



G. Ronald Lopez/Zuma

Justin Sullivan/Getty

Jeff Dean/AP

Where Is the U.S. Going?

Tasks for the Workers Movement

Donald Trump was re-elected president, and everyone is asking: What now? To determine the tasks of socialists in this new period, we must understand how we got here and what the election represents.

The Rise and Decline of the Liberal World Order

The U.S.-led liberal world order was built on the ashes of the Soviet Union. The fall of this non-capitalist country not only established the U.S. as the world's unquestioned superpower, but also opened up previously untapped resources and markets to plunder, including in China. To maximize their advantage, the U.S. imperialists pursued globalization with a vengeance—offshoring production and expanding their reach to every corner of the Earth. NATO was extended to the borders of Russia, and time and again the IMF and World Bank rewrote the rules

according to the interests of Wall Street.

The spread of U.S. imperialism's tentacles internationally was given ideological justification, with liberal capitalism proclaimed the pinnacle of human civilization. The U.S. and its allies ruled the world in the name of liberal principles like "freedom and democracy" and "defense of the defenseless." Such mantras provided a convenient cover to assert U.S. dominance, inject its capital abroad and strangle oppressed countries.

The liberal world order seemed indestructible, but a temporary breath of life for imperialism could not stop the decay that lies beneath. The very forces set in motion by U.S. hegemony have steadily eroded it. Unprecedented U.S. capital penetration propelled the growth of world trade, the industrialization of neocolonial countries and the development of China—and in the process hollowed out the U.S. manu-

facturing base, deepened its social rot and reduced its overall economic weight. To stabilize their position, the U.S. imperialists must reverse the current dynamic. But to do so requires tearing apart the basis of globalization by raising tariffs, pressing the neocolonies, confronting China. This underlies the current conflict within the U.S. ruling class.

facturing base, deepened its social rot and reduced its overall economic weight. To stabilize their position, the U.S. imperialists must reverse the current dynamic. But to do so requires tearing apart the basis of globalization by raising tariffs, pressing the neocolonies, confronting China. This underlies the current conflict within the U.S. ruling class.

Cracks Start to Emerge

The 2008 financial crisis caused the first serious cracks in the global order. Great economic pain was inflicted on working people, especially black and Latino families. Many went bankrupt in the face of ballooning subprime mortgage

payments or were saddled with skyrocketing medical debt. Millions of decent-paying jobs were wiped out and replaced by temp, low-tier and gig work. To rescue its system, the ruling class bailed out the banks deemed "too big to fail" and resorted to money printing and wild speculation—setting the conditions for an even greater collapse down the road.

In the political arena, the bourgeoisie did what some thought impossible: put a black man in the White House. Barack Obama was the living embodiment of liberal principles. His campaign was premised on "hope and change," including to end the deeply unpopular war in Iraq,

continued on page 10

Trump's Comeback:

The Death of Liberalism

The following article by G. Perrault was first issued as a Spartacist (English-language edition) supplement on November 7.

Donald Trump's second election as U.S. president marks the death blow of the liberal post-Soviet order. The American empire is not defeated, and liberalism is not finished as a political force. But liberalism is dead as the dominant ideology of the Western imperialist ruling classes.

2024 is not 2016. Back then, Trump's election was seen as an aberration. It provoked a frenetic reaction from liberals, who doubled down in defense of the status quo and the progressive values it supposedly stood for. In 2020, Biden defeated Trump and populist forces around the world suffered setbacks in the wake of the Covid pandemic. These developments were greeted with a collective sigh of relief in Washington, London, Brussels, Berlin and Tokyo: "Trump, populism, Covid, this was all just a bad dream."



UPI

Goodnight BLM kneeling, goodnight liberal Canadian PM feelings, goodnight German imperialists' moral appealing.



F. Andrieu/Agencepeps



Bernd Von Jutrczenka/DPA

But it wasn't. From Afghanistan, Ukraine and Palestine to the domestic situation in the U.S. itself, the Biden presidency oversaw the continued collapse of the liberal status quo. The very party supposed to embody global enlightenment oversaw the genocide in Gaza, the greatest crime in generations. While an air of fatuous optimism hung

around Biden and his administration, militarily, economically and politically the ground was eroding from under their feet.

As a result, in all Western imperialist countries the forces of right-wing reaction are ascendant. Yesterday's *continued on page 2*



Liberalism...

(continued from page 1)

triumphant liberals are being thrown out one after the other. Kamala Mania—the hope that a non-senile person could keep the status quo going just a little longer—represented the last burst of energy of agonizing liberalism. It was as deluded as it was short-lived. Trump's victory on November 5 both symbolizes and confirms the defeat of the liberal wing of the imperialist establishment.

This is not a fluke. The shift away from liberalism has much deeper causes than Donald Trump, social media and disinformation. At bottom this ideological shift in the American ruling class is a reflection of U.S. hegemony slipping away. When the U.S. stood as the uncontested world power, it could afford the luxury of liberal democracy at home and abroad. Now that the pressure is increasing on all fronts, liberalism is an unnecessary hindrance to U.S. global dominance. There was always a mailed fist under the velvet glove. But now the glove is too expensive and it's coming off.

Before the U.S. elections, liberals were already ditching their own "values" as fast as they possibly could. Open borders, international law, trans rights, multiculturalism, anti-racism—finished are the days when the ruling class itself proclaimed to stand for these high principles. Finished are the days of Trudeau, Jacinda Ardern and Obama. Now Sir Keir Starmer is what passes for left-wing in ruling circles.

Is the situation hopeless? For those who place their faith in the enlightenment of the progressive elites, the situation is indeed hopeless. All they can do is curse

the masses for being backward as they themselves prepare to kowtow to reaction. But it is precisely among the working masses, including the millions who supported Trump, that hope is to be found.

Defeating the liberals is the worst thing that can happen to the forces of populist reaction. Now they will have to navigate the impossible currents of a collapsing world order themselves. It is one thing to channel the deep popular anger at the elite. It is another to solve the underlying cause of this anger. Trump and his international co-thinkers will have no choice but to repress and grind down the working class of the world; eventually, the masses will turn against them. In which direction will this energy be channeled? This is the great question of our time.

