

# RALLY COMRADES!

THE VOICE OF THE LEAGUE OF REVOLUTIONARIES FOR A NEW AMERICA

## Consciousness of Class Interests Decisive to U.S. Budget Battles

The maturing global economic crisis is intensifying, now measured by its increasingly destructive impact on the budgets of U.S. states and local governments. The massive layoffs across America that began in the fall of 2008 and continue, combined with nearly 20% real unemployment today, are leaving state and local governments with far less income and property tax revenue required to maintain the status quo in public and human service programs, while the needs and demands for such programs has dramatically increased.

### SHIFTING CRISIS ONTO BACKS OF AMERICAN PEOPLE

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), all forty-eight states (two states, Kentucky and Wyoming operate on a two-year budget cycle not requiring budgets this year) have released their initial budget proposals for fiscal year 2012 (which begins this July 1 in most states). For the fourth year in a row, these budgets propose deep cuts in primary, secondary and higher education, health care, and other vital public services – in most cases, much deeper than any of the previous cuts since 2008.

Combined state budget shortfalls are expected to exceed \$140 billion for fiscal year 2012. This is on top of previous state budget deficits totaling \$428 billion since 2008 that have resulted in wholesale public and human service program cuts and massive job elimination, cuts that most state governments use to assist their efforts to balance their books.

Already since 2008, more than 426,000 public sector jobs have been eliminated by state and local governments across the nation. More than 30,000 of them were eliminated in just the month of February 2011 alone. Such figures are a bellwether indicator of the acceleration in the rate that state and local governments are cutting public and human service programs and public service jobs.

The states are shifting the total burden of the economic crisis onto the backs of the American people. A majority of the states – at least 39 of 48 – are proposing major cuts in core public services such as pre-kindergarten, K-12 and higher education, Medicaid and health care services, while seven governors are combining the cuts with increased income tax, higher sales tax rates and/or expanding existing sales taxes to include more taxable products and services. On top of this, seven governors are also proposing large tax cuts for corporations. At least 15 states have proposed layoffs and specific cuts in pay and/or benefits for state workers. (For more, see the March 21, 2011 the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities report “Governors are Proposing Further Deep Cuts in Services, Likely Harming Their Economies”).

Additionally, legislative proposals have been introduced in a dozen states to revoke public employees’ collective bargaining rights, to nullify workplace representation by union organizations, and to restrict unions from organizing workers or negotiating contracts. Other proposals such as Arizona Senate Bill 1350 prohibit public employees from participating in political activity and bar them from being members of the national, state or local committees of any political parties, or even being a candidate for any public office.

These proposals are part of an ideologically driven political attack to silence, weaken and destroy public and private sector workers’ organizations and their job protections (and ultimately collective bargaining in all sectors of the economy), while simultaneously destroying a significant part of the Democratic Party’s organizational base in those states. This frontal assault is being led by Republican governors and legislatures in 12 States: Wisconsin, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Florida, Missouri, New Hampshire, Maine, Minnesota, Iowa and New Jersey.

The growing breadth and depth of the impending job elimination throughout the public sector, along with the equally massive elimination of public and human services by state and local governments is happening for the first time in U.S. history. The economic revolution is poised to rapidly remove large sections of public sector workers from the economy, thus destroying the commonly held view that a public sector job is the most stable and long-term work anyone might find.

In the midst of the unemployment and poverty that is spreading to broader sections of the American people, the budget cuts, privatization, and elimination of workplace and political rights, the ruling class is moving to impose new forms of political rule upon the American people. Michigan – devastated by the destruction of industrial production and globalization – is, in this like in so many other areas, the harbinger of what the rest of America will soon have to confront.

In March of this year, the Michigan legislature passed the Local Government and School District Financial Responsibility Act. This legislation gives the governor the power to take over cities, counties and town governments and replace elected officials with appointed corporate managers. These appointed managers can revoke and declare null and void any existing contracts, including those with labor unions. They can dissolve school districts, sell assets, and privatize public functions and services. They have the legal authority to dissolve incorporations of cities and towns (some incorporations date back centuries) and re-incorporate

them by annexation or redistricting, thereby dissolving entire units of government. The authorities moved quickly, and less than one month after its passage the law was applied to Benton Harbor, the site of fierce struggle between the local government and the corporations. The message: Today, democracy is only for the rich.

The struggle has moved beyond the economic sphere. Few can deny that when states are reorganizing governments, overturning legal elections and formally dismantling the system of representative democracy, as they are doing in Michigan, that America is being reorganized along fascist lines.

### UNDERLYING CAUSES AND POLITICAL DIRECTION

In the midst of all this new and emerging political polarization, most labor unions, their counterpart think-tanks, together with associated policy wonks, mainstream media, bloggers and most independent presses and media outlets, incorrectly define the 2008 financial crisis as the “cause” of the current “bankrupting” of the states. The logical but incorrect conclusion then follows: to define the mass layoffs and furloughs of public sector workers, cuts in their hours and pay, and the across the board gutting of social programs as “effects,” as consequences of the 2008 crisis.

As a result, most of the organized resistance to the state budget cuts and anti-labor attacks by state governments has been to demonstrate and fight back against the anti-worker legislation, explore alternative legislation, and get involved in referendum strategies and electoral defenses like the recall efforts in Wisconsin. These efforts corral the spontaneous development of independent working class impulses and motion and direct it into a maze of Democratic Party initiatives to control and nurture working class passivity and prevent any economic self interest based, independent political impulses from developing.

