analogy to Lenin's intervention at a session of the First All-Russia Congress of Soviets in June 1917. After a Menshevik leader declared that there was no party prepared to assume power, Lenin yelled out, "Yes, there is." As comrade

Robertson remarked: "That was us in the DDR in 1989-1990. I do not believe that we should diminish or deny this simply because we were defeated. We will be defeated a lot."

In 1991-92, the counterrevolution that had engulfed the deformed workers states of East and Central Europe destroyed the Soviet Union. Recognizing the devastating impact of this defeat on the struggles and consciousness of the working class, Jim underlined:

"We're in an unusually deep trough, and the experiences that are immediately available to us are not very good. So we had better make very heavy reference back to the experiences of the workers movement when it could see much further: 1918 through 1921."

Our quadrilingual theoretical journal, *Spartacist*, has been a central vehicle for keeping those experiences, embodied in the first four Congresses of the Communist International, alive. Jim, who was the founding editor and a crucial component of the editorial board of the English-language edition until his death, always stressed that this was not a matter of passing on received wisdom but of critical evaluation. He took particular satisfaction in our articles "Down With Executive Offices of the Capitalist State!" (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 61, Spring 2009) and "Why We Reject the 'Constituent Assembly' Demand" (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 63, Winter 2012-13). Having played a key role

in motivating both, Jim saw these articles as vital extensions of Lenin's *The State and Revolution* and *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*.

California, Calvinism and Communism

Born in Berkeley in 1928, Jim was a child of the Great Depression and often recalled its utter destitution. He also remembered the impact of the 1936-37 West Coast maritime strike from the vantage point of a young boy seeing the detritus thrown from unworked ships floating in San Francisco Bay.

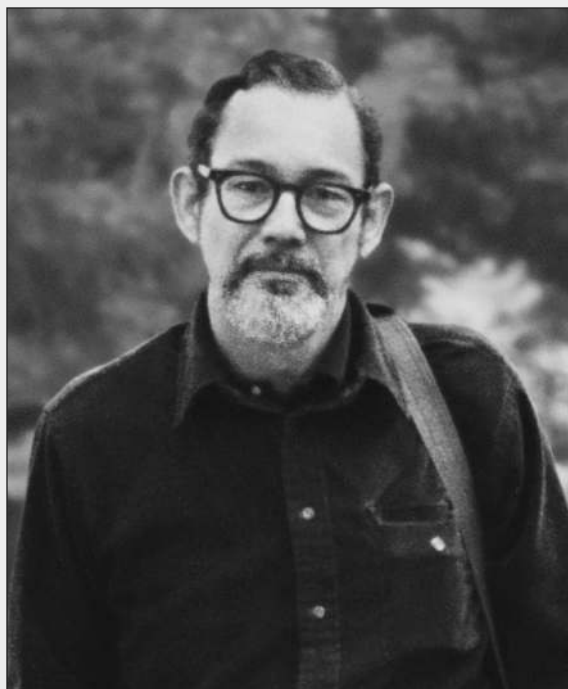
Some 80 years later, Jim was a key impetus for our "Then and Now" pamphlet contrasting the 1934 victories of three citywide strikes waged amid the Depression—San Francisco longshoremen, Minneapolis Teamsters and Toledo auto workers—with the ongoing devastation of organized labor today. Seeking to arm a new generation of working-class fighters, the pamphlet drives home that a crucial difference is that the 1934 strikes were led by "reds" committed to mobilizing the class power of the workers as opposed to the current labor misleaders, who are committed to the interests and profits of American imperialism. In fighting to implant a class-struggle perspective in the working class, Jim had a keen appreciation of the relationship of the Leninist party to the proletariat: Unions mean the unity of workers, while the party means split—i.e., the fight to forge the vanguard of the class by winning over the most class-conscious workers.

Jim's family, on all sides, was staunchly Presbyterian. The lessons inculcated by his Calvinist upbringing would continue to define him, even after he became an atheist in his teens. He maintained a commitment to knowledge and probity, as well as a keen appreciation of monetary matters. The battle against the ignorance, superstition and all-sided reactionary character of the Catholic church would also inspire him as a youth to side with the loyalists in the Spanish Civil War against Franco's fascist-aligned forces. A polymath with a wide range of interests, Jim was an avid scuba diver and acquired an impressive collection of British coins; he had a fervent interest in Roman and Mediterranean history, including the transition from antiquity to feudalism.

The American Civil War and the fight to abolish black chattel slavery was another living issue for Jim from a young age. While his mother's side of the family had been slaveholders, his great-grandfather fought on the side of the Union in the Civil War. In 1984, Jim was the moving force behind our tearing down the Confederate flag in San Francisco's Civic Center. As a tribute to the inspiration of his great-grandfather, a picture of his gravestone was printed in *Workers Vanguard* accompanying our article "We Tore Down the Flag of Slavery!" (WV No. 353, 27 April 1984).

Raised mostly in the Bay Area and the Central Valley, where his mother taught in a series of small-town grade schools, Jim remained a Californian throughout his life. His idea of a good American meal was beef enchiladas, rice and beans. He also had a keen appreciation of the brutal oppression

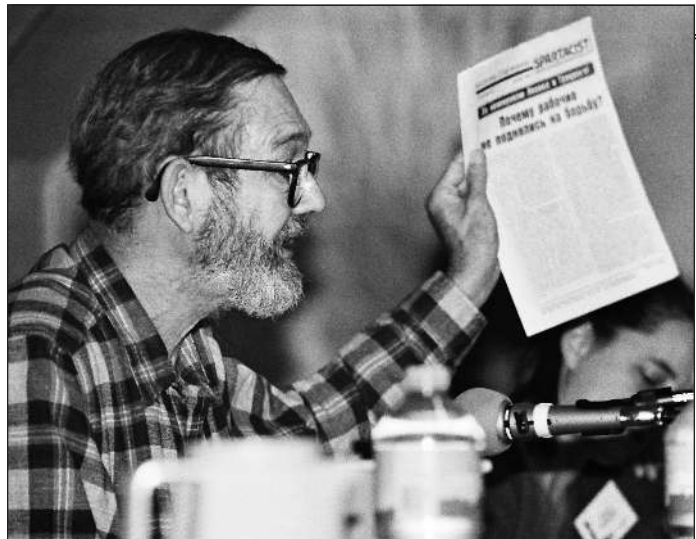
James Robertson



WV Photo

1928-2019 

WV Photo



Spartakist



Left: Jim holds ICL Russian-language leaflet issued as part of our intervention against counterrevolution in USSR, 1992. Right: ICL initiated 1990 Treptow demonstration in East Berlin, fought for revolutionary reunification of Germany.

and degradation of Mexicans who labored in the fields of the Central Valley. The incarceration of Japanese Americans in concentration camps during World War II was also a living memory for him. When his mother taught in a small Mennonite community, his only friends were the Japanese American kids who shared many of his interests. The image of Japanese Americans being held in a pen in Merced, California, waiting to be shipped to the camps was indelibly imprinted on his consciousness.

In notes for memoirs taken by his wife Elizabeth Robertson, whose death from cancer in 2005 was a body blow to Jim, he spoke to the impact of these experiences in “incubating a communist conscience”:

“A pronounced revulsion to racism; the absurdly simple idea that the material requirements of life ought to be produced and distributed upon the basis of the need for them rather than according to profitability to the owners of industry; a hard-core atheism flowing fairly straightforwardly from immersing an unknowingly dedicated Calvinist into a year of Roman Catholic school where he got A’s in catechism and then back to a secular school; and with the sole exception of the beloved Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a thoroughgoing distrust of existing government and institutions.”

At 18 years of age, Jim joined the Communist Party in Richmond, California, in late 1946. At the time, he fully shared the Stalinists’ pro-FDR “anti-fascist popular front” politics.

Black and Red

Jim was assigned to work in the CP youth organization, which was overwhelmingly made up of young black workers, many of whom had come from the South to work in the Richmond shipyards during World War II and were now laid off. As Jim once remarked, the idea that the North was “promised land” had been dashed, and now these black workers looked to the Soviet Union. The stories of the daily racist humiliation and degradation his new comrades were subjected to deepened Jim’s awareness of the centrality of black oppression to both the foundation and maintenance of American capitalism.

Years later, in the late 1950s, veteran SWP leader Richard Fraser would win Jim to his program of revolutionary integrationism, which is counterposed to both liberal integration schemes and black nationalism. Rooted in a proletarian-centered perspective to fight against every manifestation of racial oppression under capitalism, revolutionary integrationism is based on the understanding that the only road to black freedom lies in shattering this racist capitalist order through proletarian revolution, and that black workers, as the most oppressed and also most conscious and combative layer of the working class, will play a leading role in that struggle.

Describing Fraser as his “last personal teacher” at a memorial meeting following his death in 1988, Jim described his impact: “I was really quite ready to run into comrade Fraser’s presentation and historical foundation, that one can achieve the abolition of racial division in this country *only* through a profound, pervasive, far-going social revolution in which the working class comes to power.” One of the founding documents of the SL/U.S., “Black and Red—Class Struggle Road to Negro Freedom” (1966) elucidated Fraser’s program of revolutionary integrationism, incorporating lessons from our early intervention into the black freedom struggle. This perspective animated the SL-initiated labor/black mobilization to stop the Klan in Washington, D.C., on 27 November 1982 and our other anti-fascist actions. The sight of 5,000 black people, unionists and other intended victims of Klan terror victoriously marching the KKK’s planned route in D.C. was one of our proudest moments.

During his two years in the CP, Jim took the first steps in what would be a lifelong study of the lessons of the Russian Revolution. His branch leadership did not encourage reading Lenin, so Jim went out and bought a copy of *The State and Revolution*. He was struck by the fla-



grant contradiction between Lenin and the class-collaborationist politics of the CP. This would later be amplified by his awareness of growing income and other inequalities in the Soviet Union, belying the Stalinists’ claim that the Soviet Union was steadily marching toward socialism.