A little over 30 years ago, communism was proclaimed dead and the triumph of liberal democracy over the Soviet Union was heralded as the "end of history." Today everyone knows that history hasn't ended. Almost everyone knows, or feels, that liberal democracy is utterly bankrupt. As for communism, it isn't dead, but nor is it quite alive. Splintered, sclerotic and isolated from the working class, communists have a steep slope to climb. As a new period of reaction opens, it is our task to make up the lost time and prepare the working class for the struggles to come.

If the forces of the revolutionary left continue to clutch in vain to the coattails of liberals, they will continue to alienate the working class and be an irrelevant factor. The greatest danger in the coming period is for the left to wait in expectation for the liberals to lead the "resistance." Equally bankrupt will be the impulse of some to separate themselves from the masses and seek refuge in abstract

phrase-mongering about revolution. Both these trends have been dominant these past decades. Both must be discarded. The only way Marxists can become a living factor is if they draw the appropriate lessons from the last 30 years of failure and offer a path forward for the working class, in a complete rupture with both liberalism and right-wing populism.

In the immediate period, defensive struggles will no doubt be on the order of the day. As the liberals abandon the oppressed groups they claimed to champion—black people, Muslims, trans peo-

ple, immigrants, women—communists must be in the vanguard of their struggles. But they must seek to build these movements on stronger foundations, away from the moralism and sentimentalism of the liberals and intricately linked to the material interests of all workers. Ultimately, the working class will be the deciding factor. To win its allegiance, communists must show, through the course of class struggle, that unlike the traitors leading them today, they have a program that can materially advance its interests and lead to its liberation. ■



WV Photo

Cindy Nolan 1962–2024

Our comrade Cindy Nolan died of brain cancer on December 7. She was 62 years old. From her youngest days as one of eleven children in an impoverished black family until her death, Cindy was an impassioned fighter against oppression. She joined the New York Spartacus Youth League in Spring 1982 and later that year was an active participant in building the 5,000-strong labor/black mobilization we initiated that stopped the Klan from marching in Washington, D.C. This had a lifelong impact on her, which she often spoke of, as a demonstration in action of the revolutionary road to black freedom.

Moving to the Bay Area, where she married our comrade Todd Nolan in 1987, Cindy was a student and member of our campus fraction at San Francisco State University. There she was a force to be reckoned with in political combat with our opponents. Battles with mental illness took her out of the party. But when she stabilized, she worked as a stalwart party sympathizer and fought to make her way back into membership.

Cindy regularly outdid other comrades in selling subscriptions to *Work-*

ers Vanguard. She almost always intervened at party forums and other events and wasn't afraid to write a critical letter when she disagreed with something we had written or said.

Although she and Todd had split up, Cindy moved back in with him and became his main caregiver in the last years of his life, while fighting tooth and nail against the money-grubbing healthcare industry. During this time, she was dealing with her own diagnosis of brain cancer. Here again, Cindy defied the odds, living for over four years with a cancer that is usually fatal within months. Throughout that time, Cindy not only avidly followed and supported the political rearming of the ICL, but also traveled to other locals to assist in our interventions.

Despite her ups and downs, Cindy never gave up on the fight to be a good communist. Nothing made her happier than the news that her reapplication for membership had been accepted and she had been made a member emeritus in September this year. Sadly, she never recovered enough to participate again as a member in the party's work and discussions. Nonetheless, she died, as they say, with her boots on.

CORRECTION

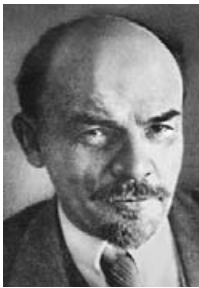
In "Police Brutality—How to Get Justice" (WV No. 1182, September 2024) we wrote that Mario Gonzalez was shot dead by Alameda cops. This is incorrect. Gonzalez was asphyxiated by Alameda cops in April 2021 after they wrestled and pinned him to the ground.

Free Mangione!

On 7 November 1938, Herschel Grynszpan, a 17-year-old Polish Jew living in Paris, walked into the German embassy and assassinated a Nazi diplomat. Grynszpan spent 20 months in French prisons before being handed over to the Nazis and transferred to a concentration camp. While rejecting the tactic of individual terror, Trotsky vigorously demanded that Grynszpan be freed from the clutches of the bourgeois state. Similar considerations guide our attitude to the imprisoned Luigi Mangione, who is accused of striking down a capitalist parasite.



TROTSKY



LENIN

We Marxists consider the tactic of individual terror inexpedient in the tasks of the liberating struggle of the proletariat as well as oppressed nationalities. A single isolated hero cannot replace the masses. But we understand only too clearly the inevitability of such convulsive acts of despair and vengeance. All our emotions, all our sympathies are with the self-sacrificing avengers even though they have been unable to discover the correct road. Our sympathy becomes intensified because Grynszpan is not a political militant but an inexperienced youth, almost a boy, whose only counselor was a feeling of indignation. To tear Grynszpan out of the hands of capitalist justice, which is capable of chopping off his head to further serve capitalist diplomacy, is the elementary, immediate task of the international working class!...

In the moral sense, although not for his mode of action, Grynszpan may serve as an example for every young revolutionist. Our open moral solidarity with Grynszpan gives us an added right to say to all the other would-be Grynszpans, to all those capable of self-sacrifice in the struggle against despotism and bestiality: *Seek another road!* Not the lone avenger but only a great revolutionary mass movement can free the oppressed, a movement that will leave no remnant of the entire structure of class exploitation, national oppression, and racial persecution.

—L.D. Trotsky, "For Grynszpan: Against Fascist Pogrom Gangs and Stalinist Scoundrels" (February 1939)

WORKERS VANGUARD



Marxist Newspaper of the Central Committee of the Spartacist League/U.S., section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

DIRECTOR OF PARTY PUBLICATIONS: Liz Gordon
EDITOR: Michael Davissou
PRODUCTION MANAGER: François Donau

MANAGING EDITOR: Jeanne Mitchell
CIRCULATION MANAGER: Miguel Acevedo

Workers Vanguard (ISSN 0276-0746) is published quarterly by the Spartacist Publishing Co., 299 Broadway, Suite 1618, New York, NY 10007. Telephone: (212) 732-7862 (Editorial), (212) 732-7861 (Business). Address all correspondence to: Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116. Email address: vanguard@tlac.net. Domestic subscription: \$5/4 issues. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Workers Vanguard*, Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116.