This leaves the working class trying to

fix the problem with solutions as if the cause was a singular 2008 event and its effects are only a temporary problem that over time can be reformed and fixed, rather than a symptom of a qualitative, systematic failure of capitalism, an outmoded system of production and exchange.

The 2008 crisis grew out of the housing speculation bubble originally designed by global financial institutions and international banks to extend credit in order to create an artificial rise in the value of housing to attract investments. It developed a fictitious market to replace the real market that was saturated and had nowhere to expand for new investment.

But this financial crisis was only one of the many “effects,” which were “caused” by the antagonism in the economy created by the use of laborless, electronic-based, digital production in a labor based economic system.

The current attack on public sector workers is also an effect of the continued elimination of jobs in the private sector over the past four decades, where workers continue to be replaced by robotic and computer applications in the production of society’s goods and services.

This digital production increasingly creates a growing number of workers, who cannot consume the abundance being produced and who don’t pay taxes. They in turn become the ones who need more public and human service programs that government won’t fund because less tax revenue is being collected. As the stages of economic destruction are played out, the impact penetrates ever deeper into the working class. The cycle continues, resulting in fewer people with jobs with and more and more people not consuming or paying taxes.

### WHICH WAY?

The electronic revolution began nearly forty years ago when robotic and computer production methods were first applied to the production process. The resultant job loss and social destruction are penetrating and targeting a new sector of the economy – the public sector. Under capitalist laws of private property, the economic revolution takes no hostages. It simply eliminates wage labor from the economy. *continues on page 2*

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# Michigan: Front Line in the Fight for Democracy

The latest round of the destruction of society is reflected graphically in the battles in the states over the budget cuts and the attacks on public workers, particularly in the Rust Belt states – Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Pennsylvania – but sweeping across the country. As value falls, revenue for the states falls, and coupled with more tax cuts for the rich and the corporations, budgets are balanced on the backs of the workers. Following in the wake of massive layoffs and dispossession in the private sector, public workers are now facing firings or furloughs, wage cuts, and raids on their pension funds, along with the tearing up of collective bargaining agreements and the destruction of public employee unions.

The battle may take on the appearance of a struggle over resources, and indeed for the workers bearing the brunt of this assault, it is a battle for the necessities of life itself – food, shelter, health care and education. Yet it is now becoming more than an economic battle, or even a fight-back to defend what is being taken away. This is now a decidedly political fight. The corporate class has open-

ly taken over government and is employing it as an instrument of brute force to impose its will. Nowhere is this more evident than in the state of Michigan, where the legislature has passed an Michigan: Local Government and School District Financial Responsibility Act (Public Act #4), empowering the governor to take over whole towns, cities and counties, and replace elected officials with a corporate manager who can then nullify any existing contracts, including those with labor unions.

Michigan is a harbinger of a fascist solution on the move. Not only the destruction of economic resources but also the destruction of democracy itself is the the direct consequence of what is happening there. Let there be no question about it: the two are inextricably linked. The ruling class is moving politically to secure private property in its interests, and to impoverish and dispossess the working class, the vast majority of the American people, of the very means to life itself. But that also means that the battle of the working class is now a political battle. The battle to secure the necessities for a full and decent life is at the same time a battle for

democracy. The question now is: in whose interest does the government operate? Will it be a government operated in the interests of the corporations, or will it be a government of, by and for the people (the working class)? The option is clear: either we, the people, will take over the corporations, or the corporations will take over society. Private property will rule, or we will make private property public property.

It is no accident that in Michigan one of the towns to be taken over by the new Public Act #4 was Benton Harbor, a small, mostly African American, mostly impoverished town on the banks of Lake Michigan. Racism allowed the corporate state to attack Benton Harbor, but the cause lies with the decline of value and the destruction of capital itself. The attack is really aimed at the working class as a whole. In this country, white supremacy and race are the product of the development of capitalist economic conditions, and the ruling class has no qualms about employing them to maintain its own supremacy.

That is why politically the way forward for the workers hinges on class unity. If we

don't stand with the workers of Benton Harbor, then we all lose. White supremacy is an ideology of all-class unity that divides worker from worker and ties workers to the ruling class. The lessons of populism show that calls for solutions on behalf of the people that fall short of working class unity around a common program and that do not reject all-class unity, are destined to fail.

More and more the call to "tax the rich" resonates among the workers, and that is a step forward, because it represents one form that making private property public can take. That battle, though, must be linked to the whole battlefield that is developing over nationalization. Nationalization in the interests of the corporations is the ruling class solution, but nationalization in the interests of the people, that is, making private property public property, is the political line of march for the working class toward a cooperative society. Again, it is a matter of which class can wield the power to obtain its own interests. One solution is fascism, the other is democracy.

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However, that same economic revolution is creating the conditions for the birth of an entirely new society, where humanity can begin to benefit from the fruits of society rather than be denied them.

Developing an understanding among revolutionaries that we are in a social strug-

gle that's birthing a new politically polarized environment is a fundamental first step. Otherwise, those who are leading sections of our class will remain hampered by the all-class ties that deny sections of our class the freedom to discover their independent class interests. The never-ending defensive fights

will continue to sap the energy out of the combatants, and our class will continue to adhere to the all-class ideas propagated by the ruling class.