As a chemistry student at UC Berkeley, Jim was introduced to Trotsky’s *The Revolution Betrayed* and other works by a young couple who supported Max Shachtman’s Workers Party. He would later often recall that when he “confessed” to being a “Trotskyite” (an experience he described as akin to telling your parents you were gay in the 1950s), he was told that it wasn’t so easy. There were two Trotskyist parties: one was “for Russia and against Stalin” and the other was “against Russia and against Stalin.” Having expressed a preference for the former, Jim was told that was “old fashioned” and was directed instead to Shachtman’s party. He joined its youth organization in 1948.

From the CP to the “Third Camp”

One of the founding leaders of American Trotskyism, Shachtman had split from the SWP in 1940, having repudiated the party’s defense of the Soviet Union. It would take some years for the full pro-imperialist implications of this defection from Trotskyism to play out. The Shachtman organization’s plunge into increasingly overt support for U.S. imperialism began not long after Jim joined, and it would propel him into opposition. In 1951, Shachtman floated the idea of supporting an American-led war against the Soviet Union under the condition that it would have some kind of labor cover. Shortly thereafter, Jim debated Shachtman in front of the Bay Area branch.

This took some guts, and it was an early marker of Jim’s political intransigence and audacity. At the debate, he used Shachtman’s 1941 article “Working-Class Policy in War and Peace.” In that piece, Shachtman had correctly excoriated the SWP’s “Proletarian Military Policy”—which advocated trade-union control over military training during World War II—as a concession to social-patriotism. Opposition to this policy remains a hallmark of our international organization, codified in our *Prometheus Research Series* No. 2, “Documents on the ‘Proletarian Military Policy’” (February 1989).

Jim also got a good education in Marxist classics in Shachtman’s organization, which he would refer to as a model for the education of new comrades in the SL. Unfortunately for Al Garber, who ran this educational program, it armed the student to polemically excoriate the teacher’s abject revisionism. Garber had argued that

Jim addressing Spartacist League founding conference, September 1966.
(Inset) First issue of *Spartacist*, February-March 1964.



Stalinism could have been avoided if the Bolsheviks had called for new elections in 1921, at the end of the devastating Civil War, and handed over power to whichever party won. In a 1954 document titled “Should the Bolsheviks Have Surrendered State Power?” Jim argued that this would have been “a betrayal of the first magnitude of socialism and would have assured the defeat” of the October Revolution. Garber snarled that Jim belonged in the SWP, to which Jim retorted that Garber belonged in the Socialist Party. A few years later, those organizations were exactly where each of them ended up.

The 1956 Hungarian Revolution had a tremendous impact in puncturing the Shachtmanites’ position that the Stalinist bureaucracy was a new “bureaucratic collectivist” ruling class. In the face of a working-class uprising, the Hungarian Communist Party bureaucracy polarized and split. A sizable minority, including a central military commander and the Budapest chief of police, went over to the side of the workers. This confirmed Trotsky’s understanding of the Stalinist bureaucracy as an unstable caste, a parasitic excrescence sitting on top of the workers state. As Jim would later remark in a presentation on the antecedents of the Spartacist League, “Imagine a proletarian revolution in a capitalist country where one-quarter of the Republican Party or the Tories goes over to the side of the workers. This is a fantasy! Everything Trotsky said was right.”

The same year as the events in Hungary, Khrushchev’s “secret” speech on the crimes of Stalin propelled hundreds of shocked and disaffected Stalinists out of the Communist Party, breaking the dominance of the CP on the left. For his part, Shachtman was preparing to totally liquidate into the

“State Department socialists” of Norman Thomas’s decrepit Socialist Party. As one of the leaders of the Shachtman youth organization’s Left Wing Caucus, which opposed the liquidation, Jim once again debated Shachtman. In the aftermath of the debate, Shachtman wrote that it was pointless trying to save Jim from “something he badly wants and badly needs—experience with a sterile, intolerant revolutionary phrasemongering sect like the SWP.”

And that is where Jim went, joining the SWP in 1957. He always fondly recalled his collaboration with veteran SWPer Murry Weiss, who was central to the party’s regroupment with the Left Wing Caucus. This regroupment would lay the basis for the founding of the SWP’s youth group, the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA). Comrade Robertson and other former Caucus leaders Shane Mage and Tim Wohlforth became leaders of the YSA. Although Jim described their view of the SWP as some kind of Trotsky memorial society, he thought that he would “rather be in an honorable irrelevant memorial association to Trotsky” than stay with the Shachtmanites.

The SWP, the RT and the Cuban Revolution

The SWP was pretty hollowed out by the time Jim joined, most immediately reflecting the impact of the stagnation and repression of the 1950s Cold War witch-hunt. With the SWP having spent some years making little to no impact on society, the Trotskyist program had increasingly become irrelevant for much of the party leadership. Looking for something else to latch on to, the SWP found it in the Cuban Revolution led by Fidel Castro, whose petty-bourgeois guerrilla forces took power in Havana in 1959 and whose government expropriated the Cuban bourgeoisie in 1960-61. Jim often recalled longtime SWP leader Morris Stein enthusiastically that the Cuban Revolution was the best one he was going to see in his lifetime.

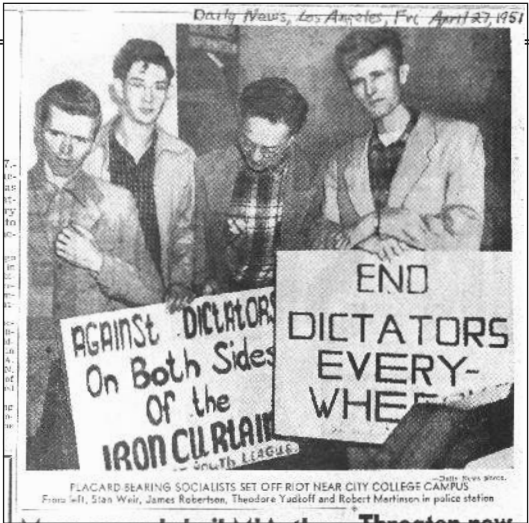
In embracing Fidel Castro as an “unconscious Marxist,” the SWP leadership dumped both the centrality of the working class as well as the need for a Leninist vanguard party to lead the struggle for power by the proletariat. In 1960, Shane Mage wrote an oppositional document, “The Cuban Revolution and Marxist Theory,” which was co-signed by Robertson and Wohlforth. In a 2014 presentation on “The RT at Conception,” Jim commented that since they were all new boys in the SWP, he didn’t think the document would have much impact. But they were also leaders of the SWP’s youth organization, and in January 1961 the party leadership called a plenum on the Cuban question. As Jim recalled: “The point of it was to bring us to heel, to stop us. They hit us pretty hard. We didn’t recant. Instead we called a faction meeting” (*Marxist Studies for Cadre Education* No. 10, June 2018). That was the beginning of the Revolutionary Tendency in the SWP.

continued on page 6

Jim (second from left) as member of “Third Camp” Shachtmanite Independent Socialist League in 1951.
Below: Jim’s 1954 document (signed James Thompson) in defense of Russian Revolution against leading Shachtmanite.

FORUM
A Discussion and Information Bulletin Published by the Independent Socialist League

SHOULD THE BOLSHEVIKS HAVE SURRENDERED STATE POWER?
A Discussion Article, by....James Thompson



A finished understanding that Cuba had become a deformed workers state in 1960 with the pervasive nationalizations and the liquidation of the bourgeoisie as a class is presented in an additional preface to *Marxist Bulletin* No. 8, “Cuba and Marxist Theory.” Written by Jim in 1973, the preface spelled out the exceptional circumstances that had led to this outcome: the absence of the working class as a contender for power, the flight of the Cuban bourgeoisie, the intransigent opposition of the Eisenhower administration and the existence of the Soviet Union as a military and economic counterweight to U.S. imperialism.

This analysis of the Cuban Revolution unlocked the process through which revolutions of insurrectionary peasant forces led by Stalinists had succeeded in smashing capitalism and establishing deformed workers states after World War II. It was a vital contribution, reaffirming Trotskyism against the disorientation and impressionism of the postwar Fourth International. The majority of Trotskyists, relying on sterile “orthodoxy,” initially insisted that without proletarian revolution there could be no social overturn of capitalism. Then, following the Yugoslav peasant-based revolution and Tito’s subsequent break with Stalin, many Trotskyists hailed the Yugoslav Stalinists as “comrades” and “left centrists.” Michel Pablo, who had emerged as leader of the Fourth International after the decimation of its central cadre in Europe during the war, generalized the embrace

lutionary proletariat. For Trotskyists to incorporate into their strategy revisionism on the *proletarian* leadership in the revolution is a profound negation of Marxism-Leninism no matter what pious wish may be concurrently expressed for ‘building revolutionary Marxist parties in colonial countries.’ Marxists must resolutely oppose any adventurist acceptance of the peasant-guerrilla road to socialism—historically akin to the Social Revolutionary program on tactics that Lenin fought. This alternative would be a suicidal course for the socialist goals of the movement, and perhaps physically for the adventurers.”

—Printed in *Spartacist* No. 1,
February-March 1964

Domestically, the RT, seeking to win black militants to revolutionary Marxism, fought against the SWP’s criminal abstention from the growing left wing of the civil rights movement. A July 1963 document written by Robertson and Shirley Stoute titled “For Black Trotskyism” recalled Trotsky’s admonition that “if it happens that we in the SWP are not able to find the road to this strata, then we are not worthy at all.” In December 1963, the SWP leadership expelled Robertson and four other leaders of the RT in the first political expulsions in the history of the party.

The Obligation of Revolutionary Internationalism

Following Cannon’s death in August 1974, comrade Robertson memorialized him in a presentation to an SL/U.S. national



Spartacist

West Berlin, 1970: Jim (center) with comrades Liz Gordon and Al Nelson during European tour to seek out possibilities for revolutionary regroupment.

From the beginning, our founding cadre understood that we would never survive as a revolutionary organization in national isolation, not least under the pressures of operating in the most powerful imperialist country on earth. We considered ourselves to be in programmatic agreement with the International Committee (until our definitive break with them in 1967). In particular, Gerry Healy’s Socialist Labour League in Britain had published very impressive and orthodox-sounding documents in defense of authentic Trotskyism. At the same time, the RT had had its own bad experiences with Healy’s bureaucratic organizational practices, which were aimed at coercing compliance with his dictates. In 1962, Healy’s American toady, Wohlforth, had split the RT, and he would later serve as the fingerman for our expulsion by the SWP leadership.

