Democrats, Republicans: Enemies of Labor, Blacks

This summer’s Republican National Convention in Philadelphia and Democratic National Convention (DNC) in Los Angeles, although separated geographically by thousands of miles, were virtually identical political circuses. Both capitalist parties converged on a right-wing “center” of welfare-slashing, the death penalty, fundamentalist “morality” and increased police repression at home and imperialist war and intervention abroad.

The Republican ticket consists of the nation’s leading executioner, Texas governor George W. Bush, and former Pentagon war chief Richard Cheney, who as a Congressman opposed freedom for imprisoned South African black leader Nelson Mandela in the 1980s. The Republican leaders tried to give this “compassionate conserva­tism” an aura of ethnic “diver­sity” and “outreach” by staging what was rightly perceived by minorities as a humiliating “minstrel show.”

The Democratic Party shifted further toward the right than the Clinton/Gore candidacies in 1992 and 1996. Gore even moved to play down the one significant policy difference between the two parties—the Democrats’ support to abortion rights—by inviting Los Angeles archbishop Roger Mahoney to give an invocation in which he predictably condemned abortion.

It would have been difficult for Gore to pick a running mate more insulting to minorities than Connecticut Senator Joseph Lieberman. A cofounder along with Clinton and Gore of the “moderate” Democratic Leadership Council which dumped the party’s cynical posture toward “special interests”—i.e., trade unions and minorities—Lieberman is an ally of right­wing Republican William Bennett in the crusade against “sex and violence” in the media, has repeatedly opposed affirmative action for blacks and Latinos, supports school voucher programs aimed at gutting public education and was the most prominent Democrat at the head of the pack howling over Clinton’s consensual sexual affair with a White House intern.

Even more so than in the past, the recent conventions graphically demon­strate the true nature of bourgeoisie elec­toral politics as expressed over 80 years ago by V.I. Lenin, leader of the Russian October Revolution of 1917, in The State and Revolution:

“It is decisive over every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament—that is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarianism, not only in parliamentary-constitutional monarchies, but also in the most democratic republics.”

The wealth of this country is over­whelmingly concentrated in less than 1 percent of the population, whose property and profits derive from the exploitation of those who labor. This capitalist class runs the Republican and Democratic parties, whose main difference is not what they do but how they do it. The Republicans make no bones about being the party of “big business” in viciously going after the working class, blacks, immigrants and the poor. The Democrats lie and do the same thing. America is ruled by the dictator­ship of a single class, the bourgeoisie. The façade of democracy is designed to obscure the fact that the capitalist state is an instrument of organized crime and violence—consisting at its core of the cops, the military, the courts and the prisons—for maintain­ing capitalist property and prof­its through the suppression of the working class and the oppressed.

Outside the DNC, the few thousand predominantly white, middle-class protesters got something of a taste of the cop terror which is the daily reality in the inner cities. The notorious LAPD, which was caught on videotape beating black motorist Rodney King to within an inch of his life in 1991 and is now under investigation for running a systematic frame-up and assassination machine, buzzed the protesters with helicopter gunships, sprayed them with pepper gas and fired rubber bullets at them. Praising the work of the LAPD, a top Gore aide said, “We knew what they were doing, and we supported them.” In Philadelphia, only weeks before the Republican conven­tion opened, cops were videotaped pummeling a black man who they shot five times. Pro­testers swept off by the police dragnet outside the convention were thrown into jail, some held on bail of up to $1 million for exercising their First Amendment rights of assembly and free expression.

The massive cop mobilizations against the relatively small protests in Philly and L.A. are a measure of the bourgeoisie’s fear that any eruption of social discontent could get out of hand. Having accrued fabulous wealth over the past two decades through slashing the living standards of working people and dismantling social programs, the bourgeoisie is determined to crush the people through parliament in order to maintain its grip on capitalist property and profits.
In the decade that Iraq has suffered under a starvation blockade, imposed by the U.S. imperialists in August 1990 under the auspices of the United Nations, that country has been reduced to an impoverished and disease-ravaged hell. Essential foods and medicines are unavailable or priced out of reach, the country's infrastructure—already largely destroyed in the U.S.-led Persian Gulf War in 1991—is almost nonfunctional, and health care is practically unavailable for lack of medicines and equipment. For lack of medicines and equipment, the imperialists are carrying out a deliberate campaign of mass murder. The devastation of Iraq has been compounded by repeated imperialist terror-bombing campaigns carried out since August 1990. Targeting heavily populated areas supposedly containing military sites, these raids have destroyed schools, hospitals and housing. Since December 1998, when the U.S. and its British ally under Labour prime minister Tony Blair stepped up the savage aerial war, some 300 civilians have been killed and 900 wounded. After a pause this summer, the almost daily bombing raids were renewed this month as U.S. and British warplanes destroyed, among other targets, a warehouse used for storing food obtained under the UN's extortionate "oil for food" program.

The devastation of Iraq has been described by the deadly effects of the sanctions against Iraq.

TheLondon Economist(8 April) described the deadly effects of the sanctions against Iraq:

"Iraq's health services, like its schools, were once the best in the region. Now most hospital lifts have ceased to function, so trauma patients have to be carried up and down the stairs... Whole wards of children with leukaemia go untreated, since the different drugs needed to treat them are rarely available at the same time. The senior gynaecologist explains that 90% of the pregnant women he cares for are anemic because of malnutrition. Diseases such as cholera and typhoid, which had been eradicated before 1990, have reappeared."

The consequences of the sanctions are so harsh that several senior UN officials responsible for implementing them have resigned, including former Assistant Secretary-General Denis Halliday who quit last year as relief coordinator in Iraq and labeled the blockade "a policy that satisfies the definition of genocide" (see "Down With Starvation Blockade and Bombing of Iraq!" World No. 735, May).

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Labor Reformists Scramble IGs

Like much of the fake left, the tiny Internationalist Group (IG) wants to exploit widespread support for the fight of its mainly white petty-bourgeois youth who protests in Seattle and Washington, clear Abu-Jamal can powerfully cut across this article, the IG intones:

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But now, a year later, the IG admits, albeit

McWilliams made a speech landing the ILWU’s refusal to load scrap iron to Japan in 1938, and Norden’s man Heyman, speaking later from the same platform, said nothing about McWilliams. The IG praised the ILWU’s “long history of taking stands for social justice.” Of course, Heyman is a member of the pro-Democratic Party “new trial” fascist socialists. Norden and the IG, in turn, deep-sixed any mention of McWilliams’ and Heyman’s speeches.

Dumping Japanese iron in 1938 was a chauvinist act of support for American imperialism’s war mobilization to dominate the Pacific. It began with trade war and economic boycotts, and ended only when the Japanese surrendered because the US dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Let’s be clear about this: McWilliams, in the service of his capitalist masters and aided by his chauvinist act of support for American imperialism’s war mobilization to dominate the Pacific.

In their efforts to defend their favorite American “class struggle” union fraud, Norden’s IG and Heyman’s over support for McWilliams in the recent ILWU elections. In a June 15 letter Heyman wrote to the Journal of Commerce and posted on the Internet, he declared: “Defend ILWU’s Proud Record—Vote for McWilliams.”