A tactical foundation for developing independent class understanding can be found in fighting for the historical, American traditions and impulses that in the past demanded that U.S. society "Tax the Rich" and "Tax the Corporations." Creating the strategic room for these impulses to sustain themselves and grow on a simple and traditional basis of them versus us can begin to cultivate

the beginning stages of understanding independent class interests.

This kind of propaganda can assist revolutionaries in instilling a sense of class identity, at the same time laying the foundation for further independent steps that will take the class along the general direction of the revolutionary line of march toward the ultimate solution of a cooperative, communist society.

*Political Report of the Standing Committee of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America, April 2011*

## EDITORIAL POLICY

**Rally:** to bring back together and put in a state of order, as retreating troops [to return to attack]

**Comrade:** a person with whom one is allied in a struggle or cause

*Rally, Comrades!* is the political paper of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America. In this period of growing motion and developing polarization, *Rally, Comrades!* provides a strategic outlook for the revolutionaries by indicating and illuminating the line of march of the revolutionary process. It presents a pole of scientific clarity, examines and analyzes the real problems of the revolutionary movement, and draws political conclusions for the tasks of revolutionaries at each stage of development in order to prepare for future stages. It is a vehicle to reach out and communicate with revolutionaries both within the League and outside of the League to engage them in debate and discussion and to provide a forum for these discussions. Articles represent the position and policies of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America.

Editor: Brooke Heagerty

Editorial Board: Cynthia Cuza, Nicholas McQuerrey, Nelson Peery, John Slaughter

Reach us at: **RALLY@LRNA.ORG**

## LRNA: What We Stand For

Tens of thousands of socially conscious people declare themselves revolutionaries in opposition to the degenerating social and economic conditions. The League's mission is to unite these scattered revolutionaries on the basis of the demands of the new class, to educate and win them over to the co operative, communist resolution of the problem.

The demands of this new impoverished class for food, housing, education, health care and an opportunity to contribute to society are summed up as the demand for a cooperative society. For the first time an objective communist economic class is forming to become the foundation for a communist political movement. A new fascist state form, the naked rule of corporate power, is arising to oppose this motion.

Society must take over these corporations or these corporations will take over society. The new class must have political power to

achieve these goals. In the effort to achieve this political power the League supports all political organizations and sections of society that fight against the growing poverty, social and ecological destruction, fascism and war.

Nothing can be accomplished until the American people hold a vision of where they want to go and what they want to be. Creating and imbuing them with such vision is the overriding task of revolutionaries and the foundation of our organization.

Destruction of the environment, the threat of nuclear war and the looming pandemics are calling the very existence of the human race into question. The battle is class struggle. The war is for the existence of humanity.

We in the League face the future with confidence. We call upon all revolutionaries to abandon sectarian differences, to unite around the practical demands of the new

# Seizing the Future: LRNA Holds 7th National Convention

Comrades and Friends,  
We stand here today celebrating the success of the seventh Convention of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America. Eighteen years ago marked the beginning of the LRNA. We understood then that the revolutionary movement was leaping into a new quality of struggle.

We have seen struggle before. But this struggle is different. It is the subjective or political expression of the revolution in the economic foundation of society. It is emerging as a response to something new – the alignment of the political superstructure to protect the obscene sanctity of private property as the economic foundation of capitalism is crumbling.

The process will go through a number of quantitative stages. At each stage the revolution will have to regroup on new foundations.

## STAGES OF STRUGGLE

The immediate first stage is clear. As workers are permanently replaced by computerized robotic production, a transformation is taking place from a highly organized, highly paid reformist core of the industrial working class to the emergence of a new class increasingly pushed out of capitalist relations of production. This first stage will see the new class becoming aware of itself and articulating a program for its survival. Its political reflection must be an organization that accurately reflects that stage – a league of revolutionaries – a non-sectarian organization formed on the new basis of the objective process, with its mission to make that class aware of itself as a class.

Over the years, we witnessed many

struggles – the rise of the struggle around homelessness and the development of homeless unions on a national level. Our efforts helped to end the isolation of the homeless population and stamp it into the consciousness of the American people.

We witnessed the massive attacks on the welfare recipients, and General Assistance programs as state by state programs were eliminated, throwing another section of the working class into the streets, followed by the Clinton administration's "welfare reform."

This administration also passed NAFTA to allow the free flow of capital across our borders while closing them to human beings in search of a better life.

We witnessed our youth under attack on all fronts: lack of jobs, massive closing of schools, increasing tuition costs for higher learning, new private prisons being built, schools privatized across the country.

And we witnessed families without water and other utilities as the struggle for survival intensifies, drawing broader sections of the working class into battle.

In the past the capitalist class attacked one section of the working class at a time, using the age-old tactic of divide and conquer. Now as the dictatorship of the corporations is gripping every state and town across this country, budget cuts are hitting a broad spectrum of the working class at once. The budget battles are placing school teachers in the trenches with students, fire fighters and corrections officers with janitors, and nurses and social workers together with destitute patients.

## BATTLE FOR CONSCIOUSNESS

Clear lines of demarcation are being

drawn, but objective economic polarization does not inevitably translate into subjective understanding and political polarization. The broad social response provides the conditions for revolutionaries to enter into battle for the minds of the American people – to win them to consciousness and clarity about who they are and what is actually in their interests.

The ruling class will use this moment to dredge up every rotten and racist thread of American history to derail and confuse the thinking of the American people. Our responsibility is to win them to some sense of their basic interests.