We also had a major political difference with Healy over Cuba. In what we would describe as “inverted Pabloism,” the Healyites answered the SWP’s embrace of Castro’s petty-bourgeois guerrillas by denying that capitalism had been overthrown in Cuba. Nonetheless, from what we could tell from their written documents, we had significant programmatic agreement, and that was central.

A Spartacist delegation attended the 1966 IC Conference in London, where comrade Robertson spoke on our behalf. He addressed our differences over Cuba, noting: “If the Cuban bourgeoisie is indeed ‘weak’ as the I.C. affirms, one can only observe that it must be tired from its long swim to Miami, Florida.” He criticized the IC’s enormous overestimation of the imminence of the final “crisis of capitalism” and

argued that the IC had “not done very well” in fighting Pabloist revisionism. Healy’s response was swift. Charging that Robertson’s supposed “unexcused” absence from a Conference session was an act of petty-bourgeois American-chauvinist contempt, he demanded that Jim apologize. Jim refused to bow to the demand that he falsely confess.

In the Spartacist delegation’s final statement to the conference, Jim argued:

“We believe it is a violation of Leninist practice to demand that a comrade affirm to his comrades what he does not believe.... The Spartacist organization has been subjected to a series of slanderous attacks, despite our basic political agreement on the necessity of the fight against revisionism. This is an attempt to substitute for international democratic centralism for the American section a mechanism not of consciousness and discipline but of fear and obedience.”

A year later, the contradiction between Healy’s organizational practices and the IC’s professed program was resolved with its embrace of Mao’s “Cultural Revolution” and of the so-called “Arab Revolution,” which was composed of despotical nationalist regimes in the Near East.

Forging a Cadre Collective

Doubtless Healy thought that after our break with him, we would simply shrivel up and die. But we didn’t. From the first issue of *Spartacist* (February-March 1964), we had declared our intention to resolve the disparity between our size and our goal of forging a Leninist vanguard party through: revolutionary regroupment with leftward moving elements of other self-professed Marxist organizations and winning individual supporters from among radicalized youth and militants in the civil rights struggle, as well as seeking to intersect key sections of the working class.

It was a period of intense political ferment and tumultuous social struggle in the U.S. The civil rights struggles had shattered the reactionary 1950s Cold War consensus. Opposition to the pro-Democratic Party liberal pacifism of the Martin Luther King leadership had generated a left-wing split of young black militants. The impact of the Cuban Revolution was now combined with growing opposition to the Vietnam War. The New Left was growing by leaps and bounds.

Although our forces were small and in the early years somewhat amorphous, we fought to intervene to the best of our capacity. What comrade Robertson brought to bear were the lessons of Leninist party building, especially the training and development of cadre that he had learned in particular from the work and history of James P. Cannon. He understood that our recruitment would predominantly come from individuals and groups attracted to our program and analysis as expressed in

1902 Hyperion
Los Angeles 27, Calif.
Feb. 11, 1960

Jim Robertson,
New York, N.Y.

Dear Jim:

I noticed that your East Coast campus tour will take you to Brown University on February 18. When you get there, I wish you would look up Professor Philip Taft and say hello for me.

Phil is an old friend of mine from early days. You probably know him as a labor historian who has recently published a widely acclaimed volume on the history of the A.F. of L. from Gompers to the merger. But you probably don't know that he has a still greater distinction. He was a young wobbly. And a first class one too--highly esteemed by all who knew him in those days.

Fraternally,

James P. Cannon
James P. Cannon

JPC: jh

1960 letter from founder of American Trotskyism, James P. Cannon, to Jim, then a leader of the SWP’s youth group.

of the Yugoslav Stalinists into a broad revisionist course. He argued that the establishment of deformed workers states in East and Central Europe, most of which were created from the top down by the forces of the Red Army, demonstrated that the Stalinist parties “retain the possibility in certain circumstances of roughly outlining a revolutionary orientation.” Thus the very need for a revolutionary Trotskyist international was liquidated.

Although in a partial and limited way, Cannon’s SWP had fought Pabloite revisionism and united in the International Committee (IC) with other organizations that claimed to defend Trotskyism. But the SWP’s embrace of Castro’s guerrillas paved the way to its reunification with the Pabloites in 1963. The RT opposed this course. Jim was particularly proud of writing the following section of the RT’s 1963 resolution, “Toward Rebirth of the Fourth International”:

“Experience since the Second World War has demonstrated that peasant-based guerrilla warfare under petit-bourgeois leadership can in itself lead to nothing more than an anti-working-class bureaucratic regime. The creation of such regimes has come about under the conditions of decay of imperialism, the demoralization and disorientation caused by Stalinist betrayals, and the absence of revolutionary Marxist leadership of the working class. Colonial revolution can have an unequivocally progressive significance only under such leadership of the revo-

lutionary proletariat. He spoke to Cannon’s unique capacity, evolved out of his times and his political struggles, “to be the successful strategist and leader of a proletarian revolution in North America.” Jim noted, however, that Cannon had ducked the international responsibility that he ought to have taken up after Trotsky’s murder:

“Cannon had an abiding failure. He became the principal individual authority responsible for the world Trotskyist movement in August 1940 and basically didn’t do anything about it (though the SWP was internationalist and willing to commit energy, lives). I think the reason was pretty simple: Cannon felt he was not good enough to be a world leader of the Marxist movement, and he was right....

“So Cannon backed off, and we’re stuck with the job. He stuck us with it doubly. Because he was a lot better than we are—and when I say ‘he’ I mean not only Cannon personally but the immediate working crew that made up the ‘Cannon regime.’...

“There was a Cannon regime, and they were doing the best they could. But they didn’t accept the international challenge, and yet it is an obligation. Yes, if you know that you don’t know anything, go patiently, quietly, perseveringly; struggle with the greatest patience and attention for international collaborators. We have to go that way, not back off and wait in national isolation for somebody else to come forward and say, ‘I can do it,’ and then we say, ‘all right; we’ll give you our authority.’ We have to persist; we have to intervene.”

—*Spartacist* (English-language edition) No. 38-39, Summer 1986



New York Times

New York City, 1964: Jim (bottom right with bullhorn) at Spartacist-initiated Harlem Solidarity Committee protest in garment district to rally working class to defend ghetto masses against cop terror.

our propaganda, not some phony pretense of “mass work.” At the same time, Jim looked for opportunities where we could, in an exemplary way, demonstrate our program in action.

In 1964, when black Harlem was under police siege following an upheaval of protest against the cop killing of a black teenager, the SL initiated the Harlem Solidarity Committee. Its purpose was to rally working-class support for the besieged black population. The response was a nearly 1,000-strong rally in New York’s garment district. Speaking to the crowd, Jim took on the cops’ campaign to charge communists with inflaming the upheaval in Harlem. As he defiantly declared, “Unfortunately there aren’t many Reds in Harlem now—but *there will be!*”

In 1968, in the course of an intense internal faction fight, Jim succeeded in forging a cadre collective of those comrades who had been won to the SL/U.S. in its early years. Then, after a series of regroupments and fusions, we were able to realize our perspective of being a fighting propaganda group with the establishment of *Workers Vanguard* as well as *Women and Revolution*. We founded a national youth organization, which in turn provided many of the young comrades who would go on to fight for a class-struggle perspective in key unions.

In notes for his own obituary written in 1990, Jim wrote: “He breached the gap from the old left under James P. Cannon

critical extension of a Leninist understanding of the national question especially in relation to geographically interpenetrated peoples. Jim was also central to winning an oppositional faction from Alan Thorne’s Workers Socialist League, which included several young Irish and Turkish members, laying the basis for founding the Spartacist League/Britain in 1978.

By the time of our first International Conference in 1979, we had sections in France, Germany, Australia, Canada, the U.S. and Britain. Of the nearly 300 delegates and observers in attendance who had been members of other organizations, the majority had been left splits from Ernest Mandel’s Pabloite United Secretariat. Others included former pro-Moscow and pro-Beijing Stalinists, anti-revisionist Trotskyists and former Third Campists, as well as ex-members of the Black Panthers and women’s and gay rights radical organizations.

Nonetheless, although we had won many youthful militants from self-proclaimed Trotskyist groups, we had failed to win veteran fighters whose experience would have helped shape a new generation. It wasn’t for lack of trying. Our most notable effort to find, in Cannon’s words, “the initiating cadres of the new organization in the old,” was a long fraternal experience with the comrades of Edmund Samarakkody’s Revolutionary Workers Party (RWP) in Sri Lanka. In 1960, Jim had written a letter to the SWP



WV Photo

At SL-initiated demonstration in NYC hours after government massacre of members of Branch Davidian religious commune in Waco, Texas, 1993.

RWP as having “emerged with integrity from the welter of betrayals perpetrated by the old LSSP” and abetted by the United Secretariat (as well as Healy’s IC). In the course of written and other discussions with Samarakkody’s group beginning in 1971, it became clear that they had not broken from a parliamentary framework. Evidence of this included Samarakkody repudiating his 1964 vote against the popular front. Relations had seemingly reached an impasse when in 1979 we received a proposal for fusion.

Comrade Robertson headed a delegation to Lanka for discussions. As another comrade who was part of that delegation recently wrote: “These ten days of intense political combat were a display of Jim’s capacities as a clear-headed political leader, combining steely programmatic firmness with a masterful sense of diplomacy. The trip was conditioned by many factors, but chiefly Jim’s well-known commitment to extend our forces internationally.” Attending our 1979 International Conference, Samarakkody made clear that he intended to maintain his provincial operation on the left fringe of the Sri Lanka popular front and would not allow his organization to be subject to the correctives of international democratic-centralism. The fusion was off, as Samarakkody packed his bags and left before the conference ended.