Opinions expressed in signed articles or letters do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint. The closing date for news in this issue is December 18.

No. 1183

December 2024

WORKERS VANGUARD

Marxist Newspaper of the Central Committee of the Spartacist League/U.S.

- \$5/4 issues of *Workers Vanguard* (includes English-language *Spartacist*)
- International rate: \$15/4 issues
- \$4/4 issues of *El Antiimperialista* (en español) (includes Spanish-language *Spartacist*)
- I would like to contribute \$_____ to the production of *Workers Vanguard*.

Name _____

Address _____

_____ Apt. # _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____) _____ Email _____

Make checks payable/mail to:
Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116
Purchase *Workers Vanguard* subscriptions online at: icli.org/ww/subscribe



1183

South Korea

To Defend Democratic Rights,



Break the U.S. Alliance!

U.S. Forces Korea/Reuters, KCTU/X

December 4: Mass protest in Seoul. South Korean and U.S. military with Yoon Suk-yeol (inset).

The article below first appeared as a December 10 Spartacist supplement in both English and Korean.

The attempt to impose martial law has been pushed back, but South Korea's crisis is far from over. Millions are protesting to demand the ouster of right-wing president Yoon Suk-yeol, making clear that they do not want a return to the days of the military dictatorship. But a successful fight to defend democratic rights in South Korea requires understanding what lies behind the drive to repression and reaction. The root cause propelling the country toward disaster is the alliance with U.S. imperialism.

For more than 75 years, South Korea has served the U.S. as an anti-communist

bastion in East Asia. As the Cold War wound down in the late 1980s, and amid widespread protests against the U.S.-backed dictatorship, Washington decided that the chokehold on the masses could be loosened without endangering private property and the *chaebol* capitalist conglomerates that dominate the economy. Adopting a democratic facade, South Korea was fully integrated into the liberal world order. It became a major beneficiary of capitalist globalization while remaining dependent on and oppressed by imperialism, as shown by the 1997 and 2008 economic crises.

Now, however, the U.S. world order is unraveling. To reverse this, the U.S. has

embarked on a course of confronting its chief rival, China, as well as Russia. As a key frontline state, South Korea is being squeezed more and more. On the military side, this has meant the deployment of advanced U.S. weaponry against China, South Korean military equipment sent to Ukraine, stepped-up war games against North Korea and demands for ever-higher military spending. Economically, pressure from Washington has led South Korea to greatly reduce trade with China, leading to a record \$18 billion deficit, while the already fragile economy will be hit even harder by Trump's protectionism. The U.S. drive against China is the central factor pushing the contradic-

tions of South Korean capitalism toward a breaking point.

The Biden administration criticized Yoon's martial law declaration, concerned that he had overreached and was destabilizing a crucial ally. But this should not blind anyone to the underlying dynamic. The circumstances that allowed for South Korea's period of economic growth and democratization have come to an end, and the pressures toward a reactionary crackdown can only heighten. The return of Trump means that the screws will be turned ever tighter, and the South Korean capitalists will be impelled to launch deeper attacks on democratic rights as well as the militant trade-union movement.

What Way Forward?

The anti-Yoon protests have prominently included strikes by the KCTU union federation as well as youth born well after the end of the previous military dictatorship. Yes, Yoon must be brought down. But the removal of one particularly right-wing president cannot address the social catastrophe facing South Korea. The problem is that the main force that the protests look to as an alternative is itself tied to the U.S. alliance which is fueling the drive to reaction.

The KCTU and other protest leaders are pushing for Yoon's People Power Party (PPP) to be replaced by South Korea's other major capitalist party, the Democratic Party (DPK). The DPK's fealty to U.S. imperialism was shown clearly when Moon Jae-in welcomed the addition of American Thaad anti-missile launchers against China during his term as president. As for the labor movement, leaders of the KCTU were arrested and imprisoned under the DPK, just as under the PPP today.

Resolving the crisis in the interests of the working masses requires a *political break* with the DPK and the smaller liberal and populist parties that serve as its satellites. They cannot solve the social and economic disaster facing the country because, like the right wing, they are beholden to the South Korean capitalists and their U.S. imperialist overlords.

The fight to defend democratic rights and advance the interests of South Korea's workers and poor requires forging a proletarian anti-imperialist front

continued on page 9

Zionist Carnage Spreads

Why Can't Anyone Stop Netanyahu?

The following article is reprinted from an October 4 *Spartacist* supplement (English edition), incorporating a correction of a minor factual error. For over a year, the U.S.-backed genocidal Zionists have slaughtered and displaced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and threatened regional war through attacks in Lebanon and Iran. Now, in the aftermath of the overthrow of the Iran/Russia-backed Assad regime in Syria by Sunni rebels, Netanyahu and the U.S. imperialists are riding high. Israeli forces immediately seized on the situation to invade Syria beyond the Golan Heights (occupied in the 1967 war). In addition, Israel's air force and navy have destroyed Syria's military assets, while the U.S. has launched its own missile strikes. The international working class must oppose these attacks and any Zionist or imperialist encroachments into Syria! One thing is certain: the fall of the hated Assad regime and the establishment of a new one made up

of "reformed" Islamists promises nothing good for the oppressed in the region.

In the wake of these developments, a part of the left has cheered the fall of a tyrannical regime. In the process, they have downplayed the victory this represents for Israel and the U.S. as well as the reactionary character of the new rulers of Syria. Then there is another part of the left that laments the fall of Assad while downplaying how his regime was a total obstacle to the fight against imperialism and Zionism. Neither of these trends offer any road forward for the peoples of Syria or the cause of Palestinian liberation. As the article below explains, the unity of the various nations and religious groups in the region can only be forged through intransigent opposition to U.S. imperialism and Zionism. But to wage this struggle consistently, it is necessary to oppose the Islamist and nationalist strategies, which are leading to one defeat after another.

continued on page 8



Michael Kappeler/Getty (top), Sipa/AP

Top: Netanyahu at UN General Assembly, September 27. Bottom: Dahieh neighborhood in southern Beirut destroyed by Israeli bombing, October 2.