There's a growing understanding that corporate control of political power makes the ruling class incapable of governing in the interests of society. That sense that something is wrong cannot move forward without the awareness of actual interests – the understanding of whose interests government should serve, whether the public is going to control the corporations or the corporations control the public.

This moment pushes to the fore tens of thousands of people who are looking for a way to contribute to the forward progress of humanity, who want to politicize and educate people in their actual interests, and who need an organization to do that. During the past 18 years the League has laid the foundation to be the organization they need. We are prepared to take full advantage of the budget battles that lie ahead to carry out the League's mission to unite these scattered revolutionaries on the basis of the demands of the new class, to educate and win them over to the cooperative, communist resolution of the problem.

The battle over budget cuts will find fertile ground for the growth of working

class consciousness and clarity. As we see in the social response to the budget cuts in the Rust Belt, the polarity over who controls society is becoming clearer. These cuts can be seen as a cover for increasing corporate control over society. In Michigan, battle plans are focusing on the new Emergency Financial Manager bill known as Public Act #4 – the financial martial law. The state has already used this law to take over the cities of Benton Harbor and Pontiac and the Detroit School Board. The level of mobilization is teaching us the hard reality that we have to imbed our propaganda tools into the heart of this movement.

## MOVING FORWARD AND OUTWARD

The League is firmly rooted in the history of the revolutionary movement. Although the revolutionary movement has never faced a situation like today, we draw strength from the continuity of scientific understanding and principles of revolutionary politics and strategy. We rely on that history in order to step up to the tasks and responsibilities of this moment.

We are clear about the present. The adoption of the documents of this Convention confirms our grasp of the underlying content of this time, the "why" behind the profound and frightening changes taking place in this country and the world.

And with this, we can seize the future. Out of the emerging social struggle, we can build and consolidate the League as an organization of revolutionaries ready for the next stage of the revolutionary movement in this country.

## On History's Shoulders

Comrades, this meeting marks some 43 years of struggle for a revolutionary party that would be a continuation of the best in American history – a party worthy of the American people.

It has been a long and difficult journey from the time five of us sat down in Watts, California and voted to create an organization that would participate in the struggle to reconstruct America, that would be of, by, and for its people.

During those years many organizations have come into and gone out of existence. Ours has remained stable, preparing for this moment in history. This Convention, like those before it, will reaffirm our commitment to our foundations, our strategy, and tactics. These are the indispensable elements that stabilized us while others withered and died.

What are the elements that make the League different from other organizations? What has allowed us to remain stable and on track?

The fundamental division between organizations arises from their different bases and their different goals. One type of organization arises from the mass movement. They are guided by theory that arises from practice. Their actual goal becomes the goal of the spontaneous movement, which can be nothing but reform.

The other type of organization arises from an intellectual grasp of the significance of the contradiction between society's productive forces and its productive relations. This group is necessarily guided by philosophy – which is the study of the processes governing all thought, principles, and laws.

The organizational predecessors of the League were formed during the great upsurges of the national liberation movement. We did not base ourselves on that movement; rather we tried to use that upsurge and transformation to expose and exacerbate the contradiction between productive forces and relations. We clearly understood that this was the only force that could cre-

ate the conditions for a transfer of political power from the capitalists to the working class. This is why we did not collapse with the relative completion of the national liberation movement.

Later, our philosophical approach allowed us to understand the revolutionary significance of the electronic revolution in production, the emergence of a new revolutionary sector of the working class, and the beginnings of an objective communist movement. What do we mean by an objective communist movement? Such a movement arises when there is such an intense antagonism between private ownership of the necessities of life and the social character of distribution and consumption that the entire social order begins to collapse. At this point communism – society's ownership of socially necessary means of life – moves from the ideological level to the actual or objective.

This historic leap in the economy presents us with a huge and difficult problem. This expanding objectively communist movement is subjectively – that is intel-

lectually – anticommunist. Clearly, nothing can be done except through the process of changing peoples' minds as they struggle for the basics of life. This is the task of an organization of propagandists.

We can proudly point to our accomplishments in building such an organization. We have a solid cadre core. We have our own theoretical and political line. We have an excellent press.

Essentially our foundation is built. The next stage - the stage this Convention must grapple with - is the outward motion of the League. This outward motion can be accomplished only if the League is clear as to its mission. Each member must have a mission. Every member in some way must contribute to our propaganda effort. We must become an army on the march – with purpose, discipline and clarity.

Comrades, the ice of fifty years is melting. Tides are beginning to flow. The moment we prepared for is upon us. Let this convention again raise the International's battle cry "To the forge, Comrades! Strike where the iron is hot!"

# Revolutionary Work Today

It's been clear for a while that something's broken in the economy and society. Millions in the United States – and billions worldwide – are seeing the last shreds of economic well-being and hope torn to pieces. Where, many have asked, is the outrage? Where is there hope for fundamental change?

For many, recent events from Cairo, Egypt to Madison, Wisconsin, have sparked some of that hope and placed squarely on the table pointed questions about how society is – and should be – organized. These events have sparked discussion and struggle over what should be the relationship between the people governed and the established government or political system. For revolutionaries, who understand that systemic change is on history's agenda, these events have made more urgent the need to answer questions like: "What is my role and response to history's call?"

Wisconsin, Ohio and other states throw a spotlight on the efforts by those with economic and political power to reconfigure how the State and government will function in the post-industrial electronic age. The social response to changes in the economy that are emerging in the United States is clearly something quite different from the back-and-forth struggle that defined governance during the rise and growth of capitalism.