As we wrote last year: “In Heyman, Norden sees a kindred spirit. Norden and his clot broke with us when we moved to break fraternal relations with a group that has proven to be more interested in building a real workers party in a co-redded state than in building the revolutionary party. Why? The ILWU lobbies by building trade-unionist opportunities to the DC’s grips. And Norden and the IG has spent much of the last three years trying to cover up for the fact that this Brazilian group—the Partido Comunista da Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (PQ), has formed a new US-based workers union in Volta Redonda through the capitalist courts three times as part of a sagging fight for control of the union against a militantly supplied bureaucrat faction.”

In its own furtive way, the IG has confirmed our basic point that the LAC’s strategy is to rely on the bourgeois state and the Democrats—and that the ILU abandoned the Trotskyist program for lawyers in order to be lawyers for opportunism.

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The Near East is marked by abject poverty, benighted enslavement of women, the dispossession of the Palestinian people by Israel and the oppression of numerous other national minorities by Arab and Iranian nationalist regimes. This legacy of social backwardness and oppression is reinforced by the domination of the region by the imperialist powers. Ongoing imperialist intrigues and depredations like the U.S./British terror bombing of Iraq are impelled by a strategic concern: control of the supply of oil, the source of more than 40 percent of the world’s energy. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the sheikdoms of the Arabian peninsula hold three-quarters of the world’s proven oil reserves. Ever since the 1920s, control over the Persian Gulf oilfields has given American and British imperialism an enormous strategic advantage over their main rivals, Germany and Japan.

The development of the oil industry has also led to the creation of a proletariat in the region whose hands lies the power to lead all of the oppressed in revolutionary struggle against imperialism and subjugation. Repeatedly betrayed by left-talking petty-bourgeois nationalists and Stalinists andchauffying under brutal bourgeois regimes, many anti-imperialist youth and the most downtrodden layers of the masses have turned to the foes’ gold of Islamic fundamentalism. But in the 1950s, this region was a hotbed of revolutionary working-class struggles which offered a real prospect for ending imperialism’s Cold War against the Soviet Union. Nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil monopoly had impelled the country on a collision course with the imperialists, leading to a deepening revolutionary crisis. The Times commented: ‘As anti-royalism spread to the hands of a fever pitch in Washington, and officials were worried that Iran might fall under the sway of the Soviet Union.’

For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!

Teheran, 1953: Revolutionary working-class upsurge which swept Iran was channelled by Stalinists into support for “progressive” bourgeoisie, then crushed by Iranian military backed by CIA.

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Near East, 1950s
Permanent Revolution vs. Bourgeois Nationalism

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Suni and Shi'i Muslims. In Algeria, the predominantly Arab ruling class lords it over the Berber national minority; in mainly Muslim Egypt, the Coptic Christian minority is hounded and persecuted, particularly by Islamic fundamentalists. The Kurdish nation is carved up among and oppressed by four capitalist states—Syria, Iraq, Iran and Turkey. The oppression of women, symbolized by the veil, remains deeply rooted in Iran and throughout the Arab world. Laws governing personal status are largely based on the sharia (Islamic law), which sanctions polygamy, grants husbands the right to divorce almost at will and subjects women to the “authority” of their fathers and husbands. Especially in rural areas, the condition of women remains one of medieval backwardness. In Egypt, fully 60 percent of all women are illiterate.

At the same time, cellular phones and computers are commonplace items for Cairo professionals, while large numbers of Egyptian workers are concentrated in modern, foreign-owned auto assembly plants. Meanwhile, barefoot villagers in the Nile valley tend their fields with tools that have scarcely evolved since the age of the pharaohs. Highly trained Iranian and Iraqi oil workers, with decades of trade-union and communist traditions behind them, find themselves in harsher and more brutal working conditions. Such conditions of combined and uneven development, in which modern industry and a powerful industrial proletariat have been superimposed on largely peasant-based societies, prevailed in Russia as well as on the shores of the Bolshevik Revolution. Though itself an imperialist power, Russia, unlike the more advanced capitalist countries of West Europe, had not had a bourgeois-democratic revolution and remained mired in social and economic backwardness. Emerging late in the capitalist era, the Russian bourgeoisie was dependent on Western capital and all the more vulnerable for its weakness. The tsarist autocracy ruled over a vast prison house of peoples and a mass of impoverished peasants. At the same time, capitalist investment had given rise to a small but combative industrial working class, concentrated in modern large-scale industry, which showed its power in the 1905 Revolution.

Marx and Engels first raised the “revolution in permanence” in an 1850 “Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League,” after the bourgeois genie had gone over to the side of the old reactionary classes against the revolutionary proletariat. They hailed the German democratic revolution of 1848. It was this document that inspired Leon Trotsky, writing at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, to advance the theory and program of permanent revolution, stressing that the anti-imperialist, political democracy and the other tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia could not be realized by the weak and dependent bourgeoisie, which feared the proletariat far too much to mobilize the worker and peasant masses for an

These two classes can be realized in no other way than through an irreconcilable struggle for power, of the democratic-liberal bourgeoisie...The dictatorship of the proletariat which has arisen to power as the leader of the democratic revolution is inevitably and very quickly confronted with tasks, the fulfilment of which is bound with deep ironies in the rights of bourgeois property...The democratic revolution grows over directly into the socialist revolution and thereby becomes a permanent revolution...In a country where the proletariat has power in its hands as the result of the democratic revolution, the subsequent fate of the dictatorship and social democracy depends on the labor movement and whether it has mastered and not so much upon the national productive forces as upon the tasks of the international socialist revolution...The Permanent Revolution (1929); reprinted in The Permanent Revolution: Results and Prospects (1969)

Leon Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution was confirmed by Stalin’s “stagist” strategy in 1925-27 Chinese Revolution led to bloody defeat.

The October Revolution was a confirmation of permanent revolution. Though Lenin came to agree with the programmatic conclusion of Trotsky’s analysis only on the eve of the revolution, he had forged the Bolshevik Party as an instrument for the proletarian seizure of power through just such an irreconcilable struggle against all varieties of bourgeois nationalism and liberalism, not least against the Menshevik opportunists who stood in the way of the October Revolution. But the parties which stood at the head of the Iranian and Iraqi workers in the 1930s and 1940s were not principally engaged in an irreconcilable struggle on proletarian internationalism and revolutionary opposition to bourgeois nationalism. The Stalinist bureaucracy which

...out of the 1920s... by the time Communist parties re-emerged in those countries beginning in the mid-1930s, the International had long since ceased to be an instrument for world socialist revolution. The Stalinist “anti-imperialist” strategy, which had been a feature of the Bolshevik Revolution, and its extension to the Near East was as yet small and undeveloped, and the Communist parties were politically and ideologically formed in the service of the triumph of capitalist restoration of capitalism in East Europe and the former Soviet Union. But just when the Indonesian proletarian revolution was beginning in the 1930s after three decades of bloody, anti-Communist military dictatorship, the workers of the Near East will again embark on revolutionary struggle against their imperial overlords and domestic capitalist exploiters. The key task is the construction of Leninist-Trotskist parties committed to the principles of proletarian internationalism and the program of permanent revolution. To achieve this task it is necessary that the young generation of worker and peasant intellectuals in the Near East learn the lessons of past revolutionary struggles which were betrayed by Stalinism and crushed by Arab bourgeois nationalism.