The Victory that Wasn't



How to Put the Machinists on Top

Left: IAM leadership and its demoralizing strategy choked the life out of the strike—unmanned SeaTac picket site, October 27. Right: IAM 751 Mobilize! turned indoor rally into mass picket line, showing way forward for union struggle, Seattle, October 15.

The following articles were originally printed in the fifth Workers Vanguard supplement (November 17) to address the IAM strike against Boeing, except for "How We Fought to Escalate Boeing Strike" which is new. The other supplements can be found at icli.org/pubs/wv.

* * *

Ever since his announcement of the strike's end, District 751 head Jon Holden has been busy proclaiming "victory" over Boeing. However, actual events tell a different tale. Holden's team never wanted the strike in the first place and demobilized it at every step, including by keeping strike pay low and picket lines sparse

and devoid of initiative to stop scabs. This sabotage was rooted not in incompetence or even simple malice, but rather a deeply flawed strategy that refused to take the fight to Boeing and create real trouble for the bosses and their politicians.

Playing the waiting game of "one day longer, one day stronger"—instead of organizing the battle to make Boeing buckle—only dragged out the strike and demoralized the ranks who were eager to fight. There was a clear path to victory: Rally the 33,000-strong Machinists and the rest of labor at Boeing and beyond to halt all work and parts deliveries. Holden's strategy, though, ran in the very opposite direction.

Despite this misleadership, the Machin-

ists held firm for weeks and backed Boeing into a corner. But when the CEO bared his claws and threatened to burn the company to the ground to punish the union, Holden & Co. predictably played dead rather than seize the moment to finish the job. With union officials outright abandoning the battle and many Machinists feeling the pressure to pay the bills, almost the exact same contract that had earlier been rejected two-to-one was rammed through. None of the main strike demands were met. This is not what victory looks like.

IAM leaders further throttled the strike by aligning the union behind the bosses' Democratic Party. Pledging to ensure

Harris's victory, they first tried to head off the strike and then worked to keep it under wraps. Matters were not to get out of hand as Harris scrambled for working-class votes. In the end, of course, the union bureaucracy failed to deliver Harris a victory. But by delivering an end to the strike before Election Day in collaboration with Labor Secretary Julie Su, they did more for her than for the union membership.

If it had been pursued to establish union dominance over Boeing, the strike could have won decisively and improved the position of this country's working class in the face of increasingly hard times ahead. But even now, all is not lost. It is crucial to take stock of the strike in order to put the union on the right track in anticipation of attacks to come.

As production gears up, Machinists will be confronted with the safety and quality crises that have compounded all the problems of the job. Management has announced a major round of layoffs, which might bypass Machinists for the moment but will ax the jobs of other union members, such as SPEEA engineers. The threat to move production to non-union plants—wielded by the company yet again to undercut the strike and get its way—hangs over the union's head. On top of it all, Trump's election has opened up a new period of uncertainty for the labor movement.

Machinists would do well to bring forward a leadership that can successfully guide the union through this turbulence. Foldin' Holden strangled the strike and forced financially strapped workers to vote for the contract even though they recognized its shortcomings. With the storm clouds of new battles already gathering, the Holden crew talks of union members working to "bring this company back to financial success." To turn things around, Machinists must reject this perspective—which can only come at the expense of the workforce—and instead look to fight for their class interests against the bosses in each and every case.

In particular, "no" and "yes" voters should join forces to push through a leadership change—not just a change in the faces at the top, but also a change in strategy. Holden himself catapulted into his current position in response to the 2013-14 betrayal of his predecessor—a betrayal that cost the Machinists their pension. But Holden never had a plan capable of getting it back. ■

Save All Working People from Boeing!

The strike's outcome is all the more maddening because the IAM's position was initially so strong. Boeing production jobs are not what they used to be—and neither is the country in general. The U.S.-dominated world order is cracking, and the widely hated Biden/Harris administration rains down economic ruin. The wreck that Boeing has made of its production process and the squeezing of its workforce—and the disasters that have followed—reflect all-sided capitalist decay. Workers across the country have grown increasingly combative and anxious about the future.

Against this backdrop, the Boeing Machinist strike had the potential to spark a wider working-class fightback both locally and nationally—if the union had fought to draw its working-class supporters into a struggle to impose their will on Boeing. In this event, the strike would have been a beacon to the working class as a whole, opened the door to union control of safety and quality and made it possible to win demands like the restoration of the pension and the elimination of the wage progression by ensuring top pay for all.

These demands, if won by the Machinists, would set the stage for other workers to win the same—which explains in

part why Boeing was not going to cave on pensions unless it was forced to do so through a serious confrontation. The Machinists had no shortage of allies they could have mobilized in solidarity action: Boeing engineers, firefighters and truck drivers, unions that handle Boeing parts like the ILWU longshoremen and Teamsters, other unions that have taken on their bosses recently like IBEW Local 46 electricians and UNITE HERE Local 8 hotel workers, to name a few.

Individual workers from these unions and more turned out to the picket lines. But even while workers have displayed a willingness to fight for relief from staggering prices and job and retirement

insecurity, union leaders do everything to restrain those impulses and keep them within the bounds considered safe by the bosses. Holden sought to make the IAM "full partners" with the crooks who run Boeing and to secure a "fair share" for workers in that context. The strike hit the limit of what the bosses were willing to concede without their grip on industry or society at large being challenged. A strategy different from the union bureaucracy's is needed, one based not on the usual "give and take" at the bargaining table but rather on provoking a clash between the counterposed interests of the workers and the bosses.

The union can strengthen its hand right

now by laying claim to independent enforcement of safety and quality on the job—and acting to shut down assembly on the spot if need be. Boeing has thrown safety and quality out the window in the pursuit of profit, and the flying public has paid for it in blood. The federal government is around to cover up as much as possible to help the company get out from under the dark clouds. Reliance on joint labor-management safety teams or government agencies like the FAA will not save working people from Boeing. To accomplish that, the union must make inroads against the company's perceived "right" to have the final say in all aspects of assembly. ■

WORKERS VANGUARD Supplement 10 September 2024
Machinists: Save Us All from Boeing!
Vote No and Strike for Better!