Cities, health care, education, homes, stable employment, the environment, as well as democratic rights, are devastated as the economic and social relationships of a period of developing capitalism crumble. Society is polarizing between the extremes of wealth and poverty.

## POLARITY EMERGING IN SOCIETY TODAY

Decisions in Washington and at the state level to define the institutional forms of ruling class control, and growing struggles to resist the destruction of an old way of life, reflect the polarity emerging in society today.

At one pole, the corporations are merging ever more inseparably into the government. The decimation of state and local budgets, privatization of public resources and services, nationalization in the interests of the corporations, the undermining and dismantling of bourgeois democracy, concentration of power in the executive branch and a "bipartisanship" that expresses and expedites the needs of the ruling class as a whole – all are visible expressions of the consolidation of a U.S. "corporatist state."

In the chaotic process of implementation of these changes, the aspects of ruling class agreement are emerging. In order to maintain their wealth and control, those in power are willing to deny the American people economic benefits and democratic rights that Americans once assumed were their birthright. These decisions foreshadow the growth of a fascism tailored to the 21st century, aimed at protecting private property even as old capitalist economic

relations are destroyed.

At the other pole, the broadening movement of people fighting for the necessities of life find themselves confronting, not an economic struggle with their employer (and for reforms in governance to stabilize that relationship), but a political obstacle: the question of who holds power in society – the public or the corporations.

When the ways society is organized no longer work to advance human well-being, the resulting instability makes fundamental change possible. The destruction of the old opens the way for the new – but the way forward will be frustrated if the desire is only to recapture the past.

## REVOLUTIONARY POTENTIAL OF THESE CHANGES

State budget battles, deficit-mongering, tax reform proposals, and cutbacks in

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Guided by a vision of society that can meet humanity's needs, the revolutionary participates in the struggle for those needs. Every battle becomes a school to teach about real causes and solutions, helping to turn the disorganized and disoriented American mass into a conscious political force.

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public service are drawing ever broader sections of the population into activity and debate. The dispossession of the American people and the polarization of wealth and poverty set the basis for leaps forward in consciousness and struggle. Millions are and will be angered or frightened, confused or politicized, ready to give up or ready to fight. The engine for such a change is the objective motion in society itself, but that motion can be sidetracked and defeated if the participants and their leaders fail to understand their role.

As the practical struggle is forced into motion to fight for its basic needs, strategies emerge to lead it, most rooted in the hope of going back to better days. The heroic gains made by unions in the first half of the last century leads many to hope that a revitalized trade union movement will strengthen workers in their struggle with the capitalist corporations. Others advocate a revitalized civic sector to create a balance of power with the capitalist class.

The Democratic Party uses this hope to fuel its electoral bids. Both major parties work together "across the aisle" in a bipartisan program of the ruling class with the goal of removing impediments to speculative capital. Both the Republican Party and the Democratic Party are leading the country toward fascism in the interests of a ruling class that wants to hold on to its private property and power. Leaders of the social motion who attach the struggle to the left wing of the Party are tying the struggle

to this ruling class program of fascism.

The "unite and fight the right" strategy advocated by much of the "left" is directed toward reaching a workable compromise with the capitalist class – rather than preparing for the class struggle that is beginning, though not yet conscious of itself.

Revolutionaries must look forward, not to an on-going back-and-forth struggle with the capitalist class, but to a radical and pervasive change in society and social structures. Guided by a vision of society that can meet humanity's needs, the revolutionary participates in the struggle for those needs, continually assesses how the stages of struggle and consciousness are unfolding, and works to build an organization that can be part of the historic effort to transform the disorganized, disoriented American mass into a conscious political force.

This effort has to be carried out in the context of today's developing political po-

larization and in forms shaped by American history. Current government intervention into the economy is opening the way for struggle that can coalesce a certain stage of mass consciousness. As key sections of the economy are taken over by a corporatist state, battles are shaping up on every narrow front over whose interests the government and this nationalization should serve. This battleground is a school for agitating and politicizing, for propaganda about real causes and solutions.

Understanding its vulnerability, the ruling class must turn any developing class motion against itself and corral it into an endless election cycle. They use every tool to agitate fear and anger into disregard for one's fellows, promoting fascist ideology. Those whose loyalty has been key to control of the broader working class are becoming desperate and their plight is framed in terms of the "middle class." The fight for jobs is turned into attacks on immigrants, for public services into attacks on public employees and the battle for a future into battles along color lines. Consciousness becomes critical to the struggle itself.

In general terms, the proletarian revolutionary movement must move from scattered economic struggles to united political struggle. Its proletarian content, as a movement that is objectively against private property, is bound to emerge. But shifts and changes in consciousness develop in leaps and the path will not be a smooth one toward ever-greater class unity. Whatever

the steps and stages ahead, the job of revolutionaries is to develop the consciousness of the struggle so that it can move to real solutions.

## REVOLUTIONARY WORK WITHIN THE MOVEMENT

Thousands of revolutionaries today are engaged in the struggle for the demands of the class and in developing a mass social consciousness in opposition to the rule of the corporations and a government that serves only those corporate interests. Recognizing the stages the struggle has to go through, revolutionaries can push from within each stage of mass struggle toward the final aim – keeping the movement on a political course, questioning why the government rules on the side of the corporations and against the people.

