

# THE WORKER

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## Bringing Independent Working Class Politics to Centerstage

Only the working class and people themselves can find the way out of the crisis and lead our country onto the road of peace and the emancipation of the people. The working class is not only the most numerous class, but its very conditions of existence reflect all the contradictions of society and make it the most consistent champion of genuine democracy – of rule by the people. In order to emancipate itself, the working class must create a new political power which affirms the humanity of all the exploited and oppressed.

The American working people have a great deal of experience in opposition to and struggle against the political power of the capitalists. The American working people have many times acted on the basis that the struggle for democratic rights, in all its forms, required the mobilization and leadership of the working class and required a fight against the capitalist line of splitting the masses on the basis of race, national origin, sex, etc. The American working people have long been fighting for a truly modern America capable of recognizing that the rights of one are inseparable from the rights of all. One of the biggest lessons of this experience is seen in the widespread recognition that while on paper capitalist "democracy" proclaims various rights and freedoms, in practice, it denies the rights of the working masses at every turn.

For example, in theory, the black people have enjoyed equal rights since the end of the Civil War. Of course, everyone can see through that lie.

In the 1950s–1970s the American people rose up in their tens of millions to demand that the promise of democratic rights and equality be translated into deeds. As a result of these struggles, certain concessions were wrung from the capitalists such as the extension of the social "safety net" to the disabled, the right of mothers to day-care, or the elimination of some of the most onerous apartheid-style laws. But no sooner did the offensive of the working class recede than the capitalists and their government began snatching back even these reforms.

Today, despite the paper promises of equality, the counter-offensive against the rights of women and national minorities, the working class, the youth, etc. is part of the dominant and official ideology of the capitalist class.

This growing reaction in the political sphere of life in spite of the advances of the working people is one of the most glaring manifestations of the general crisis of capitalism, a convincing sign of its incurable disease.

As the monopoly capitalist class in the U.S. has now gone over to an open and large-scale offensive against the forces of democracy and progress, even greater violations of the democratic rights and freedoms of the working masses have become part of state policy. The government even claims that brutal repression is necessary in order to protect the interests of the big capitalists, but it is only to prevent them from being held accountable for their systematic policies.

Similarly, imperialist ideologues have become more open and cynical than ever in advocating a "natural law" under which the society is divided into a mass whose duty it is to work and obey without a murmur, and an "elite" whose right it is to rule and to have full sway in the country. Of course, both this ideology and the policy choices it underlies meet regularly with dissatisfaction and resistance among broad strata of the population.

In the face of this dissatisfaction and resistance, the bourgeoisie seek, through the creation of a labor aristocracy, to convert the working class into merely another interest or pressure group under the tutelage of the bourgeois. This subordination of the working class movement was embraced early on and expressed by Samuel Gompers who insisted that "the aim is nothing, the movement is everything" and that workers should follow a policy of "rewarding friends and punishing enemies" – that is, subordinating themselves to the politicians in the Democratic and Republican parties. Thus, Gompersism denied the participation of the working class as an independent political force with its own conception of democracy and its own aims for emancipation. For those who

rejected Gompersism, the bourgeoisie offered the trend of anarcho-syndicalism, which turned advanced workers towards sectarianism – the abstention from all real politics in the name of the "higher good" of preaching about the ultimate goal of revolution and socialism.

Both Gompersism and anarcho-syndicalism leave politics in the hands of the bourgeoisie and retard the development of the independent political movement of the working class that can contend with the bourgeoisie over the character of the political and economic system, over the concrete direction and the policies of the government and society. By blaming the people and trying to incite competition amongst them, the labor aristocracy and the capitalist class try to divert attention from the real problem – from the fact that it is the government itself, and the capitalist class it represents which is responsible for the intensification of its own political reaction.

As the masses of people express their outrage and dissatisfaction, social democracy and revisionism on the one side, and the various "left" opportunists on the other, are in the forefront of suppressing the growing struggles of the masses, working overtime to prevent the impending revolt of the people against their poverty, oppression, and exploitation. Both have nothing but hatred for the masses of people. Social democracy and revisionism constantly condemn the masses as too "backward" to do anything but vote for representatives to rule on their behalf, while the "left" opportunists, although advertising themselves as "communists" and "revolutionaries," curse the masses for not embracing their particular pet mantras. This dogmatism works to undermine the political unity of the workers and split the people on the basis of competing ide-

*CONTINUED***Editor: Anne Beck**PO Box 25716, Chicago, IL 60625  
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## Centerstage

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ologies. The capitalists hope that in rejecting the dogmatism of such sects activists will also reject genuine communism. All these opportunists curse the masses as the source of all the problems plaguing society while covering over the root of the problem which lies in the fact that the policy of the government is determined by the interests of the monopoly capitalist class, by its program of robbery of the public treasury, of exploitation, of reaction and of war.