Stalinist Degeneration of the Communist International

The Russian October Revolution of 1917 had an enormous impact on the Near East. With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and its defeat in World War I, the region was carved up between the British and French imperialists. The Bolshevist Revolution and its extension to largely Muslim Central Asia in the course of the bloody three-year Civil War against the imperialists and counter-revolutionary armies, triggered a series of national revolts and popular uprisings in the countries occupied by British military forces from Egypt through the Fertile Crescent to Iran. An Egyptian observer spoke of the “news of success or victory by the Bolsheviks” in the Russian Civil War “seems to produce a pang of joy and content among all classes of Egyptians” (quoted in Hanna Batatu, The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq (1978)).

In this climate of social upheaval, Communist parties were formed in Tur­key, Egypt, Lebanon and Palestine (Iran). However, as throughout the colo­nial world, the workers of the Near East was as yet small and undeveloped, and the Communist parties were politi­cally and ideologically formed in the service of the triumph of capitalist restoration of capitalism in East Europe and the former Soviet Union. But just when the Indonesian proletarian revolution was beginning in the 1930s after three decades of bloody, anti-Communist military dictatorship, the workers of the Near East will again embark on revolutionary struggle against their imperial overlords and domestic capitalist exploiters. The key task is the construction of Leninist-Trotskist parties committed to the principles of proletarian internationalism and the program of permanent revolution. To achieve this task it is necessary that the young generation of worker and peasant intellectuals in the Near East learn the lessons of past revolutionary struggles which were betrayed by Stalinism and crushed by Arab bourgeois nationalism.
Near East...

(continued from page 5)

helping to restabilize the shattered bour­geois order in West Europe. In Yugosla­vian, and then in China in 1949, the victory of indigenous Stalinist-led peasant-bad guerrilla forces led to the creation of bureaucratically deformed worker-states, like those formed under Soviet occupa­tion in East Europe (see “Yugoslavia, East Europe and the Fourth International, The Evolution of Potechism,” Prometheus Research Series No. 4 [May 1993]).

It was only the Trotskyist Fourth International that pursued the proletarian internationalist line carried out by Lenin’s Bolsheviks in World War I: revo­lutionary defamiliarization against all the impe­rialist governments. For Britain, France, and the U.S. no less than for Germany, Italy and Japan. World War II was a con­flict for division of the world’s markets, sources of raw materials and cheap labor, as had been the case in World War I. The Trotskyists continued to fight for liberation of the colonies from imperial­ism. Recognizing that the Soviet Union, though bureaucratically degraded, re­mained a workers state based on collectiv­ized property, the Trotskyists called for the extension of the Russian workers state to non-Russian states. At the same time, we expected the U.S. and Britain to treacherously destroy the Stalinist bureaucracy through reactionary internationalism in the 1948 War

The 1948 War

World War II radically altered the face of the Near East. The U.S., emerging as hegemonic imperialist power, moved to replace British and French domination in the region. The weakening of the West European imperialist powers, combined with the radicalization of the colonial masses, led to the creation of a series of independent states. The working class, enormously strengthened by the development of regional industry to replace the colonial economy, confronted indigenous bourgeois state powers. The Soviet victory over Nazi Germany, and the Kremlin’s more milit­ant posture in response to the onset of the imperialist Cold War, greatly enhanced the Trotskyist International’s strength in the region. In Yugoslavia in East Europe (see “European Internationalism,” Prometheus Research Series No. 4 [May 1993])

The collapse of imperialist occupation in the region, the discred­ting of the Zionist state of Israel by the Brit­ish withdrawal from Palestine, and the emergence of the independent states. The Soviet bureaucracy did an about-face and sup­ported the imperialist partition of Palest­ine and the emergence of the Zionist state. Designed as a maneuver against British and Arab nationalism, the partition was largely intended to drive out from Palestine the large, numerically overwhelm­ing Jewish population from the Arab countries to form the basis of the new, Jewish state of Israel. The partition and its consequences were condemned by the world’s proletariat.

The 1948 War had a profound and continuing impact. The expulsion of nearly a million Arabs from Palestine—most of them to surround refugee camps where they and their descendants live to this day—was accompanied by a mass migra­tion of the so-called Oriental or Sephar­dic Jewish population from the Arab countries to Israel, encouraged by both the Arab regimes and the Zionists.

Armed workers militia in Shanghai, 1927 (left). Slaughter of Communists by Chiang Kai-shek’s nationalist forces following defeat of revolution. Second stage of "two-stage revolution" is massacre of workers.

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A postwar development of particular importance was the growing recognition of the Zionist state of Israel with the Brit­ish withdrawal from Palestine. Having courted and betrayed Arab nationalism for nearly two decades, the Soviet bureaucracy did an about-face and sup­ported the imperialist partition of Palest­ine and the emergence of the Zionist state. Designed as a maneuver against British and Arab nationalism, the partition was largely intended to drive out from Palestine the large, numerically overwhelm­ing Jewish population from the Arab countries to form the basis of the new, Jewish state of Israel. The partition and its consequences were condemned by the world’s proletariat.

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Arab defeat thoroughly discredited the imperialist partition of Pales­tine, the land of the Hebrew-speaking people. When national self-determination was achieved, the Hebrew-speaking workers and auxiliaries from the domi­nant new Jewish state. Designed as a maneuver against British and Arab nationalism, the partition was largely intended to drive out from Palestine the large, numerically overwhelm­ing Jewish population from the Arab countries to form the basis of the new, Jewish state of Israel. The partition and its consequences were condemned by the world’s proletariat.

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A postwar development of particular importance was the growing recognition of the Zionist state of Israel with the Brit­ish withdrawal from Palestine. Having courted and betrayed Arab nationalism for nearly two decades, the Soviet bureaucracy did an about-face and sup­ported the imperialist partition of Palest­ine and the emergence of the Zionist state. Designed as a maneuver against British and Arab nationalism, the partition was largely intended to drive out from Palestine the large, numerically overwhelm­ing Jewish population from the Arab countries to form the basis of the new, Jewish state of Israel. The partition and its consequences were condemned by the world’s proletariat.

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The upsurge of class struggle in Egypt at the close of World War II, while not reaching the levels of Iran and Iraq, nev­ertheless allowed the young Communist party to become the leading political force in the Egyptian labor movement.

In January 1951, an armed clash between British and Egyptian forces in the Canal Zone touched off rioting in Cairo in which much of the downtown commercial district was burned down. With the British government totally discredited and virtually paralyzed, the country was increasingly polarized between the rap­idly growing Muslim Brotherhood and the Communists. Student members of the Muslim Brotherhood carried out military training at the universities, driving around campuses in military jeeps and spraying machine-gun fire in the air to intimidate their opponents.