Our assessment of the leap at the foundation of society gives us confidence in the objectivity of the emerging motion. Each social catastrophe presents the battleground on which to prepare the class politically to fight in its own interest. Every specific battle, every narrow front becomes a school for agitating and politicizing, for propaganda about real causes and solutions, for a battle over whose interests shall prevail. The actual resolution to each social calamity is ultimately the abolition of private property. The program of the new class can emerge within the phases of mass struggle as a rallying point for the actual resolution to concrete problems. Revolutionaries cannot proceed from any pre-conception of the forms that developing class and political consciousness will or "should" take.

Revolutionaries cannot stand apart from the struggle and expect to be able to get people to think differently. A self-contained organization of revolutionaries cannot approach the art of politics needed to address the emerging stages of the struggle. Revolutionaries must be involved in the current stage of the struggle – as messy as it may be. It is precisely propaganda and agitation, teaching and politicizing in the context of the social motion itself that can advance the stage of the struggle and consciousness.

These challenges can be met only by an organization of thinking revolutionaries who can disperse to diverse fronts while maintaining a common direction. Only such an organization can point the way forward. Only such an organization can unite the revolutionaries who are emerging in the struggle and grow on a political basis.

Revolutionaries today are looking for discussion on crucial issues of direction, solutions, and strategy. They understand the need for education and strategic perspective in order to make their contribution. That's why revolutionaries need organization. They collectivize their activity out of an understanding that this is a moment in which they can make a decisive contribution to history. The revolutionary struggle is just beginning: either society will control the corporations or the corporations will control society. We need – and together we can build – a league of revolutionaries ready to meet the challenges ahead.

# Lessons from American Populism

The closing decades of the nineteenth century gave America the most radical and formative political movement of its entire post-Civil War history. Populism was the social response to consolidation of political rule by huge industrial and financial corporations after America's last great social revolution – the one accompanying the transition from agricultural to industrial means of production.

On the one hand, populism projected an extraordinary democratic vision of a country and economy that rightfully exists for the benefit of the people, not corporations. However, its objective and subjective weaknesses made defeat inevitable. Although it included tenants, sharecroppers, and some workers, urban and rural, populism was in the main the movement of the dying class of America's yeoman farmers.

As such, its guiding ideology was one of Jeffersonian-Jacksonian all-class unity. This was its fatal flaw. Especially in the South, all-class unity took on the form of the all-class white unity of white supremacy. Despite many efforts, and lacking a class analysis, Southern populism was never able to move beyond it. When the movement began to decline, this opened the door to its total subversion from inside and outside by rabid, terroristic Jim Crow fascism, laying the foundation for capital's control over labor in America ever since.

In 2011 America has entered a new and entirely different social revolution: the one created by the transition from industrial to electronic means of production. The break in continuity we experience today is resurrecting many political forms and ideas of the populist era. We are called to reexamine them to separate out and reject their politics of all-class unity, while embracing those ideas and forms that can be put to the service of authentic working class politics.

## THE FARMER'S ALLIANCE

Populism as we know it grew out of the Farmers Alliance originally established in Texas in the 1880s, in response to the shocking descent of millions of farmers into spiraling poverty. Southern cotton prices fell from a dollar a pound in 1865 to 20 cents in the 1870s, 9 cents in the 1880s, and 4.6 cents in 1894. In the West, "sod-house" farm families typically went barefoot in summer and wrapped rags around their feet in winter.

Farmers correctly blamed their oppression on the crop lien system that effectively enslaved them to the town supply merchants. The merchants loaned them supplies for the year at exorbitant interest in return for a lien on their crop. As farmers began to organize, they learned that this was only one part of an immense system of exploitation that included storage operators, railroads, manufacturing trusts, commodity speculators, and banks. In the South in particular, the crop lien was the method of choice for Wall Street to squeeze colonial

tribute from the Southern poor and further consolidate its iron economic grip by bankrupting the farmers and seizing their land.

The Alliance grew dramatically from 1887-92 to some three million members, with an additional 1 1/4 million in the Colored Alliance. It organized a vast system of cooperatives that gave the farmers negotiating strength and a sense of their power, but was not sufficient to break the monopolies or abolish the crop lien.

When neither Democrats nor Republicans responded to their demands, the populists began a steady process of politicization and education. Their National Reform Press Association grew to include some 1500 newspapers by 1896, and their Lecture Bureau grew to some 35,000 lecturers. The broad networks of cooperatives and sub-alliances formed dynamic lines of communication for both lecturers and the printed word. Farmers broke free of the dominant conservative media of the day and embraced the populist doctrines on a mass scale. As historian C. Vann Woodward wrote, "Like water from a duck's back, the hoary platitudes of professional politicians rolled from heads wrapped in forbidden notions of government ownership and cooperatives."

## THE PEOPLE'S PARTY

The populist campaign culminated in the organization of the People's Party in Omaha, Nebraska in 1892, to this day the last significant effort to organize a third party in America. The response of the ruling class was twofold. On the one hand, populists in the South were mercilessly attacked as communists, anarchists, and advocates of "Negro domination". Time after time they were denied election in the South by open violence and orchestrated fraud. On the other hand, at the same time, there was an epidemic of politicians, both North and South, who falsely converted to the populist program (or parts of it) in an effort to corral its followers and take the movement off course.