WORKERS VANGUARD Supplement 30 September 2024
Boeing Machinists: Escalate the Strike to Win!

WORKERS VANGUARD Supplement 20 October 2024
Boeing Machinists:
Vote No, Step Up the Strike!

WORKERS VANGUARD Supplement 3 November 2024
REJECT the Blackmail Contract! Make Boeing Buckle!

WORKERS VANGUARD on Boeing Strike
workersvanguard.org/topics/boeing

Down With Bosses’ “Divide and Rule” Schemes!

In the presidential elections, many Boeing Machinists, fed up with the liberal status quo, voted for Trump. They expressed distrust of the Democrats after being heavily bruised by the inflation of the last four years, made worse by the fact that Boeing has long had Democratic Party politicians in its hip pocket. A good portion of these Trump supporters are militantly pro-union and keenly aware of their ability to shut down the company. They dislike self-righteous liberals who claim that Trump voters are the problem and judge the Republican standard-bearer to be a “lesser evil,” whose economic policies will supposedly provide a greater trickle-down benefit.

But Trump is no answer. While he will make life miserable for the Democrats, he will make it even more miserable for working people. He is backed by Wall Street bankers and a growing set of elites, like Elon Musk, who prefer his brand of rule, not least his vicious anti-union stance. The IAM leadership—by throwing in their lot with the Democratic Party and burying the strike—only contributed to making Trump great again. In opposition to both the reactionary candidates, Harris and Trump, we urged a vote to the working-class alternative provided by the presidential ticket of the Party for Socialism and Liberation.

The policies of both the Democrats and the Republicans fuel divisions in the working class. Trump regularly rails against newly arrived immigrant workers—perhaps the most vulnerable section of the

class—and Harris proposed her own set of harsh anti-immigrant measures. The liberal elite wag their finger at white workers as hopeless bigots and harden



Lindsey Wasson/AP

Everett, October 23: Machinists of different political beliefs rallied opposition to rotten contract offer outside voting location.

the partisan lines, all the better to mask the role of the entire ruling class in driving immigrants from their homelands and maintaining them as a cheap pool of labor to drive down everyone’s conditions. The pitting of migrants vs. more established immigrants vs. native-born workers is a ruse to put workers at each other’s throats and prevent them from banding together against their common class enemy. During the strike, foreign-born as well as

Trump-supporting Machinists were on the frontlines, seeking to escalate the struggle. The defense of working people in the crosshairs today is crucial to preparing the defense of the union tomorrow.

As the experience of the Machinists shows, if union members are not fighting to bring everyone up, then they are left open to division and defeat. To steal the pension in 2013-14, Boeing drove a wedge between new hires and senior workers with the aid of the IAM leadership. A sizable signing bonus was inserted in the giveback contract to entice the support of new hires, and the union tops scheduled the vote when many senior workers were away on vacation. It passed by the slimmest of margins. This time around, Boeing attempted similar tricks, and it succeeded in imposing a probationary period on new hires for the first time—a setback that puts them at the complete mercy of the bosses and carries the danger of undermining future union struggle.

A leadership committed to transforming the union into a fighting force for the interests of the working class would oppose all the bosses’ divide-and-rule schemes—and put forward a way for the union to defend the most vulnerable and break down those divisions. For example, to bridge the divide between new hires and senior workers, it would strive not only to revive the pension and abolish probation, but also to institute union-run, company-paid training to ensure all new hires are up to speed on safety and union standards.

The IAM leadership, though, plays right into the hands of divide-and-rule. This is also evident in its failed effort to organize Boeing’s North Charleston plant—a vital task to counter the outsourcing threats that have bedeviled the Machinists. Thus far, every organizing drive in this plant has faltered because the bosses pit workers against one another along regional and racial lines.

Anti-union forces paint the IAM as a vehicle of liberal Democrats that will leave workers in the South worse off. Union officials give this narrative some legs not only by attaching the IAM to the Democrats, but also by having called into question the skill of South Carolina workers in the name of defending jobs in Washington state before the National Labor Relations Board. What they refuse to do is mobilize working-class action against layoffs or segregation on the job at Boeing South Carolina—which would go a long way toward uniting the workforce behind the union. A fighting IAM leadership would have dispatched a delegation to North Charleston to recruit workers there to join the strike and the union.

The union tops’ avoidance of the fight against racial oppression is a great gift to the bosses. It not only preserves the South as a vast “open shop,” but also brings the entire working class down in every other way. White workers will not be able to make any lasting gains so long as a layer of the working class is oppressed beneath them. If the multiracial working class remains atomized—fighting for the same piece of a shrinking pie—it will remain trapped in a cycle of defeat. Instead, the multiracial working class must fight for the whole pie. To meet their needs and achieve their own emancipation from wage slavery, white workers must champion black liberation. In turn, black workers will not be able to throw off their oppression—which is embedded in capitalist rule—absent integrated class struggle. ■

For a Class-Struggle Leadership!

Some opposition groupings in the IAM place a heavy emphasis on democratic participation to the exclusion of all else. Union democracy is necessary to facilitate the fullest discussion and debate over the way forward. But the union’s bureaucratic straitjacket is a product of its leadership’s commitment to being teammates of the bosses and containing the discontent of the ranks. It is impossible to tear off that straitjacket without challenging the existing leadership and its dead-end strategy.

Initiated as a strike committee, IAM 751 Mobilize! stands out for attempting to provide a real alternative. At the only strike rally initiated by Holden—an indoor showcase for Dem-

ocratic Party politicians—Mobilize! intervened and turned it into a march to a nearby picket line and a display of force there. During the contract votes at Everett and Renton, its members rallied opposition to the bullshit offers while calling for an escalation of the strike in opposition to the Holden bureaucracy.