The DMNL also had a military section, but its work consisted of providing sup­port for Nasser’s Free Officers Move­ment, a heterogeneous coalition of anti­British military including Muslim Brothers,

continued on page 14

WORKERS VANGUARD
Los Angeles Spartacist League/Spartacus Youth Club on August 12 and distributed at the protests during the Democratic National Convention. "Whites Only." "Coloreds Only." These were the watchwords of the hideous oppression of blacks in the Jim Crow South—a racist society of "separate and unequal" which was enforced by systematic police repression backed up by lynching mobs. Grotesquely such segregationist practices have appeared at the Convergence Center run by the Direct Action Network and the D2KLA Network, which are organizing the protests at the Democratic National Convention (DNC) in Los Angeles.

On August 10, a dark-skinned comrade of the Spartacus Youth Club, youth group of the revolutionary Marxist Spartacist League, was told to leave an "Anti-Racist Workshop" because the meeting was "for white people." We spoke to people throughout the Center, condemning the Jim Crow policy of segregating whites and "people of color." We learned that a white woman from South Africa, recalling her experience with racist apartheid, felt uncomfortable and left the meeting. And at the previous night's "people of color only" workshop, Latino youth were angry at the segregationist policy. Now, D2KLA organizers have banned us Spartacists from the Convergence Center altogether for agitating against this disgusting policy of racial exclusion.

The following leaflet was issued by the Los Angeles Spartacist League/Spartacus Youth Club on August 12 and distributed at the protests during the Democratic National Convention.

**SYC Protests Exclusion**

**"Whites Only" at L.A. Rad-Lib Workshop**

The liberal organizers of the DNC protests look to pressure the Democratic Party (the party which administered Jim Crow in the South) to be more "human" to the peoples of the Third World and to put "people before profits" at home. Since they promote the view that U.S. imperialism and its parties can be the agency for "justice" and "human rights," they not only can't challenge racist American capitalism but end up mimicking the racist and ethnic divisions in society. Thus our comrade was told that he couldn't attend their workshop because white people needed a "safe place" to discuss racism! Is it any wonder that the "spirit of Seattle" protests have maintained a mainly white, middle-class composition?

The bipartisan abolition of welfare, the gunning down of Amadou Diallo in a hail of 41 bullets, the hundreds of thousands of black men consigned to prison hellholes are the bitter daily expression of the fact that black oppression is rooted in the very foundation of American capitalism. Racism is produced not by the white population of all social classes as the liberals claim, but centrally through the policies of the ruling class forcibly segregating blacks at the bottom of society. But the oppression of black people as a race-color caste also makes the struggle for black equality a powerful potential lever for social revolution. That fight must be linked to the social power of the working class, of which blacks are a strategic component, through a multiracial revolutionary workers party fighting to sweep away the entire system in which racial oppression is rooted. This program of revolutionary internationalism is the only road forward. Finish the Civil War! For black liberation through socialist revolution!

We Spartacists aren't here to beg the capitalist Democratic Party to be "more responsive" to the needs of working people and the oppressed. Nor are we here to huddle the vote for Ralph Nader, whose candidacy for the capitalist Green Party is, by Nader's own admission, "anti-racist." Rather, we want to win those youth who want to fight against racism, exploitation and war to the perspective of socialist revolution. The exclusion of our comrades by the liberal "anti-racists" organizing the workshop and our exclusion from the Convergence Center altogether flow from the politics of the "spirit of Seattle," which combined protectionism, China-bashing and the revolting promotion of U.S. imperialism as a vehicle for bringing aid to the world's downtrodden.

The oppression of the world's masses is not caused by "supranational" agencies like the WTO or IMF but by imperialism, which is the highest stage of capitalism where imperialists powers compete against each other over who gets to loot the rest of the world. The myth of "globalism" is designed to obscure the central role of U.S. imperialism as the primary source of poverty, war and oppression around the globe. The struggle against exploitation and racial oppression requires the destruction of capitalist rule through international socialist revolution. Defeat U.S. imperialism through workers revolution!

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25 AUGUST 2000

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From Bourgeois Idealism to "Green Radicalism"

The following is an edited transcript of a class given by Spartacist League Central Committee member Joseph Seymour to the New York Spartacus Youth Club on July 22.

What I want to try to do here is discuss those ideas and attitudes of classical anarchism which we encounter among the Green radicals and left-liberals; that those who call themselves anarchists, but who are not, American radical youth today, not only do not have any revolutionary experience of the far more radical expression of the left prior to Marx was Jean Jacques Rousseau, who summed up his political philosophy as "man is naturally good; it is only by institution that he becomes evil." This discourse on the origin and foundations of inequality among men was the single most important intellectual influence on generations of revolutionaries, from the Jacobins of the French Revolution through the various radicals of early 19th-century Europe to most of the "Red 48ers" in the 1848 Revolution. The central premise of Rousseau is that there is in the human species a natural—though very imperfect—mannishness that is social and historically conditioned but natural—in some fundamental and empathy with the sufferings of others of that species.

The most ambitious attempt to provide a sort of scientific substantiation for this view—which could be called "species solidarity"—was made by Peter Kropotkin, in a book called Mutual Aid, which was considered the authoritative statement of anarchism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The first two chapters are devoted to mutual aid among animals, that is, nonhuman animals. To give you a flavor of the argument (I am not making this up, I am not that creative)

"As to the big Mollusca crab (Limulus), I was struck (in 1852, at the Brighton Aquarium) with the extent of mutual assistance which these cephalopod animals are capable of bestowing upon a comrade in case of need. One of them had fallen upon its back as a result of injury to its right valve, and its heavy saucepan-like carapace prevented it from regaining its natural position... Its comrades came to the rescue, and for one day and a half I watched how they endeavored to help their fellow-prisoner."

Now I think, just by reading that, one can easily see the connection with Green Anarchism.

The very close family resemblance between classical anarchism, especially in its Kropotkinian version, and Green radicalism is personified by the career of Murray Bookchin. In the 1960s and '70s, Bookchin was the pre-eminent anarchist intellectual in the United States, the most significant influence in American left politics and the intellectual foundation for the more radical elements of the New左 Chomsky today. In fact, Bookchin was even more aggressively anti-Marxist than Chomsky, because "Marxism-Leninism..."
was then fashionable. But at some point, Bookchin shifted over to the more fashionably doctrinal green radicalism, which ran counter to sociology. But he didn't change his worldview. It's the same worldview, just expressed slightly differently.

Implicit in all forms of green radicalism is that all people should basically agree to the future of humanity and other species, if you could convince people that automobiles are harmful to the environment and harmful to the future of humanity and other species, they'll presumably give up automobiles.

First, consider that modern industrial society is built around the automobile, that you can't get to work without it in any way.