This culminated in the 1896 Democratic Party nomination of phony populist William Jennings Bryan for President on a weak free silver program. At the same time, the People's Party itself was infiltrated by a mass of office-seekers who advocated "fusionism" with one of the two major parties in order to get elected regardless of principle. The fusionists hijacked the People's Party convention and nominated the Democrat Bryan as its presidential candidate, effectively destroying the political independence it had painstakingly built over years, and abandoning the Southern populists to the escalating fascist offensive there.

Deserted by Northern populists and politically adrift, many Southern populists reacted by colluding with Democrats to disenfranchise African Americans. This was done in a series of Democratic-controlled state conventions all across the South from 1890-1908, and approved by the Republi-

can-controlled U.S. Supreme Court. In the process of disenfranchisement, hundreds of thousands of "undesirable" Southern whites also lost the vote as well. The total number of voters declined by some 50-80% all across the South during this period, Populism was obliterated, and open fascism enthroned.

## CONCLUSIONS

The populists in any case could not have won. Even in the late nineteenth century American farmers were already a dying class. By the 1930s, half of all U.S. farmers had been forced into tenancy, and the development of modern agribusiness – "factories in the field" – sealed their fate. The populists attempted to unite with the growing class of industrial workers, but the workers themselves had neither the visionary leadership nor organization necessary for effective independent politicization.

In spite of all, however, the populists made lasting contributions that need to be studied by revolutionaries and by the working class movement of today. Their Greenback theory of economics merits revisiting in today's era of battles over nationalization. The populists pioneered the call for nationalization of banks that remains on the agenda today as a step toward saving homes in foreclosure and preserving government programs at every level.

Secondly, the populists mastered the process of politicization in a way that has important lessons for today. They successfully combined mass political education with the practice and organization of day-to-day economic struggles to survive. Their system of newspaper routes, lecturers, and lecturing schools succeeded because it was seamlessly integrated with the movement, and taught daily lessons based on daily experiences. This made their politics and economics readily comprehensible to the millions of farmers.

Third, their "Omaha platform" adopted at their founding convention in 1892 was the first and most influential attempt to challenge the Jeffersonian concept of small government from the point of view of Jefferson's own democratic principles. The ideal Jeffersonian agrarian society of small producers (to the extent that it ever actually existed) had undeniably been superseded by industrialization and corporate monopoly. In this situation, all true populists unequivocally called for the expansion of government, as they did in the Omaha Platform:

"We believe that the power of the government – in other words, of the people – should be expanded (as in the case of the postal service) as rapidly and as far as the good sense of an intelligent people and the teachings of experience shall justify, to the end that oppression, injustice, and poverty shall eventually cease in the land."

The particular solution advanced by the Farmers Alliance was nationalization. At their 1896 convention they adopted the following resolution:

"We hold therefore that to preserve these rights under a republican form of government, private monopoly of public necessities for speculative purposes, whether of the means of production, distribution, or exchange, should be prohibited, and whenever any such public necessity or utility becomes a monopoly in private hands, the people of the municipality, state, or nation, as the case may be, shall appropriate the same by right of eminent domain, paying a just value therefore, and operate them for, and in the interest of, the whole people."

The intention of the populists was to nationalize monopolies in order to preserve yeoman farming and small businesses. They could not succeed. But their experience is a precedent and an example in our efforts to demand nationalization in the interests of people under objectively more favorable conditions today. Victory in our modern battle of nationalization means taking a step toward the political power necessary to secure public ownership of all means of production for the benefit of the public.

Finally, possibly the most important lesson of populism was the glaring negative example it set of self-destruction by failure to address the role played by white supremacy and colonization of the South as instruments of ruling class political power. For all of its talk about "labor impoverished" and the "plain people", the Omaha platform was not a working class program. It condemned immigrant workers as the "pauper and criminal classes of the world".

C. Vann Woodward described the class politics of the populists as "confusing." The ringing calls for nationalization of monopolies were always compromised by the populist allegiance to the twin ideologies of private property rights and all-class unity. When the Colored Alliance threatened a strike of cotton-pickers, Alliance President L.L. Polk called on farmers to crush the strike because, "reforms should not be in the interest of one portion of our farmers at the expense of another."

These fatal equivocations were carried over into the twentieth century labor movement and influenced the politics of both left and right. The Left drew heavily on populist influences in their campaigns and were unable to break as decisively as necessary from the politics of anti-monopolism and white supremacy that permeated them.

Revolutionaries today have to rely on careful class analysis to extract the positive and negative lessons of populism. In an era of looming fascism, the dangers of populism are enhanced. The social movement of today is already under attack by a modern-day version of the 1890s disenfranchisement campaign. A new bill in Congress and similar ones in several states is seeking to strip children of immigrants of citizenship. It is not hard to see that this could lead to denials of the vote to anyone unable to provide proof of legal immigration status of one's parents. Those who fail to learn from history will be condemned to repeat it.

# Understanding Racism

To understand an ideology such as racism we need to understand the forces in society that demanded its existence. Everything in human society is based on a material foundation. The material foundation of a society is the economy. Agricultural economics has been the basis of every human society. Without agriculture there could have been no industrial revolution, and no electronic and information age. Economics is not just a part of human life. It is every part of human life. So when the economy changes, social values change and the politics change in that society. Ideas such as race, racism and white supremacy are essential products of capitalist economic conditions.

## RACISM ROOTED IN ECONOMICS

A major change in the world economy, and therefore world history, was the African slave trade or Maafa (African Holocaust). The slave trade to the Americas, including South America, Central America, the West Indies and North America was the greatest crime in human history. It was the most profitable, the most brutal, earthshaking, history-changing human undertaking that ever took place. Everything changed because of the economic demand for slave labor.