The next step is to build on these efforts to push for new leadership elections—to elect candidates who reject the perks and privileges of union posts and want to strengthen the union. The aim must be not only to sweep aside Holden and his fellow bureaucrats, but also to turn the IAM into a fighting battalion of the working class. Here are some lines of struggle to that end:

- **Rebuild the strike fund—no money for Democrats or Republicans!**
- **No layoffs!**
- **Organize the unorganized! For black liberation!**
- **For union control of safety and quality!**
- **For a union leadership that fights for the interests of the entire working class!**
- **For a workers party that fights for a workers government!**



WV Photo

Everett, November 4: Boeing Machinist holding IAM 751 Mobilize! flyer urging strikers to reject contract.

How We Fought to Escalate Boeing Strike

For the duration of the recent Boeing Machinist strike, representatives of *Workers Vanguard* were in the Puget Sound region. Through a series of political struggles on the ground, we encouraged the founding and activity of a strike committee, IAM 751 Mobilize!, which brought together Machinists who wanted to escalate in the face of the union bureaucracy’s demobilization of the strike. This development is a testament to the vital role of leadership in struggle, pointing the way forward at every turn against the bureaucracy’s strategy and the divisions it helped create, including between new hires and senior workers.

A Strategy Worthy of the Machinists

We first intervened after IAM District 751 president Jon Holden recommended the pre-strike offer as “historic” despite its complete inadequacy. We sought to

channel rank-and-file anger into a rejection of Holden’s entire strategy—which flowed from his pro-capitalist outlook—by providing an alternative rooted in class independence and the fight for union dominance over Boeing. Our aim was to fuse the militancy of the workers with conscious political leadership.

We came across plenty of Machinists, from MAGA supporters to the socialist-minded, who wanted to make a fight of it against Boeing. We not only argued against the tricks of the Holden leadership and “divide and rule,” but also laid out concrete steps to take at each juncture. This approach gained us a hearing—and even earned us a grudging respect from fighting Machinists who are far from sharing our socialist views. In particular, we stressed that the key to victory was to break

continued on page 6

Boeing...

(continued from page 5)

out of the restraints placed on the strike by a union leadership aligned with liberal Democrats.

This alignment ensured the IAM tops were *not* going to create ripples for the bosses and their kept politicians. Their corresponding strike strategy was “one day longer, one day stronger,” making it a waiting game. Supposedly, all that mattered is that the longer the strike dragged on, the more the damage to Boeing’s profits. As such, the strength of the picket lines was immaterial to the strike’s outcome.

But this strategy could only bring defeat. One reason was that the longer the strike dragged on, the greater the economic pressure on individual Machinists. This pressure caused hardship, sowed division among the union membership and eventually forced the swallowing of an insufficient contract. Making matters worse, the union bureaucracy set strike pay so low (\$250 a week) that many Machinists were feeling the pinch a couple weeks in.

Other left groups, like Kshama Sawant-led Workers Strike Back (WSB), spotted the problem of the low strike pay and centered their intervention around calls for its increase. No doubt, strike pay needed to be higher. But in and of itself, greater strike pay would only allow the Machinists to hold out a little longer. The WSB was simply proposing a more robust version of Holden’s strategy. But the strike was never going to win by continuing further down the track laid by the IAM leadership.

“One day longer, one day stronger” has a fundamental flaw. If one measures success by the yardstick of lost revenue, Boeing got clobbered, because the strike was perhaps the costliest in the U.S. this century. But Boeing is not some mom-and-pop operation; it is the very embodiment of monopoly capital in a strategic industry with a massive military division. The strike was not going to proceed linearly down the “one day longer” track and make the aerospace giant capitulate to demands so damaging to its interests as restoration of pensions, end to forced overtime and the like. In other words, Boeing was not going to sit by and lose a war of attrition—and the bosses’ government would not let that happen either. No, *Boeing and its allies would escalate before it simply conceded.*

And that is, in fact, what happened. Boeing decided it had had enough; the CEO threatened to bring in scabs from around the world, move production to non-union plants and even burn the company to the ground to break the strike. Predictably, the Holden team folded. It was not going to engage in a head-on confrontation in the shadow of the elections, especially since it was heavily invested in a Harris victory.

So, Boeing’s threat to escalate worked. The only thing that was going to change the equation, at any point, in favor of the IAM was for *the union to escalate*: e.g., build mass picket lines, cut off parts deliveries, organize Boeing’s non-union operations. Doing so required rejecting Holden’s strategy, actively breaking down divisions among the Machinists and drawing other Boeing employees, trade unionists and the flying public into the struggle by appealing to their common interest against the class enemy.



David Ryder/Reuters

What was needed was a mobilization of working-class force to make Boeing capitulate and put the union on top.

We motivated the need to organize the strike on this basis in five strike supplements, each outlining a plan of action for a particular juncture. The first, popularly titled “Save Us All from Boeing!”, urged Machinists to take matters into their own hands and impose their will on a company in crisis. It sparked interest in working with us to form a class-struggle pole in the strike. The second argued for an escalation to win and proposed turning picket lines into workers assemblies to get the ball rolling on debate over strike strategy. That became a focus of our activity for some time—to find and bring together fighting Machinists.

Sectarians and Strike Committees: Never the Two Shall Meet

Early on, we came across two supporters of the Internationalist Group (IG) on the picket lines, who denounced our intervention into the strike as substitutionalism. For the IG, the notion of revolutionaries attempting to leverage anger at the existing union leadership’s sabotage of a strike to build a new, class-struggle leadership to advance the interests of the workers was beyond the pale! It was like staring in the mirror of our sectarian past. They preferred to make grand declarations of class-struggle intent with no point of application in reality. But socialists who are opposed to shaping the class struggle in favor of spreading good ideas

are not socialists but, at best, preachers.

Workers will embrace socialist ideas because they are clearly demonstrated to make a difference in the living struggle, not simply because they sound nice. Our strongest rebuke to the IG and like-minded sectarians was not what we said that day, but what we did shortly after. Until then, Machinists who wanted to participate in what became Mobilize! had been unable to sit down together to plan common work. So, an action was conceived and organized: turning Hold-

put workers in charge of the plants and society at large.