If man is naturally good, naturally empathetic, as Rousseau argued, how do we get war, slavery, the conquest and subjugation of one people by another, class exploitation, poverty, torture, the whole kit and caboodle? Well, Rousseau's answer is that this comes from the institution of private property, which was for Rousseau basically "a bad idea." In his Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, he writes:

"The very man who, having enclosed a piece of land, thought of 'This is mine' and from that moment, to everyone who wants to believe him, was the true founder of civil society. How many crimes, wars, murders, how many vices, the human race would have been spared if someone had pulled up the stakes and filled in the ditch and cried out to his fellow men: Beware of listening to this impostor. You are lost if you forget that the fruits of the earth belong to everyone and that the earth itself belongs to no one!"

And Rousseau goes on to attribute all malignant and ignorant emotions and attitudes to property and resiling inequality:

"Insatiable ambition, the thirst of raising their respective fortunes, not so much from real want as from the then-Trotskyist Felix Morrow who called 'Anarchism,' the pioneer advocate of women's rights. Interestingly, Mary Wolstonecraft married William Godwin. They had a daughter, also named Mary, who later married another famous English radical, the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. Mary Wolstonecraft Shelley is also famous in her own right, as the author of the novel Frankenstein.

Godwin made it very clear that his conception of anarchism was simply a shifting of what Rousseau had placed in the distant past, in the Golden Age, into the immediate future. Thus he wrote:

"It was however by a very slight mistake that he missed the opposite opinion which in time, as the fact of human equality was more and more expected, and which preceded government and laws instead of the period that may possibly follow upon their abolition."

Marxism vs. Anarchism

Now at this point I want to elaborate on an aspect of the doctrine that is not generally appreciated, including among people who call themselves anarchists, as it shares a fundamental point of convergence with liberalism in opposition to Marxism. Anarchism really is a doctrine of class collaboration. In the first part of the anarchism series ("Marxism vs. Anarchism. The Origins of Anarchism," Vol. VI, No. 3. Winter 1996), I quoted from the then-Trotskyist Felix Morrow who explained that when the anarchists entered the capitalist Popular Front government during the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s, at a time when this seemed to be a violent violation of their principles, and many anarchists denounced them for it. But at a higher level, it was consistent with their principles, because they had always believed that following the revolution the capitalist class would too undergo a moral regeneration and work for the betterment of humanity.

Bakunin today has a posthumous reputation as some kind of revolutionary wild man. But I think him loose and mad for trying to overthrow the state and abolish it forever. But that reputation is undeserved. Most of Bakunin's career was actually spent in liberal and liberal-nationalist circles. In the late 1860s, there were two competing left-wing international organizations. There was, of course, the International Workingmen's Association, the First International, dominated by Marx. But there was a rival, liberal body called the League for Peace and Freedom, which was led by liberal politicians and intellectuals like John Stuart Mill in England and the novelist Victor Hugo in France. At first, Bakunin didn't join the workers international, he joined the bourgeois liberal international, and only when he couldn't convince the bourgeois liberals to embrace anarchism did he go over to the workers international.

But even more so than Bakunin, Kropotkin was very explicit in appealing to capitalists. And here the difference between anarchism and syndicalism actually is of some importance. In the 1890s, the anarchist movement split into two rival competing tendencies. Generally the syndicalists denounced the anarchists as woolly-headed idealists and ivory tower intellectuals. The American syndicalists said, "The anarchists deny the class struggle and we fight it." In turn, the anarchists condemned the syndicalists for what we would later call "economism," for reducing the noble goals of the anarchist revolution to the small change of trade-union struggle for higher wages and better working conditions. They denounced some anarchist-syndicalist leaders, not without justification, as aspiring trade-union bureaucrats, although the term was not yet in vogue. But more importantly is that like the Marxists, the syndicalists maintained that consciousness was socially determined. They maintained that it was the workers, by their role in society and their experience, who would be uniquely attracted to and disposed to accept the program of anarcho-communism; they had an interest in this program. The capitalists, by their role in society, had become so selfish and egotistical that they were hostile to the program of anarcho-communism. And of course the classic anarchists, of which Kropotkin was the dominant figure, had to answer this challenge. So in Mutual Aid he writes:

"We are the people who have acquired wealth often do not find it in the expected satisfaction. The conscience of human solidarity begins to tell; and, although society is so arranged as to stifle that feeling by thousands of artificial means, it often gets the upper hand; and then they try to find an outcome for that deep human need by giving their fortune; or their force, to something which, in their opinion, will promote general welfare."

So as I said at the beginning of this talk, the youth who called upon the directors of the World Bank to forgive the debt of poor Third World countries were entirely consistent with the doctrines of Kropotkin, expressed through human solidarity.

I'd like to deal with another aspect of the question. In the Spartacist pamphlet "Enlightenment Rationalism and the Origin of Marx," I noted that in some ways Rousseau and Adam Smith represented the poles of Enlightenment
Anarchism... (continued from page 9)

thought. Adam Smith argued that social and economic inequality is a necessary overhead cost for technological progress, raising the living standard of people, and increasing what he called The Wealth of Nations. Rousseau accepted that argument, but he went on to argue that equality and social harmony and commu­
nal values could exist only with a static and relatively primitive economy. Consis­
tent with his entire doctrine, he main­
tained that man was happiest, indeed he was only happy, at the most primitive level of economic existence: "As long as men remained satisfied with their rustic habit, as long as they were content with clothes made of the skins of animals, ewen with thorns and fish bones; as long as they continued to be satisfied with the product of economic scarcity. Rousseau inverted this. For Rousseau, economic scarcity means that people wanted to be better than their fellows. A conventional understanding of so­
cialism and communism implies that such im­
volves us, is that we are hostile to capital­
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cially in but not limited to Third World countries, and they are people who do nothing, who are strictly parasitic, and live in the lap of luxury. Well, cer­
tainly an important goal of communism is to eliminate that. But that is not the ultimate goal. The ultimate goal lies in a whole other sphere of human activity, the sphere outside of consumption, and it is precisely this sphere that requires a much higher level of labor productivity than exists even in the most advanced cap­i
talism. In other words, if our goal were simply to provide everybody in this country with a decent standard of living, say, equivalent to $80,000 or $100,000 for every family, we could still do it with the existing American economy just by a little restructuring. That is not what we are ultimately about. What we are ultimately about is providing all members of society, here and elsewhere, with the capacity to do creative work, work that is called free or unalienated labor. We are not basically in the business of equality of consumption.

Now precisely because of this aspect, Marxism, the concept of communism, is fundamentally different from both the earlier socialists and the anarchists. For the pre-Marxist socialists, the ultimate goal was to provide everybody in this coun­
try with a decent standard of living. For the pre-Marxist communists, the question was how to organize all the workers of the world into a single, stateless, classless society. For the anarchists, the question was how to organize all the workers of the world into a single, stateless, classless society. It is precisely for this reason that anarchists argue that the Bakuninites never answer the question, but only can answer it from their logic. They would say, "After the anarchist revolution, everybody will understand a much higher level of labor productivity than exists even in the most advanced capitalism!"