There was no such thing as racism before the rise of the Atlantic African slave trade. There was no economic demand for it. The Medieval Arabs from the Middle East did invade and enslave millions of North, East and Western Africans. Eurasian Arabs also enslaved other whites and Mediterranean whites. History teaches us about the Eurasian Mameluke slaves who rebelled against the Arabs and also about the Slavs of Eastern Europe from which the word slave is derived.

Ancient slavery and Medieval Arabic slavery were greatly different from capitalist Black enslavement. For example ancient and Arab slaves were mainly prisoners of war, debtors or victims of religious persecution. Of course, any form of slavery is destructive to humanity whether ancient, medieval or colonial, but it is important that we understand the difference.

The slave trade in West Africa did not begin with an invasion by Europeans. It began with elites of divided African nations selling their subjects and war prisoners in exchange for guns, rum, and so forth. Only later in the slave trade did it become a question of color.

Capitalist Black enslavement did not result from financial indebtedness, war or religious persecution, but from the need for labor in the Americas. The sugar and cotton plantations of the Americas required acres of land and thousands of workers. Tens of millions of Black Africans were brought to the Americas, died on the journey or, if they survived, were sold into bondage. Black slavery was permanent and inherited. Blacks were considered sub-human.

The failed enslavement of Native

Americans and European indentured servants paved the way for the permanent enslavement of African Blacks to meet those needs. West Africans had agricultural knowledge and skills. They also had a relative immunity against malaria adapted from centuries of living in the tropics that the white indentured servants did not.

To eyes blinkered by profit and wealth, these slaves were not human beings, but commodities to be bought and sold on the world market, nothing more. This is what gave the new type of slavery its brutality, misery and horror. This is what made it the “peculiar institution.” The slave trade was the most profitable market that humans had

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Economics is not just a part of human life. It is every part of human life. When the economy changes, social values change and the politics change in society. The ideology of racism is an essential product of capitalist economic conditions.

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ever experienced. It divided humanity between those who were being sold and those who were doing the selling.

The brutal system of slavery in western society and the subjugation of millions of people had to be justified with an ideology. This ideology was racism. Racism declared that the “white race” had been chosen to rule the earth in God’s name.

Racism arose in the United States in the context of science, culture and the demands of a growing capitalist economy. It was different in Europe than in the U.S. because non-white existence was not an every day fact there.

Before the 15th century Europeans did not view themselves as Europeans. This concept was developed due to the African slave trade in which Europeans were conditioned to view “white” as a race and race as an important human characteristic. This concept of racism meant that white people had the right of conquest and exploitation of other lands and other peoples by virtue of their color.

Capitalism has to expand or it cannot exist. Racism grew out of the capitalistic economic demand for Black slavery. The expansion of capitalism also expanded the ideology of racism and white supremacy. The spread of the concept of race was inseparably connected to the conquest of the Americas, and the spread of African slavery. The wider the spread of African slavery, the wider the spread of the concept of race.

## TEACHING RACISM

These ideas did not just naturally appear. They had to be created and nurtured at every stage of capitalism’s development.

European religious institutions played a central role in developing such a vicious

concept of race. European Christianity perversely changed its values to justify slavery through racist ideology and practice. Originally in medieval times, Madonnas resembled a physically distinctive Black woman. Shrines of the Black Madonna are scattered all over Europe. During the period of the development of the slave trade, these Black Madonnas were superseded by white Madonnas. The color of the Christ mother was changed from black to white in order to justify such a brutal slave system. Remember: an ideology cannot arise unless it has a material foundation to do so. That material foundation is capitalism.

The Catholic church strongly supported

who it was claimed were poor because they too were inferior.

## UNITY OF HUMANITY

Understanding history is key to knowing how and what needs to be changed in order to better humanity. It has been stated that whoever controls the past controls the future. The ruling class has followed this statement from the time of the Pharaohs of Egypt up to the western world empires of today. What is bringing peoples’ history to light is modern science that aids in challenging history as interpreted by the ruling class.

Human beings have been able to survive on this planet through cooperative effort to make a livelihood. Every new way of making such a livelihood has necessitated changes in their wider relationships with each other. Changes in the forces of production are associated with changes in the relations of production, and these eventually transform the wider relationships in society as a whole, including the ideas that define and justify those relationships.

The unity of humanity, whether Black, white, Hispanic or Asian, depends on its material condition. Economic inequality divides human society. Without economic equality there will be no unity as history teaches us.

Automated production increasingly exceeds consumption. This widens the gap between the rich and the poor and increases poverty amongst the masses of Blacks, whites, Hispanics and Asians. This economic condition can no longer meet the needs of human society. The question that comes up is can economic equality be achieved? A hundred or fifty years ago, no. But with the technological means of today, most definitely.

Modern science has allowed history to take leaps in the past fifty years with the discovery of genetic science by tracing DNA in the human lineage. It is a fact that the human race shares a common ancestry. This knowledge alone eradicates the legitimacy of the concept of races among humans.

Capitalism as an economic system is coming to an end. For the first time in human history, abundance, not scarcity, can define human society. But the death of capitalism alone will not secure mass human wealth. The laws that protect private property must be abolished in order for the means of production to be publicly owned by the people and to produce in the interests of the people.

As we have seen, race is an economic issue primarily, not just a moral issue. If we destroy the current economic situation then we can destroy institutional racism.