Nonetheless, we learned that we had polarized the RWP, and several of its younger comrades were won to our tendency. They were animated by Jim’s insistence that the struggle against Sinhala chauvinism by the working class of Sri Lanka “can be no less a precondition for successful revolution than the struggle against Great Russian chauvinism was for the Bolsheviks.” As our Lankan section, they fought with great determination and courage against the government’s escalating war against the Tamil population. Internationally, our sections organized

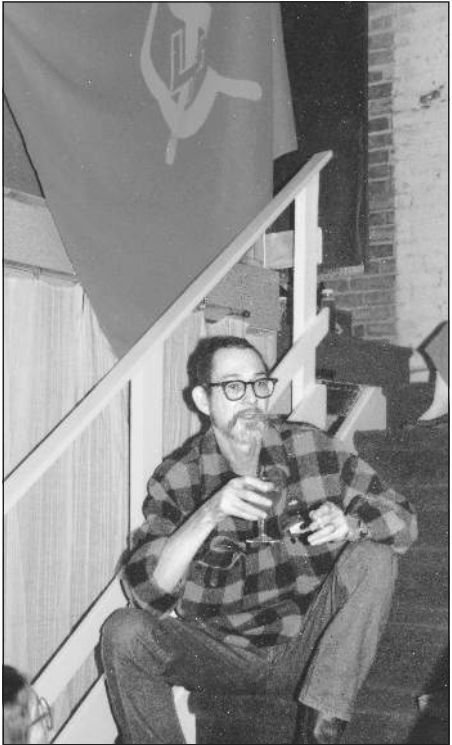
and participated in protests with Tamil exiles protesting the terror in Sri Lanka.

We lost these comrades largely due to our inability to communicate in each other’s languages. Despite concerted efforts by our Sri Lankan comrades and comrades in New York, we never succeeded in breaking the Sinhala-English barrier. In a later document titled “Internationalism Is a Dead Letter If...!” Jim wrote: “Without the language capacity to bridge the gulfs between the people of the world we are not merely lost, we are non-starters.” Referencing himself as “the pathetic walking example of this problem” despite several years of studying Spanish, some French and a prolonged attempt to learn German, Jim ended with the salutation “For a Welders’ and Bilinguals’ Government!”

Maintenance and the PRL

Jim’s reference to “welders” was not meant jocularly. Throughout his political life, he fought against bourgeois society’s veneration of “intellectual labor” and contempt for those who work with their hands. In part, this reflected his study of, and work in, chemistry. In remarks at the 1994 SL/U.S. National Conference, he counterposed “unifying communist values” that seek to overcome the division between mental and manual labor to “the bourgeois dichotomy between the doer and the thinker, the blue and the white collar, work and leisure, dirty and clean, menial and advantaged.”

Jim dedicated his presentation (printed as “Maintenance and the Communist Movement,” WV No. 605, 2 September 1994) to



WV Photo

During gathering at PRL, 1988.

Nina Hartley. A porn star and fighter for sexual liberation, Hartley, in Jim’s words, “personifies the struggle against a parallel kind of invidiousness and hypocrisy, in her case sexual, inherent in the bourgeois order.” Jim was a key contributor to *Women and Revolution*, which was published from 1971 to 1996. *Women and Revolution* was not only a tool for intervention into the 1970s women’s liberation movement but also a means to illuminate social questions arising out of the fundamental character of women’s oppression, taking up subjects like human origins and early society as well as culture and art.

Inside the party, Jim encouraged women comrades to become leaders of the organization. In part, this came from his experience in the SWP, where male National Officers had female secretaries. While these extremely competent and devoted women cadre shared their opinions with the national leaders, they did not speak at Political Committee meetings. As one of our early leading women comrades wrote: “Jim said he didn’t want me to be like that; he wanted women in our party to seek authority in their own right.” The leaderships of the SL/U.S. and the ICL

continued on page 8



Thomas R. Copi

Jim (center) protesting U.S. imperialism’s war against Vietnam at NYC demonstration, 15 April 1967. Against liberal pacifism, Spartacists stood out with our call for military victory to the Vietnamese National Liberation Front.

and Max Shachtman to the New Left, bringing along several hundred at the time so they did not spend their lives in futile adventure or Yuppiedom.” And, by the time of our Third National Conference in 1972, we finally had the cadre, language skills and financial resources to systematically pursue our international extension.

Reforge the Fourth International!

The international Spartacist tendency was formally launched in 1974 with the “Declaration for the Organizing of an International Trotskyist Tendency” (DOITT). Adopted by the SL/U.S. and the Spartacist League of Australia and New Zealand, as well as supporters in Europe, the DOITT document stated:

“The international Spartacist tendency is just that, a tendency in the process of consolidation. But from its international outset it declares its continuing fidelity already tested for a decade in national confines to Marxist-Leninist principle and Trotskyist program—Revolutionary, Internationalist and Proletarian.

“The struggle for the rebirth of the Fourth International promises to be difficult, long, and, above all, uneven.”

From our first days, Jim was often part of international delegations that pursued opportunities for principled revolutionary regroupment. He personally focused particular effort on Britain, living in London in the mid 1970s. There he collaborated in the writing of our “Theses on Ireland,” a

Political Committee protesting its public silence over the betrayals of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP), which had signed on to a popular-front electoral pact with the bourgeois-nationalist, Sinhala-chauvinist Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). In 1964, the LSSP joined the SLFP government, leading Samarakkody to split from the LSSP. Later that year, he and his comrade Meryl Fernando, both Members of Parliament, cast their votes in favor of a motion of no confidence, a principled act that brought down the coalition government.

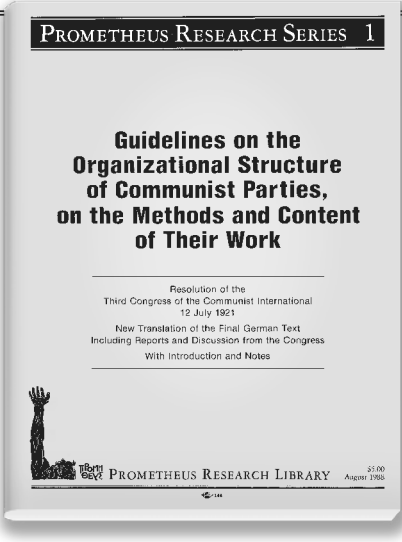
The DOITT document outlining the prospects for revolutionary regroupment took particular note of Samarakkody’s

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have always been distinguished by their many Marxist women cadre.

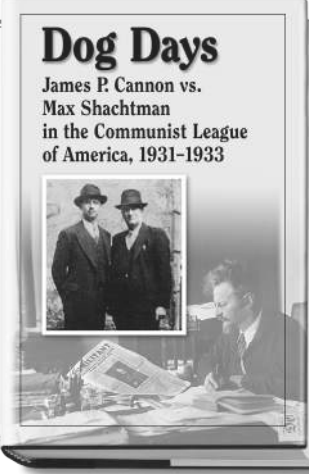
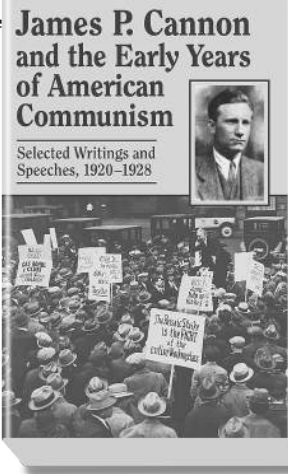
On the book-learning side of the equation, Jim pursued a lifelong dedication to building a Marxist library and collecting archival material documenting the history and experiences of the workers movement, both in the U.S. and internationally. This started during his years in Shachtman’s organization, and it wasn’t easy as an impoverished student in the midst of the McCarthyite witchhunt. Thus, Jim was understandably quite proud when Louis Sinclair, the bibliographer of Trotsky’s works, found items in Jim’s library that he wasn’t aware of during his visit to the Bay Area in 1958.

Noting Lenin’s admonition that “he who takes somebody’s word for it is a hopeless idiot,” the tasks and perspectives document adopted at the Fourth SL/U.S. Conference in 1974 spelled out the importance of archival work:

“One of the crucial tasks of the vanguard of the proletariat is the struggle to function as the memory of the working class. An important component of this struggle for continuity is the systematic assembling, propagation and critical assimilation of the primary documentary history of the workers movement. Given the passage of time and the accumulation of distortions and vulgarizations, only the precise, verified reconstruction of past realities can serve as a true compass.”

Jim’s personal collection became the basis for the Prometheus Research Library (PRL), a working facility for Marxist and related studies and also the library and reference archives of the SL/U.S. Central Committee. He remained PRL director until his death.

From the beginning of the PRL, Jim pushed an ambitious publishing program to make available rare and important documentation from the history of the communist movement. Our earliest *Prometheus Research Series* bulletin (August



Jim, a lifelong archivist, was instrumental to publication of our two PRL books.

one’s opponents in the workers movement to the record of Stalinism:

“By all historical accounts Stalinism ended the moral and political framework of the old radical movement where anarchists, Marxists, syndicalists, cooperativists and even single-taxers worked together on issues of mutual interest. One of Stalinism’s more poisonous qualities, and it is quite total, is the conviction that if you have serious political disagreements with someone you can’t give them the time of day, let alone a reference to an old document.”

In this spirit, Jim was also personally involved in providing documentation and commentary to historian Bryan D. Palmer when he was working on *James P. Cannon and the Origins of the American Revolutionary Left, 1890-1928*.

Most, but not all, of the *Prometheus Research Series* bulletins were conceived of (if not co-edited) by Jim, based on his years of research and reflection. This is also true of the PRL’s second book, *Dog Days: James P. Cannon vs. Max Shachtman in the Communist League of America, 1931-1933* (2002). Jim had heard rumors of this factional battle from his early days in Shachtman’s organization, but it took him years to get his hands on the key documents. Jim realized that

ticularly on the fight for black liberation, until Fraser’s death in 1988. Two years later, we produced a PRS bulletin containing a selection of his works as a tribute.