For the anarchists, equality and freedom have value in themselves, ultimately for these are means to an end. What does equality mean under communism? It certainly doesn’t mean that people will have the same living standards, or consume or utilize the same material resources. Equality simply means co-operating. There isn’t a huge range of lifestyles, consuming very differently. People can do free to do what they want. It’s not merely that there won’t be a coercive state, but most time will be what is now called "free time." The ques­
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entific character, and at the same time is a general work, i.e. if it ceases to be human effort in a definite, trained natural form, gives up its purely natural, primitive aspects and becomes the activity of a sub­
dject controlling all the forces of nature in the production process." Well, to control all the forces of nature in the productive process involves the expenditure of very considerable material resources. First, this is the question of acquiring the knowledge of the forces of nature. Consider the vast resources nec­
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The Workers State and the Anarcho-Commune

I want to discuss a couple of aspects of Marx’s conflict with Bakunin, or Baku­
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Anarchism... (continued from page 9)

ership of much of humanity, which is entirely consistent with anarchist doctrine as a goal. The problem is that it contra­
icts anarchist program and means. If you read, for example, Bakunin’s Revo­
lutionary Catechism, in which he spells out in great detail the organization of the future anarcho-communist society, it is based on extreme economic as well as political decentralization. You have these little local anarcho-communes which get together to form regional anarcho-communes, which are basically economically self-sufficient, though they may trade with one another. But the prob­
lem is, anarcho-commune in upper Manhattan and one in a peasant village in India are going to be very different kinds of anarcho-communes. That’s not equal­
mity, may equality no. How do you get equality? Well, the one way you’re going to get is that the Marxist program, which is an internationally planned, socialized economy with a central politi­
cal government, at least during the transi­
ence between the Third World and the First World. That is, they are opposed to and want to overcome the impover­
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in order to have a workers revolution in the first place, the workers would have to have a much higher level of political conscious-ness and a different leadership. That is, as long as the British working class supported the openly pro-capitalist union leaders, supported the British Empire, and didn't have any workers parties. So it's not that somehow you go from what exists to a workers state with no change in leadership and consciousness on the part of the working class. As long as the American working class more or less sub-scribes to the politics of AFL-CIO leader John Sweeney, there's not going to be a proletarian revolution in this country. So that's part of the answer.

The second part, which is more funda-mental, is that Marx and Lenin, when they were talking about a workers' state, were not talking about Soviet Russia in the early 1920s. They were talking about a state that was in an advanced capitalist country, an advanced industrial country. Moreover, they were talking about it in an international context in which proletarian revolution had triumphed in the major capitalist countries. Obviously there can be a workers' state, and the withering away” of the state in an advanced capitalist country if you

bers of left-wing organizations who thought of themselves as reds. But they went into the union officialdom, and gradually they lost their belief in revolu-tion and acquired certain material and social privileges.

I suppose the most extreme case would be South Africa, because there the exis-tence of a labor bureaucracy is so recent and the result of such a rapid change in the political situation. Consider that 15 years ago all the trade-union leaders and Communist Party government offi-cials in South Africa were either in prison, exiled, or in exile. And if these people 15 years ago could have looked into the future and seen what they had become, they would have been horrified. But the difference, especially in South Africa, between the life you can live as a union official, and the life of a rank-and-file worker is vast. Ultimately of course, as Marx and Engels wrote, the withering away of the state is premised on a rapid rise in the level of labor productivity, making it higher. Than the advanced capitalist countries.

Anarchism and Stalinism

In reality, Stalinism is a doctrine that is actually closer to Bakuninism than it is to Marxism. Stalin maintained that you could build socialism in one coun-try, Russia, but at least he thought you could raise the level of productivity. Bakunin thought you could have anarchocommunism in a Russia that was basi-cally on a primitive peasant base. In both cases there's a divorcing of what could be called social psychology from the eco-nomic reality. In other words, there's a denial of the fundamental premise of Marx that right cannot stand higher than the material conditions of society and the cultural level conditioned thereby. And that's the real answer. Ultimately the Stal­linist bureaucracy is a product of the con­tinued world domination of capitalism, which prevents the raising of the general level of productivity in deformed workers' states, like China. The more intellectually honest anarchists actually recognize the similarity between certain strands of Stal­linism and Bakuninism, so that anarchist intellectual Paul Avrich argues that Marx­ism and Guevarism—which really main­tain that socialism is basically a change in psychology in the masses with no rela­tion to the level of production—were actually closer to Bakuninism than Marx­ism, and he was right.

If you read some of the old Stalinist propaganda about the “new Soviet man,” it's very much consistent with the Bakun-in notion of a moral regeneration. The Marxist scholar Isaac Deutscher, for example, characterized the “socialist man” Stalin presented to the world as working 12 hours a day under conditions that no American worker would accept.

In his Revolutionary Catechism, Baku­nin in many ways paints a very attractive society. But he maintained that society could exist, and was in fact more likely to exist, in the most backward, rural regions of Europe—Italy and Russia. It is no coincidence that anarchism as a doc­trine and a movement took hold in back­ward European countries like Spain and Italy; tsarist Russia, which never had a mass anarchist movement, produced some of the most influential anarchist thinkers.

Bakunin was an advocate of, by the very nature of his doctrine, socialism in one country, or even in one region of one country. For Bakunin, consistent with the whole Rousseauian tradition, the main effect of the revolution was not a reorgan­ization of production to a higher level but a change in the political consciousness so that people identified their own per­sonal interests with humanity in general. Marxists, on the other hand, reject the spurious arguments of both the Stalinists and the anarchists that classless com­munism is simply the product of a psychological regeneration. We fight to overthrow the capitalist system in order to reorganize production so as to raise it to such a high level that scarcity will no longer exist. Only then can we lay the material basis for the emancipation of humanity from exploitation, war and pov­erty.

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In his Revolutionary Catechism, Baku­nin in many ways paints a very attractive society. But he maintained that society could exist, and was in fact more likely to exist, in the most backward, rural regions of Europe—Italy and Russia. It is no coincidence that anarchism as a doc­trine and a movement took hold in back­ward European countries like Spain and Italy; tsarist Russia, which never had a mass anarchist movement, produced some of the most influential anarchist thinkers.

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Democrats, Republicans... (continued from page 1)

programs benefiting minorities and the poor. America's rulers are quite aware that they are sitting on a powder keg of discontent. Yet even as they vastly augment the forces of state repression, they are concerned to maintain illusions in the "democracy" of capitalist class rule in the U.S.

Less than half the electorate now votes in the presidential elections—an all-time low. In 1948, 51 percent of the votes in the last two elections. Bourgeois Green Party candidates James Schiro and Ralph Nader seek to capitalize on this disaffection by offering a refurbished version of Democratic Party liberalism which does not make a clear break with the people. Meanwhile, the AFL-CIO labor bureaucracy and the middle-class black Democrats are hitting the hustings to get out the vote for Gore.

Fully 30 percent of DNC delegates were trade unionists. The ties to the Democratic Party forged by the labor bureaucrats, which bind the working class to the capitalist class, are a strategic obstacle to pursuing the class struggle against capital.

For the working class to be mobilized in its own interests and in the interests of all the oppressed, it must stand independent of the capitalist class, its parties and its state apparatus. Break with the Democratic Party and create a party for a workers government!