WSB had some support among the Machinists. But during the mass picket action, their organization was busy elsewhere building a rally for liberal politician Jill Stein to take place later the same day. At the Stein event, their speakers neglected to even mention the action. Shortly after, the Seattle-centered WSB abandoned the striking Machinists to stomp for Stein in Michigan. WSB had publicized another strike committee,



Workers Strike Back

October 15: WV supported IAM 751 Mobilize! building mass picket. On same day, Kshama Sawant of Workers Strike Back stumped for liberal presidential candidate Jill Stein.

en’s October strike rally into a mass picket line. The action provided a focus and a cause—something that could tangibly impact the struggle—and was the launching pad for the rank-and-file committee. In contrast, the union bureaucracy brought workers out to the Seattle IAM hall to let off steam and subject them to Democratic Party politicians.

Based on our own experience on the picket lines, we knew there would be plenty of Machinists pissed off at Holden in the crowd and looking to deliver a blow against Boeing. If anything, we underestimated the potential response, having failed to consider the possibility of rallying the numbers to set up a mass picket line to stop scabs. That was a missed opportunity—to immediately attempt to generate support for such action among the roughly 250 marchers. Nonetheless, the action was a major success—and three days later a group of Machinists met for Mobilize!’s first meeting. This demonstrated the force of program that matches the objective interests of the class.

Opportunists Abandon the Working Class

Mobilize! was established and consolidated as a united front of Machinists and their working-class allies who wanted to escalate the strike in opposition to the union leadership. Striking workers and their supporters, irrespective of political affiliation, were welcome to work jointly in that direction and in the process establish a way forward for the strike through open debate. We were confident that our strategy would alone prove capable of winning the core strike demands and catapulting the working class into a better position. We argued our case and engaged in exchanges on everything from strike strategy to the elections and Palestinian struggle, without drawing organizational lines.

The united-front conception matched the needs of the Machinists, who were eager for advice—even competing advice—in order to figure out how best to confront Boeing. Some of the strongest defenders of the united front were Machinists who had an association with other left groups. They recognized that we had something unique to offer. For example, when it came to Boeing’s military operations, WSB advised that it was not in the interests of the workers to produce military material, while we advised that it was in the interests of the workers to establish union control over where that material ends up. The former is born of liberal moralism, throws workers out of a job and contributes nothing to anti-militarist struggle; the latter is part of a perspective to strengthen the union and

which we repeatedly urged to merge with Mobilize!. Instead, the WSB-promoted committee became a nonfactor. WSB had a clear choice—the workers or the liberals—and its actions left no doubt where its fundamental priorities lie. WSB’s opportunism put it in the exact same place as the sectarians—abdicating leadership.

Opportunists Split the Working Class

Unity in action is important to deliver the strongest punch for a cause. It is also a powerful sorting-out tool. Toward the strike’s end, we twice issued supplements to rally opposition to rotten contract offers in conjunction with Mobilize!. The first effort was successful, giving Mobilize! some momentum. A heightening of the struggle for a strong strike against the union bureaucracy was immediately posed, because the Holden gang was clearly going to try again to bulldoze the strike before Election Day (and it did).

In the lead-up to the sellout, an apologist for the IAM bureaucracy within Mobilize! went on the offensive. Having failed to convince Mobilize! to become an adjunct of the bureaucracy, this individual resorted to making provocations against us. He could not abide our clear and consistent opposition to Holden’s strategy and so attempted to smear us with vile slander by distorting our position on “age of consent” laws. We exposed this as a thinly veiled ploy to whip up liberal hysteria in support of the very IAM leaders who were busy sinking the strike. We oppose all state interference into consensual sexual activity, but this question had nothing to do with the struggle at hand.

Some Mobilize! members—who were more susceptible to liberal pressure and shrank from doing anything to upset the bureaucracy—joined in the smear job; but others flatly rejected it. These latter Machinists fought to clarify the committee’s purpose and carried the debate: Mobilize! was going to fight to escalate in opposition to the union bureaucracy’s strategy. In contrast, the pro-bureaucracy clot drew its own organizational conclusions from this struggle. They split from Mobilize! and formed a committee associated with Labor Notes, an outfit that nurtures aspiring bureaucrats under the reform label.

Soon after the split, the union bureaucracy engineered the defeat of the strike at the insistence of Boeing and the Democrats. Despite our and Mobilize!’s best efforts, the burying of the strike has caused demoralization in the ranks. However, there remains a path forward: fight for a new, class-struggle leadership to arm Machinists and other unions for the battles on the horizon. ■

SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S.

Local Directory and Public Offices

iclfi.org • vanguard@tiac.net • X@WorkersVanguard

National Office: Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116, (212) 732-7860

Chicago Box 6441, Main PO, Chicago, IL 60680
chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net
Public Office: by appointment, call (312) 563-0441

Los Angeles Box 29574, Los Feliz Sta., Los Angeles, CA 90029
slsycla@sbcglobal.net
Public Office: by appointment, call (213) 380-8239

New York Box 3381, Church St. Sta., New York, NY 10008
nysl@tiac.net
Public Office: by appointment, call (212) 267-1025

Oakland Box 29497, Oakland, CA 94604
slbayarea@fastmail.net
Public Office: by appointment, call (510) 839-0851

TROTSKYIST LEAGUE IN QUEBEC AND CANADA

Montréal CP 83 Succ. Place-d’Armes, Montréal, QC H2Y 3E9, (514) 728-7578
trotskyste.montreal@gmail.com
f République-ouvrière • X@Rep_Ouvriere

Toronto Box 7198, Station A, Toronto, ON M5W 1X8, (416) 593-4138
trotskyist.toronto@gmail.com • @workertribune • XWorkers_Tribune

What Way Forward for the IBEW

The following Workers Vanguard supplement was issued on October 17. It stated that the share of union work in the electrical industry dropped fourfold. Due to the difficulty of verifying the figures, it is better to say that the share dropped substantially.

Earlier this year, the IBEW Local 46 Limited Energy (LE) unit in Seattle waged a ten-week strike. This collective action captured the attention of union members far beyond the Puget Sound region, especially among those in the IBEW's lower tiers. LE electricians earn substantially less than inside wiremen and, like much of this country's urban working class, are not able to live where they work. They walked off the job in April to pry what they needed from the hands of the NECA employers. When the dust settled, though, they had been made to accept a contract that contained a below-inflation wage increase and *no* paid time off. It is important to understand *why* this happened in order to chart a way forward for the union.