Other, unmitigatedly hostile opponents would present Jim as a raving megalomaniac surrounded by handraisers and hacks. These included Tim Wohlforth, who had contrasted his own putative status as a Marxist leader to Cannon, whom he called a vulgar “window-smasher.” The misnamed Bolshevik Tendency, an outfit started by embittered ex-members, joined this chorus. The subjective malice animating the BT was seen in its embrace of Bill Logan—a social and sexual psychopath who was expelled at our first International Conference—as its leader.

The truth of the matter is that Jim never aspired to be “*the* leader” and was keenly aware that he stood far in Cannon’s shadow. As he put it in his memorial to Cannon, Jim knew that he, and we, could not “wait in national isolation for somebody else to come forward and say, ‘I can do it.’” So he grasped the nettle. Not on his own, but through an ongoing struggle to forge a collective leadership.

Against those posturing as “100 percent” leaders, who were unable to tolerate any corrective or criticism, Jim argued that if you were right 70 percent of the time it was a pretty good track record. Jim often said that “the party flies on two wings,” underlining the value of comrades in the left and right wings of the party.

He also liked to quote Oliver Cromwell’s entreaty: “I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken.” And when the party was wrong, Jim insisted that we publicly correct ourselves. Others, particularly of the *líder máximo* school, take this to be evidence of weakness and disarray. For our part, we recognize that frankly acknowledging our mistakes is, as Lenin put it, “the hallmark of a serious party” that seeks to both learn from its errors and impart these lessons to the proletariat.

Revolutionary politics is, as Cannon put it, “a devourer of men.” Against pretty big odds, comrade Robertson persisted in the struggle to forge a Leninist party. It took its toll. As part of coping with the stresses and to overcome a great personal shyness, he drank, a lot. By the late 1980s, he was also keenly aware of the impact of aging on his political capacities for central party leadership. He often spoke of the “Rickover Syndrome,” referring to U.S. Navy admiral Hyman Rickover, who was forced to retire at 82 after nearly sinking the nuclear submarine USS *La Jolla* during its 1981 sea trials.

In the early 1990s, Jim and his family

moved to California, which he described as “semi-retirement.” Nonetheless, although removed from the administrative leadership of the party, he continued to be central to shaping our international line and to our propaganda, as well as to internal struggles in the ICL. With his health threatened by alcoholism, he stopped drinking and later also gave up smoking. This bought Jim, and us, some 25 more years of his life and political experience. In that time, he sought to pass on the lessons he had learned to newer party leaders.

In a 1977 internal educational on party history, Jim noted:

“The reason that we stress the continuity of international communism and Trotskyism is because we have so little.... 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 fingers. And the other is



PRL
With founding librarian of the PRL, Diana Kartsen (1948-2007).

analogous to the apprenticeship program where you learn by doing under the direction and supervision of those who know better than you. And without components of both I do not think it’s possible to build the Bolshevik party without having to start all over again which is unlikely.”

The founding leadership of the SL had the advantage of coming onto the scene at a time when society was erupting in the U.S. and internationally in social struggle. The current generation has to fight to persevere in a political climate that, since the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92, has overwhelmingly been defined by a dearth of class and social struggle and a great retrogression of consciousness.

One of Jim’s favorite quotes was from a talk by Lenin in January 1917, when he said: “We of the older generation may not live to see the decisive battles of this coming revolution.” The following month, the February Revolution in Russia opened the way for Lenin and the Bolshevik Party to intervene in a political struggle that would culminate in the October Revolution. Advising our younger comrades to not be taken in by pretenders to Marxism who denounce us for lacking immediate perspectives, Jim underlined: “Don’t pay so much attention to your immediate perspective, because you don’t know what’s going to happen in February! What is your *program*? That is the decisive question.” ■

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”
—George Santayana

1988) published the first complete and accurate translation of the “Guidelines on the Organizational Structure of Communist Parties, on the Methods and Content of Their Work.” Adopted by the Third Congress of the Communist International in 1921, the document stands as a codification of communist organizational practice as it was forged by the Bolsheviks and tested by the 1917 workers revolution.

Given the early PRL’s very limited editorial experience, Jim approached George Breitman, one of the principal editors of Pathfinder’s series of Trotsky’s works, who together with other old-time cadre had been drummed out of Jack Barnes’s SWP in 1984. With Breitman’s help, the PRL began to collect Cannon’s writings from the 1920s, work that eventually led to *James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism* (1992), which Jim co-edited. A PRL memo based on Jim’s notes contrasted such collaboration with

despite the absence of any principled programmatic difference, this early fight between Cannon and Shachtman presaged their 1939-40 battle over the Russian question. It was an early example of the petty-bourgeois impressionism that would lead to Shachtman’s break with Trotskyism. And it demonstrated Cannon’s commitment to programmatic integrity and proletarian centrality.

“We of the Older Generation...”

Dick Fraser once wrote that Robertson had appropriated the “worst aspects of Cannonism and Shachtmanism.” Jim hoped that Fraser meant Cannon’s political intransigence and Shachtman’s easy-going, democratic organizational practices. But he knew he didn’t. Despite political differences, Robertson and Fraser remained friends and political collaborators, par-

This class series on party history for comrades of the ICL includes transcripts of presentations about our forebears in the Revolutionary Tendency of the Socialist Workers Party and the early years of the SL/U.S. The pamphlet contains two talks by Jim Robertson, including “James P. Cannon Memorial Meeting” (August 1974) and “The RT at Conception” (February 2014).

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UAW...

(continued from page 1)

strike against the automaker began. This policy can only breed demoralization and erode the unity and integrity of the union. Industrial unions like the UAW were built on the very principle that “picket lines mean don’t cross!” To their credit, Ford and Fiat Chrysler workers as well as other trade unionists have walked the picket lines at GM. What is needed to bring the automaker to its knees as quickly as possible is for the UAW to build mass picket lines, reinforced by the rest of labor, that nobody dares to cross.

The defeatist approach to the picket lines on the part of the union bureaucracy reflects its loyalty to the capitalist profit system. The top layer of the organized labor movement, which long ago separated itself from its working-class base, sees the world through the same lens as the capitalists and their government. As a result, the labor misleaders bow before the rules set by the bosses and their Democratic and Republican political representatives.

For its part, the company is clear on what picket lines represent and has marshaled the cops and courts to clamp down on picket activity. In the first week, police detained striking workers from Flint, Michigan, to Arlington, Texas. On September 17, eleven UAW members, including the Local 1853 president, were arrested on disorderly conduct charges at the GM plant in Spring Hill, Tennessee. As the Partisan Defense Committee, a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League, wrote in a September 23 protest letter to the D.A.: “These arrests are a blatant attempt at strikebreaking.”

Railroad cops from Indiana in riot gear, together with Michigan state troopers, removed union pickets from the south gate of the Delta Township plant in Lansing. The claim was that the picketers were on the grounds of the rail yard next to the plant, and therefore in violation of the ban on secondary boycotts. In Texas, cops cleared out UAW pickets at the Navy Yard, a third-party site where GM had stockpiled vehicles from the Arlington plant for shipment, and Local 276 officials are being sued for having allegedly conducted a secondary boycott. In Tennessee, a court granted GM a temporary restraining order to prevent pickets from blocking plant gates.

All this underscores the class nature of the capitalist state, an apparatus of violence—centrally the police, courts, prisons and military—in the service of the bosses. Some striking workers alibied the cops who dispersed pickets as “just doing their job.” Indeed, and that job entails suppressing workers struggle and terrorizing the ghettos and barrios. Police “unions” are not organizations of workers but of the uniformed hired guns of the class enemy that seek more firepower and fewer constraints to go after labor, black people and immigrants. The cops and their security guard auxiliaries have absolutely no business in the labor movement.

Even before the strike began, federal authorities tried to bully the union into submission. In late August, the FBI, IRS and Department of Labor raided the homes of the current and previous UAW presidents, Gary Jones and Dennis Williams. As part of a widening corruption investigation into the UAW that began under the Obama administration, the government has snooped around in the union’s internal affairs and on September 20 arrested an eleventh person associated with the union. The Justice Department has charged this group with alleged crimes ranging from embezzlement and money laundering to mail and wire fraud. The federal probe is a dagger aimed at the entire UAW and must be opposed full stop. Union leaders should be held accountable, but only by the membership. *Labor must clean its own house!*

Leadership Is Key

The UAW bureaucrats, like the rest of the AFL-CIO officialdom, say nothing can be done in the face of legal ordinances



August 28: FBI raids home of UAW president Gary Jones, part of government crackdown on union and its leadership in lead-up to strike.

and court injunctions that severely limit picketing. This position is proof of their total renunciation of the class-struggle methods that built the union.

Some UAW members today trace their family’s union lineage to participants in the great 1936-37 Flint sitdown, conducted in defiance of the bosses’ anti-union laws. Auto workers occupied the GM Fisher Body No. 1 and No. 2 plants, temporarily seizing the very thing the capitalists consider most sacred: private property. The sit-down strikes posed the question of who is the real boss of the factory, the capitalist or the worker? On 12 January 1937, an assault by city cops and security guards to retake Fisher No. 2 was rebuffed in what became known as the Battle of the Running Bulls. In response, the Democratic governor called out the National Guard to maintain “law and order.” Workers ignored court injunctions instructing them to leave and the strike spread to 17 GM plants. After 44 days, the automaker capitulated and recognized the union.

Ford remained a non-union holdout, though, until the 1941 battles at River Rouge. Unlike the other major auto bosses, Henry Ford had recruited large numbers of black workers. He had hoped they would be strikebreakers, but instead the black workers overwhelmingly joined their white class brothers to build mass picket lines when a strike was called. As vividly retold by Art Preis of the Socialist Workers Party in *Labor’s Giant Step* (1964):

“Vast, impenetrable and immovable barricades of automobiles were set up, blocking off all the main arteries into the Ford fortress. The pickets in their cars even took control of the county-owned drawbridge, thus barring shipment of supplies by water on the River Rouge. Parked bumper to bumper for great distances, and surrounded by massed determined pickets at every vital point, the barricades of cars formed an impassable barrier into or out of the plants.”