Jackson, Sharpton: Front Men for White Racist Rulers

The Democrats' overt appeals to the Republican "mainstream" risk even further alienating organized labor, blacks and liberal intellectuals. Yet it is the trade unionists manning the campaign phone banks and the black politicians and preachers who are critical to a Democratic victory. One delegate, a retired auto worker, shrugged: "We can get our people to turn out on election day? I don't know."

The black Democrats are working overtime to bring out the vote for Gore/Lieberman. The Congressional Black Caucus was trotted out for a photo-op with Lieberman. The last weekend in November 23 in response to the Partisan Defense Committee call to stop the KKK terrorists from rising in New York City. Running point for the whole of the Democratic Party machine and working in collusion with Republi
can mayor Giuliani, Sharpton pulled out all the stops to try and prevent this mass labor/black mobilization. But the Demo
crats, who went so far as to offer a plat
form for the Klan in a grotesque demon
stration of "tolerance," failed. On that day, the working people and minorities of NYC repudiated the Democrats and ensured that they would prevail. As we wrote in our WV supplement (Nov
ember 99) titled "Labor/Black Mobiliza
tion Takes NYC": "The successful labor/black mobilization brought to life the connection between labor's fight and the fight for black free
dom. Black oppression is the cornerstone of racist American capitalism. There is no road to eliminating the special oppression of black people other than the working-class conquest of power, and there will be no proletarian revolution to end class exploitation unless the working class activity takes up the fight for black rights."

"The working class has the numbers, the organization and the power to win all things that are central to the liberation of the black people that don't bow down to the bosses' laws, parties and state agencies, a work
ers party that doesn't respect the prop
erty "rights" of the bourgeoisie. We need a workers party that fights for a workers government to rip the means of produc
tion from the capitalist class and institute a planned socialist economy that oper
ates not for the profit of a few greedy exploiters but for the benefit of all humanity...

Bankrupt Liberalism vs. the Fight for Black Freedom

Official black leaders no longer even talk about reforms which would radically improve the conditions of the black masses. A recent op-ed piece in the New York Times (6 August) by liberal black academic Orlando Patterson criticizes the Congressional Black Caucus and a num
ber of black Democratic mayors for being "committed to a conception of inclusive
ness that eschews genuine social and cul
tural integration." He notes, "While most African-Americans and the middle classes generally still say they favor integration, some prominent black political leaders have given up on this strategy."

However, Patterson does not explain why so many black leaders, centrally the Democratic Party, have in effect accept de facto segregation. That's because genuine social and economic integration is just too much for the distr
ibution of wealth, a total and radical restructuring of the American economy which can only come about with the destruction of the capitalist system. There is no other possible way to provide for quality, integrated housing and medical care, to ensure that children in the inner
city ghettos receive an education in any sense comparable to that available in affluent, largely white suburbs.

The liberal-led civil rights movement of the 1960s could achieve nothing to funda
mentally change the economic and social conditions of black people. Demands for voting rights, an end to segregation and legal equality could be achieved under capitalist democracy. But the forcible subjugation and segregation of the black population at the bottom of this society cannot be eradicated through new rights laws alone.

While younger blacks may view the 1963 March on Washington as the culmi
nation of the militant struggle for civil rights, the reality was very different. The fight for black equality profoundly shook the liberal black leadership. However, the liberal black leadership represented by Martin Luther King sought to contain the struggle through a framework of "respectable" bourgeois politics, in particular tying the movement to the Democratic Party Kennedy and Johnson administrations.

This was especially clear during the 1963 march, which was marked by growing tensions between the younger black militants and the King leadership and the white liberal establishment, particularly the Walter Reuther wing of the AFL-CIO bureau
racy. John Lewis, the militant Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), drafted a speech demanding the black population — including the "party of Kennedy is the party of Eastland," Mississippi's Dixiecrat sena
tor. March leaders, particularly Reuther and black-socio-democratic union leader A. Philip Randolph, pressured Lewis into deleting this section of the speech.

With millions taking to the streets and battling the racist cops from Bir
mingham, Alabama to Los Angeles and Detroit, the fight for black equality inter
sected growing popular opposition to U.S. imperialism's dirty colonial war against the Vietnamese workers and peasants. However, the ruling class was able to reestablish itself as a com
bination of murderous repression, partic
ularly directed at the Black Panther Party and other radicals, and the co-option of a layer of black leaders and activists.

Today, the core of the black wing of the Democratic Party—from King to one
time lieutenant Jesse Jackson to former SNCC leader John Lewis—derives from the middle class, who help tie the mass of the working people to the capitalist state apparatus...
Central to Clinton's electoral strategy in 1992 was the Democrats' own "Southern strategy," aimed at recapturing some of the racist white vote which had gone Republican during the Reagan-Bush years of the 1980s. As opposed to the dead end of support for "lesser evil" Democrats and the reactionary black politicians of Louis Farrakhan, we stand for the perspective of democratic socialism and for the full integration of black people into an egalitarian socialist society. Black activists are a significant part of the working class, in whose hands lies the power to break the chains of capitalist exploitation and racist oppression. Subjected to both class and racial oppression, black workers will be impelled to play a leading role in the socialist revolution in this country.

Reformism Tails on Democratic Donkey

It is telling that even before the L.A. convention, the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) decided not to endorse Gore, saying he "represents a centrist, neo-liberal politics of the Clinton and other DSA founders were key Democratic Party advisers and authored the "war on poverty" programs which were used to co-opt a layer of black activists in the '60s. Now the DSA contends, "It is inaccurate to describe DSA as primarily working within the 'left wing' of the Democratic Party." This is not because the DSA has overlooked the left, but because the "New" Democratic leaders no longer want a social-democratic "left wing" in the party. As communists, we seek to direct increasing disillusionment with bourgeois electoral politics into the struggle for working-class leadership and independence from the parties of the capitalist class enemy. Our purpose is to make the working class see the necessity of building a mass movement in fighting to abolish this entire racist profit system through proletarian socialist revolution. And in such a struggle, the revolutionary workers party necessary to achieve this aim we will on occasion run in elections—as we have in the past—in order to bring our political program to new and wider audiences and to mobilize support for extraparliamentary social struggle in defense of labor and against racial oppression.

Martin Luther King Jr., A. Philip Randolph and other liberal civil rights leaders, seen here with President Kennedy following 1963 March on Washington, chained black struggle to Democratic Party.

Up to 10,000 turned out for POC-initiated labor/black mobilization that rode Klan out of NYC last October 23, in opposition to Democrats' grotesque call for "tolerance" for racist killers.

UWSA Local 8888 waged four-month strike against Virginia's Newport News shipyard in heart of racist, "open shop" South. Labor rights and black rights go hand in hand!

USWA Local 8888 waged four-month strike against Virginia's Newport News shipyard in heart of racist, "open shop" South. Labor rights and black rights go hand in hand!

Martin Luther King Jr., A. Philip Randolph and other liberal civil rights leaders, seen here with President Kennedy following 1963 March on Washington, chained black struggle to Democratic Party.