The sectarian splitting activities and liquidationism of the opportunist groups which cling to the coattails of the capitalist parties inevitably embrace – when push comes to shove and the interests of capital are threatened – the aims of the capitalists themselves. Thus, for example, the leaders of the AFL-CIO embrace the program of "increasing the competitiveness of U.S. capitalism." Similarly, at key moments, the "leaders" of the peace movement openly adopt the chauvinist positions of the capitalist ruling class and popularize U.S. imperialism's "soft tactics", its "peace plans," and imperialist diplomacy organized to buy more time for the prosecution of its wars.

But all of this feverish energy exerted on behalf of the class interests of big capital only exposes once again the tremendous all-sided crisis facing U.S. state-monopoly capitalism. Why would the capitalists, who never part with a dime except in anticipation of a greater return, spend billions of dollars trying to force their ideas down the peoples' throats if they believed the people were uninterested in changing the capitalist system? No, the capitalists themselves are aware that the inherent contradictions of capitalism are making themselves felt and the polarization between opposing classes can only escalate.

This is what the demands of social development and the whole course of history have placed on the historical agenda. It can be said that the real starting point of political knowledge is recognition of the irreconcilable antagonism between the workers and people, on the one hand, and the capitalist state – the existing political power – on the other. This is the starting point of people grasping the necessity for independent political action – grasping that they can emancipate themselves only through political struggle against the oppressive state of the exploiters.

History has its own objective logic. That logic is a linkage of major

events and ages that exist independently of human volition or consciousness. The objective logic of history is the necessary change of socio-economic formations, including changes in the economic structures and type of life. It also amounts to qualitative changes in political institutions consonant with the evolution of social relations. It is the objective character of the logic of history which explains why there have never been generations or nations able to choose the way of life according exclusively to their taste or volition in disregard of the material conditions they have largely inherited from the preceding society. People can learn the laws of history, can change their knowledge of them. But they operate regardless of whether or not we learned them. For instance, prior to Marxism, there had been no scientific theory of revolution, though revolutions did occur. The objective logic of history has often made short shrift of all the efforts of ruling classes to re-establish and sustain the outdated social relations that became the basis of their domination.

Of course, objective laws of history are laws about human activity and cannot take place or operate outside the activity of individuals, parties, classes and nations. People can only consciously and voluntarily play a role in the creation of history if they take guidance in their knowledge of historical laws. In the course of its struggle against the capitalist class, the working class has created the theory of Marxism-Leninism to guide its struggle. Marxism-Leninism is the science which reveals the objective laws of motion of society. It is the conviction of the Workers Party that the task of social science is to establish the role of the conscious will in history and find the root causes for the socio-historical activity of individuals, classes and nations.

The on-going attacks of the gov-

ernment against the rights of the people, the attempt to divide the people while subordinating everything in the society to the profit-drive of the biggest monopolists can only be defeated by the conscious section of the working class coming forward with a program for uniting the people on the basis of opening the path for the progress of society. Such a program must demand that the fundamental rights of the people be guaranteed and that these rights be extended universally to every member of society.

The mass disgust with the Democratic and Republican parties can only intensify because the anti-social agenda of these parties is the inevitable product of capitalism in crisis and decay. Turning this mass disgust into a positive political alternative is the task of the times. This is the issue which must be faced. The only way forward is for the workers to change the political map by bringing their agenda to centerstage. The workers must emancipate themselves by coming forward as a class-for-themselves to assert their own political aims and agenda, their role as decision-makers, and to build up their own independent political movement in opposition to and struggle against the U.S. monopoly capitalist class and its twin parties of war, robbery, racism and repression.

The decisive task of building the independent working class political movement is to build and strengthen the political party of the working class, the Workers Party. When everything is weighed up, the fundamental fact of U.S. political life is that the objective conditions, as well as the aspirations and strivings of the masses of people, demand fundamental change, but that the subjective conditions – the consciousness and organization of the working class and people – are lagging behind. The problem to be solved is the creation of the means whereby the people can come forward into independent political life with their own agenda and their own organization for implementing that agenda. The entire experience of our Party is that when and to the extent that such instruments are built, the people come forward and are able to defeat the bourgeoisie on various fronts. So too, these generalized political movements are harbingers of even greater struggles which lie ahead as the working class creates space in which the people can politicize themselves, as it accumulates forces in the struggle against imperialism and for socialism.

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