Both these strikes were led by young workers with radical social and political views. But by the time of the Flint sitdown, the Communist Party, which played a major role in the strike leaderships, had swung over to supporting the New Deal government of Democratic president Franklin D. Roosevelt. These links to the Democratic Party effectively subordinated the union to the capitalist state. In the late 1940s, UAW head and Democratic Party stalwart Walter Reuther further chained the union to the state through the purge of Communists and other militants as part of U.S. imperialism’s anti-Soviet Cold War. The end result of this process was the consolidation of a bureaucracy in the UAW and the rest of the AFL-CIO that was thoroughly committed to the American capitalist order.

The disparity between the appetites of the UAW tops and the aspirations of auto workers on strike today points to the need to build a class-struggle leadership of the unions capable of mobilizing the mass strength and solidarity of the workers in opposition to all capitalist class forces, not least the Democrats. Under such a leadership, a union with the clout of the UAW could rally broad layers of the workers and the oppressed behind crucial struggles, like a concerted campaign to organize the unorganized, especially in the South, where race terror has historically served to keep unions out. The building of this new union leadership is integrally tied to the struggle to

forge a workers party that would fight for quality health care and decent-paying jobs for all, with the aim of overthrowing capitalist class rule and establishing a workers government.

For International Labor Solidarity

Earlier this year, UAW head Gary Jones proposed a consumer boycott of all GM cars not assembled in the U.S. or Canada. This gross chauvinist protectionism was directed against one country in particular, Mexico, a neocolony of U.S. imperialism where GM had just become the largest vehicle manufacturer by volume. These “Buy American” campaigns drive a deep wedge between workers in the U.S. and in Mexico and beyond. They help GM’s efforts to divide and conquer its workforce as a whole, which is part of its purpose in extending tiers and the pool of temporary workers.

The integration of GM production across North America poses the possibility of and necessity for joint labor action



Obama shakes hands with then UAW president Ron Gettelfinger, 2009. Democrats’ bailout of auto bosses meant further destruction of jobs and livelihoods of UAW workers.

of U.S., Canadian and Mexican auto workers. Our comrades of the Grupo Espartaquista de México translated into Spanish and distributed to Mexican auto workers our last article, “UAW: Strike to Win!” (see page 3).

Until today, when a parts shortage caused the GM assembly plant in Silao, Mexico, to shut down, the automaker had imposed speedup on the factory’s union workforce to offset its losses from the UAW strike. At least five workers there were fired after refusing, in solidarity with the UAW, to work overtime. A concrete act of internationalist solidarity in return would be for the UAW to demand the reinstatement of those fired. With GM turning the screws on workers everywhere, the UAW has no shortage of potential international allies. Early last month, some 10,000 unionized workers at the three GM assembly plants in South Korea stopped work for three days to protest a wage freeze and company restructuring.

During the strike, the UAW International bureaucracy has rolled out the red carpet for Democratic politicians, such as Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders, giving them the opportunity for picket line photo-ops and campaign speeches. Protectionism is the stock in trade of Sanders, whose record in Congress is also littered with support for U.S. imperi-

alism’s wars and occupations. During his stop by the Detroit-Hamtramck plant on September 25, Sanders thanked striking workers for “having the courage to stand up to corporate greed.” Don’t be fooled by empty platitudes! As a capitalist politician, Sanders is in the business of corporate greed. The drive for profit through the exploitation of labor is intrinsic to the capitalist system that Sanders represents.

The union bureaucracy’s strategy of reliance on so-called labor-friendly Democrats has only spelled disaster. Barack Obama rode into the White House in 2009 with the support of the UAW and other unions. His administration then got its start by showering the banks and automakers with billions in taxpayer money. Carried out in collusion with the UAW bureaucracy, the bailout of the auto bosses was barely disguised union-busting, opening the floodgates to mass layoffs and the further atomization of the workforce.

Having already contracted out the vast bulk of parts production to outside companies, many non-union, GM used the bailout to begin chipping away at the remaining union jobs. Cleaning and other plant maintenance were outsourced to Aramark, although according to these workers, who remain in the UAW, the automaker is now searching for a non-union outfit to replace them. The company has also set up separate entities like GM Subsystems Manufacturing, whose UAW workforce is under a separate contract with a “no strike” pledge that the union tops are currently upholding. Largely as a result of all this slicing and dicing of the workforce, union membership at GM is today one-fifth of what it was in 1994.

Perhaps the most enduring impact of the bailout on the union is the proliferation of second-tier new hires and temps.

In many plants, black and women workers fill a greater proportion of these temporary positions. In this society built on a bedrock of chattel slavery, the specially oppressed black population by and large remains economically “the last hired, first fired” and forcibly segregated at the bottom. The labor movement must fight against all manifestations of racial oppression, with the understanding that genuine black equality can only be achieved with the abolition of capitalism.

With their current strike, UAW members have launched a fight against the deepening of the exploitation and degradation of the most vulnerable among them. This country’s capitalist masters will never stop trying to grind down wide swaths of the population, who today are left to scramble and toil away at multiple jobs just to survive. Trade-union struggle, while able to deliver significant blows against the conditions of exploitation, cannot on its own end that exploitation. To win the class war, workers need a revolutionary party committed to the fight to emancipate labor and all of the oppressed from the bondage of capitalist wage slavery. When the working class takes state power and expropriates the owners of industry and the banks, the tremendous wealth of this society can begin providing a decent life to all. ■

Against “Fight the Right” Reformism—

For Workers Power!

We print below an article by our comrades of the Trotskyist League in Quebec and Canada that appeared in their English-language press Workers Tribune (No. 2, Summer/Fall 2019). Since publication, unearthed photos of Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau in black-face and brownface have further exposed, in a crude way, the utter hypocrisy of the vaunted “multiculturalism” of the country’s ruling class. Trudeau’s actions reflect the racism that is intrinsic to the vicious, oppressive Canadian capitalist state, which is centered on the national subjugation of Quebec, and which carries out attacks on immigrant-derived racial and ethnic minorities as well as the dispossessed Indigenous peoples.

WORKERS TRIBUNE

Four years of federal Liberal [Party] rule under Justin Trudeau have brought more of the same for workers and the oppressed. Stagnant wages and ever more precarious work are joined by mass layoffs, lockouts, strikebreaking and other anti-union attacks. Housing is unaffordable. Health care, education and other basic necessities have been cut to the bone. Trudeau’s Liberals have deported thousands of immigrants—for many others Canada remains a racist hellhole. The new NAFTA deal maintains the U.S./Canada free-trade rape of Mexico while also attacking workers in the U.S. and Canada. And the Liberals have reliably backed U.S. imperialism’s provocations abroad, including against Russia and in the anti-Communist drive targeting the Chinese deformed workers state.

These are the “sunny ways” that came with the Liberal victory in 2015. Now facing popular disaffection, Trudeau is trying to refurbish his tattered “progressive” image by pointing to the bogeyman of the Conservatives [Tories], who have won elections in five provinces over the past year. The front and centre target in this “fight the right” campaign is Ontario premier Doug Ford, who has waged particularly savage attacks on workers and public services, and serves as a convenient foe for Trudeau. The latter wants to harness the outpouring of justified anger against Ford to get re-elected in October.

The union bureaucrats and reformist left are beating the same drums to “stop the Tories” and “resist the blue wave,” meaning re-elect the Liberals and/or back the pro-capitalist social democrats of the NDP [New Democratic Party]. This “fight the right” crusade is a trap for workers and the oppressed.

None of the contending parties represent, in even a distant or distorted way, the interests of the working class. A pick-your-poison choice over which one will get to administer capitalism amounts to no choice at all. The parliamentary edifice of bourgeois democracy masks the dictatorship of a tiny, parasitic capitalist ruling class that amasses its profits by savagely exploiting the workers. As V.I. Lenin, leader of the October 1917 workers revolution in Russia, wrote in his book *The State and Revolution* (1917):

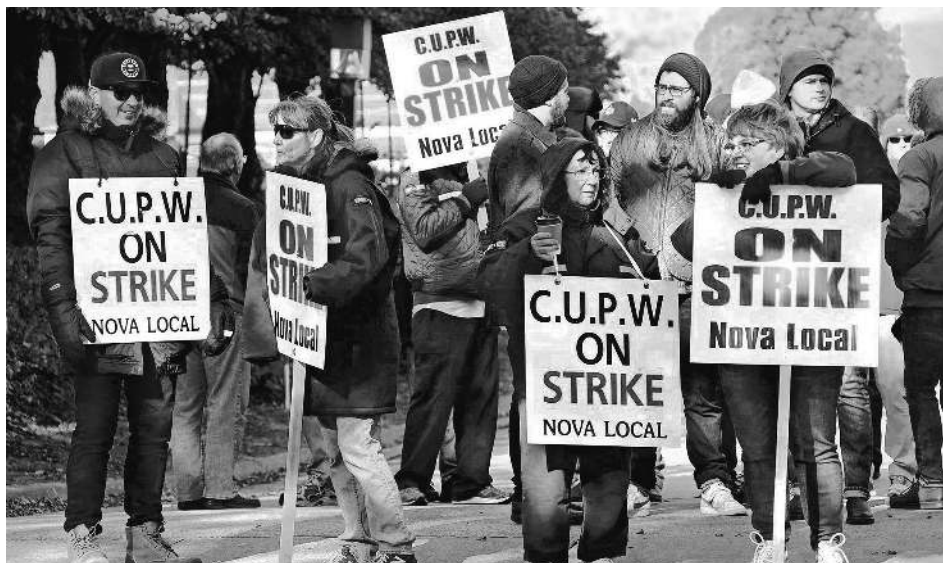
“To decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament—this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism, not only in parliamentary-constitutional monarchies, but also in the most democratic republics.”

The Conservatives are plenty reactionary, but there is no qualitative difference between them and the Liberals. These are the dual parties of Canadian capitalism, of which the cornerstone is allegiance to the British monarchy and the forcible

retention of the Québécois nation. Representing the same rapacious ruling class, these bourgeois parties carry out all manner of attacks on the workers and the poor, while enforcing the national subjugation of Quebec. Nor does the NDP merit the political support of workers. While the Liberals and Conservatives are outright

workers is a direct result of the giveback contracts, two-tier and multi-tier wage schemes and similar devices acceded to by these union misleaders.