25 AUGUST 2000

continued on page 14
Near East... (continued from page 6)

Wafdists and the DMNL. Nasser looked leaflets and perform other tasks. Central in this was Nasser's arms (and future Egyptian president) who worked for the good of his people. Nasser's interview (continued from page following month, when textile workers long as they perceive that nothing can be government officials and the role of the liberals and n Algeria, France and Britain, in the early postwar years. Nasser shifted to a pro-Soviet posture, while continuing his anti-Communist and nationalist campaign. This meant that the trade unions were decimated, no social safety net, no regulatory agencies. It is necessary to defend Social Security and Medicare and other social programs against the vicious government rollback schemes. But our goal is not simply to maintain the existing conditions of the working class and poor, but to bring about an even greater degree of revolution. Like the pro-capitalist trade-union leaders, the Stalinist bureaucrats and landowners. The continued 

Democrats, Republicans... (continued from page 13)

Certainly, many people rightly view government officials and legislators as corrupt and unprincipled, as political profit-titutes on the corporate payroll. But as long as they perceive that nothing can be done about this, such an attitude does not threaten or challenge the capitalist order. Every reform and gain for workers, minorities and women in this country—industrial unionism, Social Security and Medicare, public health, formal equality for black people, the right to abortion—has been won through hard-fought struggles, and the role of the liberals and social democrats was to keep those struggles within the confines of electronic reformism. The New Deal reforms were instituted to head off the convulsive labor struggles of the 1930s that formed the industrial unions and shook the American bourgeois order. The 1960s "war on poverty" was aimed at buying social peace as the ghosts exploded across the U.S. Today, having achieved its decades-long goal in the counter-revolutionary destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state, and having battered the trade unions at home for more than two decades, the American ruling class envisions a return to the unrestrained capitalism of the 1920s—trade unions decimated, no social safety...
decidedly not the policy of the CWA and IBEW bureaucrats. Verizon...
AUGUST 22—As we go to press, nearly half of the 87,000 workers who walked out against Verizon in 12 states from Virginia to Maine on August 6 remain on strike. The Communications Workers of America (CWA) and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) reached a tentative settlement in the company's northern division two days ago and ordered its members there back to work, without even a vote on the contract. Teams of "flying squadrons" from Pennsylvania in Verizon's Mid-Atlantic division continue to hit facilities in the Northeast. In New York City, hundreds of workers are refusing to cross their picket lines.

A central issue in the Verizon strike was organizing the burgeoning non-union sector of the workforce. Faced with the prospect of low-wage, dead-end jobs with no security and no medical insurance, some 40 million unorganized workers in the U.S. today say they want a union as compared to half that number in 1984. The strike by Verizon workers to reverse the massive inroads on union power in telecommunications has been closely watched by workers around the country. It has also been very closely monitored by the bourgeoisie, which spends a billion dollars a year at least on keeping out unions and is particularly concerned about a strike in this high-tech industry that is crucial to the operations of banking and finance capital. The New York Times (21 August) was forced to admit that the strike showed that "organized labor still has a place in the New Economy."

Verizon was formed earlier this summer through a merger of Bell Atlantic and GTE, along with takeovers of a British wireless company and a non-union Internet provider. Its fastest-growing division—wireless—is virtually all non-union, with only 46 union members in a workforce of 32,000. The Verizon bosses—and the other telecommunications giants—have billions in profit riding on keeping unions out of the booming wireless and Internet data businesses. Non-union workers at Verizon make some $10,000 a year less than union members.

The strikers' determination was also fired by the hellish working conditions at the company. A worker in Woburn, Massachusetts who wants to be unionized said she was "tired of being treated like a second-class citizen." But even unionized workers are subject to the kind of totalitarian management practices which made the old Ma Bell monopoly notorious: up to 20 hours a week forced overtime, uprooting of workers and their families through forced transfers from one city to another, grueling working conditions. Service reps are allowed only two seconds between calls. One striker in New York City said: "These people will treat you like a slave, if you give in to them."

Taken aback by the union membership's determination to give in, Verizon was forced to grant a number of concessions on mandatory overtime hours and unionization. The company did not get the right to virtually unlimited transfers it wanted, but the proposed transfer rate of 0.7 percent of workers annually is still nearly three times higher than under the old contract (Reuters, 21 August). And the unions made some concessions on seniority. Mainly, the unions won a "card check" procedure that will allow organizing new locations simply by signing up 55 percent of the workers without going through the labyrinth of NLRB elections. This agreement covers only one-quarter of the non-union wireless workforce at Verizon. But to translate even this into a "real" drive to organize the unorganized requires a program of class struggle. And that is continued on page 15

Verizon Strike Rattles Wall Street

For a Class-Struggle Fight to Organize the Unorganized!

CWA Local 1106 pickets NYC Verizon facility in Queens. Solid strike was undermined by union tops' class-collaborationist strategy.

At their annual Labor Day rally and picnic this year, Charleston, South Carolina longshoremen will be celebrating a major victory against union-busting attacks by the employers and the Democratic Party state and city governments. This past spring, International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) Local 1422 beat back a five-month attempt by the Nordana Line and the Charleston Port Authority to use a non-union outfit to unload their ships. Beginning in May, Nordana agreed to use only longshoremen hired out of the union hall at prevailing union wages and conditions, in line with the ILA master contract.

This victory was secured through a bitter struggle last January, as picketing longshoremen were confronted by some 600 cops—mobilized from police forces across the state—who fired tear gas, shock grenades and sand-filled projectiles at the workers (see "Charleston ILA Battles Racist Union-Busting Assault,' WV No. 723, 28 January). Local 1422 president Kenneth Riley told WV that the support of the International Transport Workers' Federation was also crucial, as dockers in Spain, Australia and Nordana's home port in Denmark vowed not to handle scab cargoes. Like all labor victories, this was hard-won: eight ILA members were arrested, five of whom face up to five years in prison on trumped-up "felony riot" charges. All of labor must demand: Drop all charges against the ILA longshoremen!

The capitalists aimed their fire at the ILA because it is a bulwark of black labor power and a beacon to working people and the black masses in the region. In turn, Local 1422's victory was an inspiration to workers throughout this state in which barely 4 percent of the workforce is organized. Riley told WV: "I cannot begin to tell you the number of calls we have gotten since this incident, of groups of working people that want to organize.... We have public workers, warehouse workers, workers in the building supply industry. Fed up with grueling overtime and lean wages, over 100 crane and equipment operators and other Port Authority workers recently joined the union. Riley observed that Local 1422's successful struggle has "served as a catalyst in this state to get folks fired up about unions and get other unions interested in organizing again."

This victory shows the potential for the massive unionization drive needed across the nation to organize every worker, "open shop" South.

The forces arrayed against integrated labor—hating Ku Klux Klan, racist, labor-hating Ku Klux Klans. Ominously, the continued on page 15

ILIA Victory Brings in New Union Members

... Continued on page 15

Down With the Confederate Flag of Slavery! Organize the South!