One wing of the labour bureaucracy, typified by the leaders of Unifor, supports the class enemy directly by backing Trudeau, who they call a “partner with



Canadian Press

October 2018: Canadian Union of Postal Workers strike was broken by Trudeau’s Liberal Party government that imposed back-to-work legislation.

capitalist parties, the NDP is what Lenin called a bourgeois workers party: linked to the labour movement via the union bureaucracy but thoroughly pro-capitalist in outlook and program. While in opposition, the New Democrats pose duplicitously as friends of labour and the poor, while preaching class “peace” and chauvinist Canadian “unity.” And when they manage to attain power in one province or another, they carry out capitalism’s savage dictates.

With its strategic role in production, the working class is the only force in this society with the interest and capacity to sweep away the rule of capital. But the workers desperately need their own party: not a party of small-change reformism, but a binational multiethnic *revolutionary* party that champions the oppressed, including the independence of Quebec, and mobilizes the proletariat in struggle. While defending whatever gains have been wrested from the exploiters, such a party will have as its goal a workers revolution to overthrow the capitalist state—with its police, prisons, courts and army—and replace it with the *dictatorship of the proletariat*. The rule of the working class will pave the way to a socialist society of equality and abundance for all.

For a Class-Struggle Leadership of the Unions!

Underpinning the whole “fight the right” scam is the lie that workers and their exploiters share a common interest. In Canada as in other imperialist countries, the capitalists have cultivated the labour bureaucracy as a privileged social stratum which, while sitting atop the workers’ mass organizations, ensures their subordination to the enemy class. Like the New Democrats, the union tops serve as a transmission belt for bourgeois politics into the labour movement. Instead of much needed class-struggle mobilizations against capitalist attacks, they uphold a ruinous program of national patriotism (“defending Canadian values”) while channelling discontent into the ballot box. The enormous increase in the rate of exploitation endured by a generation of

workers.” Unifor president Jerry Dias worked alongside the Liberals in renegotiating NAFTA. And when GM announced that 2,600 Oshawa auto workers would lose their jobs by Christmas 2019, the union launched a vicious campaign against GM’s “choice to increase manufacturing in Mexico” and called for a boycott of Mexican-made GM cars. Such racist protectionism, pitting Canadian and U.S. workers against their class brothers and sisters in Mexico, is poison to class struggle!

Other labour bureaucrats strike a more “progressive” pose, but they too undermine labour’s struggle. After contract negotiations broke down late last year, leaders of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) staged limited, rotating strikes rather than mobilize the full power of the union on the picket lines. The premise was that Trudeau was more labour-friendly than the previous Tory regime of Stephen Harper, and so would be more favourable to the workers in their battle against the Canada Post crown corporation. Like the Tories, the Liberals responded with strike-breaking back-to-work legislation. CUPW responded by issuing a statement urging the Trudeau Liberals to act on their supposed “narrative of support for unions,” while diverting the struggle into the dead end of the bosses’ courts.



Reuters

Trump and Trudeau at G7 summit, August 25.

In Ontario, the labour tops have featured Liberal and NDP speakers at the mass protests against Ford’s onslaught. Some of the more left-talking labour leaders have evoked the Days of Action of the mid-1990s—a series of one-day local general strikes carried out in response to austerity attacks by an earlier Tory regime. These actions gave a taste of labour’s potential power. But, for the union tops they were about letting workers blow off steam and refurbishing the tarnished image of the NDP, which had been discredited by the anti-labour attacks of the Bob Rae government. Once this was accomplished, the Days of Action were called off in order to try and beat the Tories at the ballot box by electing Liberals or New Democrats.

The labour misleaders put the brakes on the class struggle in exchange for a few crumbs from the bosses’ table. Instead, what is needed is a *class-struggle leadership* of the unions, one that understands that the interests of the workers and their exploiters are counterposed and irreconcilable, and that the bourgeois state is an enemy of the working class, whatever party is currently at its helm.

The NDP and the Reformist Left

In a statement calling to back the NDP in the coming election, leaders of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) claim that “at its heart, and by its history, the NDP is Canada’s party of labour and working people.” Not so. From its inception nearly 60 years ago, the NDP has always served as a political tool of the bosses: diverting the workers’ discontent into safe channels while trying to inculcate them with “Canada first” chauvinism.

In B.C. [British Columbia] today, the NDP, which rules in an alliance with the capitalist Greens, is locked in bitter contract negotiations with the teachers union, notably over the issue of workload and class size. It’s no surprise that the New Democrats’ posturing of support to the teachers, made while in opposition, fell by the wayside once they took office. Strikebreaking by B.C. NDP governments stretches back to the 1970s. In 2000, they broke a strike by CUPE public school staff in Vancouver after a week. Five years later, while in opposition, they denounced a teachers strike as illegal and stood by the salary freeze imposed by a Liberal government.

Various reformist fake-Marxist outfits have, nonetheless, made fighting for a government of the English Canadian NDP their life’s work, while seeking to push the party to adopt more left-talking policies. With the federal party currently floundering in the polls, the Fightback group [affiliated with Alan Woods’s International Marxist Tendency] advises that “adopting a militant, socialist program can serve to rally Canadian workers, and stem the NDP’s bleeding” (fightback.ca, 8 May). Socialist Alternative [of the Committee for a Workers’ International Majority] beseeches the NDP to shift “from dull safety to a bold left-wing program” (socialistalternative.ca, 16 May). The NDP has never had a “socialist” program because they are opposed to socialism!

We of the Trotskyist League understand that the NDP is an *obstacle* to forging the kind of party that the working class needs. We fight to break the workers from the politics of social democracy, an integral part of the struggle to forge a workers party based on the Marxist understanding that, in order to achieve a society where those who labour rule, the capitalist state must be overturned by the working class. The reformists, in contrast, peddle illusions in the bourgeois state and its reformability; thus their politics con-

sist of oppositional activity completely defined by the framework of capitalist society. Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky sharply characterized this as “the actual training of the masses to become imbued with the inviolability of the bourgeois state” (*Lessons of October*, 1924).

For Quebec Independence!

Ardent defenders of “Canadian unity,” the New Democrats and labour bureaucrats are deeply hostile to the struggle for Quebec’s national liberation. The NDP, for example, endorsed the Liberals’ so-called Clarity Act, which effectively makes Quebec independence illegal. It is vital that the English Canadian working class oppose this chauvinist poison, which undermines the struggles of *all* workers by chaining them to their exploiters.

The pre-election period has seen another wave of chauvinism against Quebec and francophones elsewhere in the country—from Ford’s attacks on Franco-Ontarians to growing reaction against French-speaking Acadians in New Brunswick. Alberta’s Tory premier Jason Kenney launched a Quebec-bashing campaign over Quebec’s refusal to let a pipeline go through its territory, ranting about the billions of dollars Quebec supposedly receives from Alberta. But for decades the Liberals have been at the forefront of the repression of Quebec’s rights. For instance, it was Pierre Trudeau who ordered the military occupation of Quebec in 1970, aiming to crush growing nationalist agitation. The holy trinity of Trudeau the father, the son and their anti-Quebec spirit truly epitomizes national oppression by the vile Anglo-Canadian ruling class.

Canadian nationalism, encoded under the guise of “unity” and “progressive values,” is the retrograde social fabric that keeps Quebec under the boot and allows the capitalists to divide and rule, amassing huge profits from the exploitation of the workers, anglophone, francophone and immigrant alike. Canadian social democracy and its pseudo-socialist offspring are a product of this history. As we wrote in *Workers Tribune* No. 1 (Summer/Fall 2018):

“The Canadian bourgeoisie maintains its ideological hold on the workers of English Canada through sacrosanct Canadian chauvinist unity. This poison is loyally transmitted into the working class through the NDP social democrats and the union bureaucracy. The English Canadian proletariat must at all costs defend the rights of Quebec, and champion Quebec independence if it wants to break politically from its own bourgeoisie and lead a successful fight for its own liberation.”

—“République ouvrière and *Workers Tribune*: Raising the Banner of Leninism!”

Québécois national liberation is the Achilles heel of the Canadian ruling class; its realization would liberate the oppressed Québécois, greatly weaken the Canadian bourgeoisie and clear the road for the liberation of anglophone workers from their “own” exploiters. We fight to build a binational revolutionary workers party with the aim of two parties in two



Promotion of “green” capitalism was focus of international protests during September 20 Global Climate Strike. Washington, D.C. demonstration demands petty-bourgeois environmentalist “Green New Deal.”

states, inscribing on our banner: *Down with the monarchy! Independence for Quebec! For socialist revolution!*

“Green New Deal” = Pro-Capitalist Austerity

Amid the scramble for votes, the Liberals, NDP and Green Party are also vying to appear “progressive” on the issue of environmentalism. But environmentalism as a *bourgeois* ideology is hostile to the interests of the working class. This is most fully embodied in the Greens, an outright capitalist party that could be aptly dubbed “Conservatives with composters.”

All forms of environmentalism take as their starting point the acceptance of capitalist society, seeking to pressure the profiteering ruling class to reorient its investments. Unable to look beyond this framework, environmentalists can only promote liberal, idealist and even reactionary schemes at the expense of industrial and economic growth. Marxists are not indifferent to environmental degradation, but our concern is tempered by our dedication to the eradication of the scarcity and human misery imposed on the masses of the world by the brutal capitalist system.

The latest eco bandwagon is the “Green New Deal” (GND), a campaign to transform the economy by getting rid of the fossil fuel industry, coupled with government investments in “green jobs,” infrastructure and social services, all to be financed by illusory tax-the-rich schemes. The NDP’s election platform, a “New Deal for People,” includes many of the GND’s measures.

The GND is a manoeuvre to give environmentalism a worker-friendly spin by looking for converts in the union bureaucracy and trying to veil its aim of slashing entire industries. Workers in sectors like oil, natural gas, mining and auto form a significant portion of what is left of the unions in the private sector, and have immense potential social power. Pressuring the capitalists to transform these industries into “green jobs” is

utopian idealism, but more importantly it is a recipe for union-busting attacks. Already, huge numbers of workers in the “green economy” suffer from low wages, frequent injuries and no unions. Whatever the industry, it is vital for the labour movement to organize the unorganized.

This plan for a “green” capitalism intentionally evokes the New Deal of U.S. president Franklin Delano Roosevelt, which is hailed to this day by labour bureaucrats and fake-leftists. FDR’s New Deal, promulgated during the capitalist Great Depression of the 1930s, was aimed at refurbishing confidence in the decaying profit system. It was also an attempt to head off a growing proletarian socialist movement embodied in the waves of militant strikes that led to the forging of industrial unions.

The anti-worker premise of the GND was recently elaborated in an absurd article in *Jacobin*, the publication associated with the Democratic Socialists of America (which as a component part of the Democratic Party is committed to promoting the fortunes of U.S. imperialism). With the title “The Green New Deal Needs WWII-Scale Ambition” (3 March), these apostles of eco-austerity promote an imperialist war mobilization as a model!

Light years away from a revolutionary perspective, the reformist left has jumped on the GND bandwagon. Among the most

craven is Socialist Alternative, which wants to see “a bold socialist Green New Deal that would make Canada an example of clean energy and a world leader in green energy technology” (25 June). Thus, they embrace the same pro-capitalist framework as the mainstream environmentalists and union tops, albeit with a thin “socialist” veneer.

Like the many other ravages of the capitalist profit system, the very real dangers of climate change and environmental destruction can only be properly addressed with the reorganization of production on a rational basis under an *internationally planned socialist economy*. That requires a series of socialist revolutions, particularly in the imperialist countries that have dominated and despoiled the world for well over a century. As our comrades in the Spartacist League/U.S. wrote in a polemic against reformist advocates of “ecosocialism”:

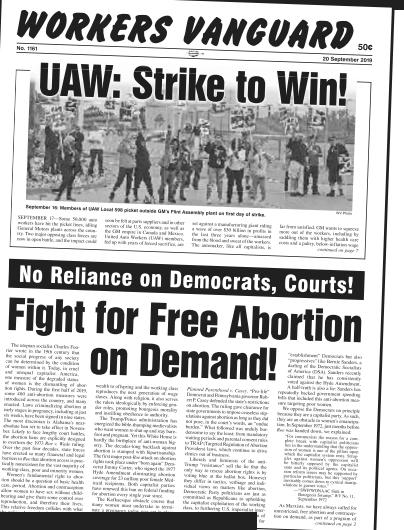
“When production is planned and directed at satisfying human need and not the profit motive, environmental considerations can be given their proper due. The vast expansion in knowledge, technologies and resources will put mankind in position to anticipate and prepare for whatever curveballs the natural world throws at it.”

—“John Bellamy Foster & Co.: ‘Ecosocialism’ Against Marxism,” *Workers Vanguard* Nos. 1032 and 1033, 18 October and 1 November 2013

There is a way forward! That is the authentic revolutionary program of Marxism, which we of the Trotskyist League in Quebec and Canada uphold alongside our comrades of the International Communist League. More than a hundred years ago, the Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky provided a beacon to the oppressed masses of the world by leading the first and only successful proletarian revolution. The October Revolution was the greatest act of emancipation in history, expropriating the capitalists and the landlords, liberating the myriad of oppressed nations in the tsarist empire and opening the road to the liberation of women. We proudly stand on this tradition and seek nothing less than to build the nucleus of a Leninist vanguard party, the essential tool to accomplish the revolutionary overthrow of the parasitic bourgeoisie and its replacement with a new ruling class: the workers of the world! ■

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WORKERS VANGUARD

Morality Cops Strike Again

Let Them Vape!

For the past month, the U.S. has been gripped by a health panic over so-called vaping-related illnesses. The government and media have seized on the deaths of over a dozen people and the hospitalization of hundreds who exhibited a variety of respiratory problems—still of unknown origin—to enact draconian measures against e-cigarettes and vaping products. On September 11, the Trump White House proposed a plan to ban flavored vapes nationwide. Shortly after, Democratic New York governor Andrew Cuomo ordered an emergency prohibition on flavored e-cigs and Massachusetts implemented a four-month total ban. With liberal Democrats leading the charge, authorities are trying to suck the public in through sheer fearmongering and anti-smoker bias, with no scientific evidence to back them up. Warning: this crusade is bad for your health.

Having banished cigarette smokers to huddled ghettos of shame and loathing, today the morality police turn their fire on e-cigarette users. Countless smokers who have quit tobacco by switching to far safer vaping now find themselves hounded by the same puritanical busybodies who recoil at the prospect of sin without punishment. Underscoring the cruelty of this campaign, flavored vapes have been specially targeted. For many ex-smokers, the (non-tobacco) flavors are crucial to sticking with their electronic nicotine hits. Limiting the choice to tobacco-flavor vapes or banning e-cigs altogether will no doubt push people away from an enjoyable, effective alternative and drive them back to a pack or two a day.

Moreover, outlawing vaping products won't stop people from vaping. It will only endanger vapers by encouraging them to buy on the black market, which, according to health officials, is one of the possible culprits for the current spate of lung illnesses. To the extent that scientists have established any connection to vaping products, it is to counterfeit "dank vapes" or other bootleg products from street vendors that contain THC and are likely contaminated with toxins. The hysteria against vaping sure doesn't help get to the bottom of what's actually causing the illnesses. At the same time, pounding on the purported link between lung illnesses and THC, the fun component of marijuana, will only fuel prejudice against pot.

It is true that long-term effects of e-cigs cannot yet be known since they have only been around for a little more than a decade. But as reported in a 2016 study by Britain's Royal College of Physicians, those effects are "unlikely to exceed 5% of those associated with smoked tobacco products, and may well be substantially lower than this figure." This past February, Public Health England, a government body, reinforced that conclusion and strongly recommended e-cigs as a substitute for cigarettes.

There are over ten million adult e-cig



Steve Burns/WCBS880

NYC, September 17: Protest against Governor Andrew Cuomo's state ban on flavored vapes. Last month, a number of states and cities implemented or proposed bans on vaping products.

users in the U.S. alone (and at least four times that number globally). Supposing there really have been more than 800 lung injuries related to vaping, it would still be far safer than riding in a car. Even when products like actual cigarettes are known to be dangerous, we think the capitalist government should keep its dirty hands off those who use them. People have the right to their own choices regarding their bodies, habits and lifestyles. We oppose all laws against so-called "crimes without victims"—drugs, gambling, prostitution, etc. Individuals ought to be able to read, eat, drink, smoke and enjoy whatever consensual sexual activities they want without the cops and courts butting in.

No moral panic is complete in this country if it doesn't invoke the cry: "Think of the children!" Talk of a teenage vaping "epidemic" is merely a backhanded way to attack the rights of everyone. Take, for example, all the noise that vaping may be a "gateway" drug to smoking or other behavior deemed socially "deviant." Or, as the government's National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine put it in a 2018 report on the alleged public health consequences of e-cigs: "After successfully engaging in one risky act (i.e., vaping), courage to engage in other risky acts (i.e., smoking) may build." In fact, figures show that as vaping has increased among youth, cigarette smoking has dropped sharply. The real point is that with a growing vaping subculture among teenagers (not to mention millennials), the powers that be worry that this activity falls outside the box of their puritanical social norms.

Anti-vapers often focus on the fact that nicotine, delivered by whatever mecha-

nism (traditional cigarette, vape, chaw, etc.), is addictive. Yes, it is. But people have the right to put addictive substances in their bodies—including the most common addictive substance, caffeine. What drives the modern-day Carrie Nations crazy is not that vaping is dangerous but, on the contrary, that it allows a gratifying chemical to be delivered in a relatively safe manner. In a society where most have to struggle mightily to house and feed their families, these churlish prigs want to deny workers and youth even the small comforts or stress-relievers available to them.

The same capitalist rulers who rail against evils like addiction have nothing but contempt for the health and welfare of the masses—the poor and the homeless; the tens of thousands without access to clean water in ex-industrial wastelands like Flint; workers who toil at back-breaking, dangerous jobs their whole lives only to find health and retirement benefits ripped away by bosses slashing "excess costs." To meet the real health needs of the population, the labor movement should be in the forefront of the fight for socialized medicine—for quality medical care free at the point of delivery! That includes treatment for addiction for those who want it.

The anti-vaping frenzy is the latest example of the periodic "moral rearmament" campaigns pushed by the American rulers in order to instill fear and subservience in those they exploit and oppress, and to extend the reach of the state into our private lives. In this racist capitalist society, it's the workers, black people and all

the oppressed who bear the brunt of government intrusion. And more often than not, it's the liberal wing of the capitalist establishment that leads the charge. In June, the liberal mecca of San Francisco, where there's an app for everything except combating homelessness (and they've built police robots to "deal with" homeless people), was the first to ban all vape products. And in Congress, the Democratic Party's Rashida Tlaib (Democratic Socialists of America), railing at a looming vapeocalypse, lashed out at a witness who testified during a September 24 hearing that e-cigarettes were a "health miracle" that had helped her quit smoking. Tlaib, who suggested the woman was a "conspiracy theorist," had moments before touted the truly ludicrous notion that secondhand smoke was "worse than directly smoking cigarettes."

Karl Marx, who a century and a half ago laid bare the workings of this vicious capitalist system, wrote concerning English liquor laws: "The classical saints of Christianity mortified their body for the salvation of the souls of the masses; the modern educated saints mortify the bodies of the masses for the salvation of their own souls." Like Marx, we draw the conclusion that only the victory of proletarian revolution and the establishment of workers rule on a world scale will put an end to the hideous exploitation and oppression of the working and impoverished masses. In a rational society organized around a collectivized economy, safer drugs and medicines would be by-products of qualitative scientific and technical advancement. Far from restricting personal rights, this social order would mark the beginning of human freedom, as people would finally have the time, resources and knowledge to develop their talents, and pleasures, in ways unimaginable to us today. ■



John Tenniel

Caterpillar to Alice: "There is insufficient evidence that vaping leads to drastic changes in size."