On one level, it is not so hard to figure out what went wrong. Despite the fighting spirit of the 1,000-strong Local 46 LE electricians, they could not escape injury from the double-barrel shotgun of the union's tiers, which pit one unit against another, and the Project Labor Agreements (PLAs), which ban any strike activity. This shotgun was wielded by the Local 46 leadership in service to the NECA bosses, and it proved fatal to the LE unit's strike.

At the strike's outset, the Local 46 business manager declared: "No more second-class citizens! No more big unit here, little unit there." But these fine words found no reflection in the conduct of the strike. The IBEW leadership had apprentices *cross the picket lines* and, in the name of abiding by the PLAs and the equivalent Community Workforce Agreements with the City of Seattle, had at least one-quarter of LE electricians *stay on the job*. The picket lines were kept small and extremely porous and limited to a handful of job sites at any one time. A strike is a class battle. If the union does not rally all its own forces, much less its working-class allies in the rest of the trades and beyond, to shut things down, it is all but surrendering in advance because the bosses are not going to show similar restraint.

The LE electricians fought the best they could under the circumstances and voted by wide margins to reject multiple contract proposals—until the union bureaucracy served up the final offer and called an end to the strike before a vote was taken. By that point, the inside wiremen's contract had expired, but they were to remain on the job at all costs. NECA threw some extra money their way while rebuffing calls to address work rule and safety concerns. So,

Lessons of Seattle "Limited Energy" Strike



Megan Farmer/KUOW

IBEW Local 46 workers on strike in Seattle, April 26.

the inside wiremen (IW) lost out, too. Here is the problem of the tiers and PLAs in a nutshell for the IBEW across the country: The union is left weaker and every electrician worse off.

Boosting NECA Weakens the IBEW

It does not have to be like this. But to find the way out, it is necessary to dig deeper to the root of the problem. The IBEW's overall trajectory is indistinguishable from that of organized labor as a whole. The triumph of the U.S. ruling class as the world's sole superpower a few decades ago was accompanied by a war on labor and a push for globalization—which hollowed out the country's manufacturing base. The IBEW and other unions were put back on their heels, and bitterly anti-union outfits went on the march. The reaction of the IBEW bureaucracy was—and remains—to bind the union ever more closely to the NECA employers in order to head off the mortal threat posed by the contractors who never hire union labor.

As a result, many new tiers, like the Construction Electricians/Construction Wiremen (CE/CWs), were introduced and the PLAs spread like wildfire, all to win union jobs and bring new members into the IBEW. What has been the result? Over this period, the share of union work in the electrical industry has dropped substantially, and the union is divided in almost every imaginable way: IW vs. LE vs. CE/CW, local vs. local, white vs. black, men vs. women, to name a few.

The contractors hire cheaper CE/CWs to perform work that previously would have gone to inside wiremen, and the CE/CWs in turn resent their limited prospects of ever moving up in the union. The lower tiers—CE/CW, LE and the like—are very much treated like second-class citizens, as are travelers in higher-paying locals, like San Francisco's Local 6. Historically excluded from the IBEW altogether, today black workers are heavily

confined to the lower tiers, replicating their segregation at the bottom of society. Racial segregation has long been an invaluable tool for the bosses—allowing them to keep the black population in wretched conditions and use that as a battering ram against white workers.

Organizing the unorganized is a burning question. But the IBEW is throttling itself, and looking more and more like a non-union operation every day thanks to its leadership's commitment to making NECA as competitive as possible in the contractors' bidding wars. Practices like spinning (turning back those dispatched by the union hall) and "at-will hiring" (permitting layoffs on any grounds) give the employers the final say on hiring. This further fuels divisions inside the union and erodes safety on the job—as the bosses inevitably weed out union militants, safety advocates and black and women workers. Market recovery programs and targeting funds are outright union subsidies of NECA and drive down everyone's take-home pay, while being touted as effective organizing tools.

Whatever short-term jobs are gained, it is *not* worth the cost of keeping the union locked in a downward spiral. Take the PLAs, the centerpiece of the union bureaucracy's organizing strategy. Increasingly desperate to slow the union's slide, IBEW leaders are increasingly approaching developers with union-inspired PLA proposals. In addition to their no-strike clauses, the PLAs often contain local hiring provisions, which undermine the union hiring hall while claiming to promote "diversity and inclusion." For example, the City of Seattle's CWAs mandate the hiring of workers from "economically distressed zip codes" as Priority Workers. Black and women workers are concentrated in such specially designated labor pools, which often constitute the union's lower tiers. This must be changed. Their status brings down the entire union and is the source of heightened racial and

other animosities among the union ranks. Some organizing! The PLAs are usually negotiated by liberal Democratic Party politicians, including Biden/Harris on the federal level, to paint themselves as "pro-union" and "pro-diversity" when in reality they are lighting the powder keg that can only blow apart the IBEW.

For a Fighting IBEW that Unites All Electricians!

Clinging to NECA will be the downfall of the IBEW—the union can regain strength only by standing on its own two feet. There must be a serious effort to organize the unorganized across the board not by granting concessions to NECA, but by taking the fight to the contractors. Non-union job sites should be picketed and shut down while making the case for union membership to the electricians working there and opening the IBEW's door to them. Such a fight would have to be consciously organized to counter the pressure of the sweet-tasting PLA poison and the bosses' sweet-talking Democratic and Republican politicians. Then it would be able to not only inject fresh blood into the union, but also propel its transformation into a class-independent force to secure the needs of all electricians and the broader working class.

Making the IBEW into an organization that non-union electricians feel compelled to join requires a parallel fight to counter the divisions inside the union. The tiers must be abolished, and equal pay and benefits for equal work at the highest level established for all electricians irrespective of specialty and location. All practices that discriminate against travelers, the CE/CWs and other lower tiers, black workers and women must be rooted out. **No second-class citizens!**

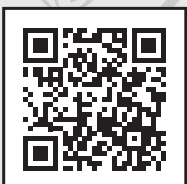
To cut through the bosses' divide-and-rule "diversity" schemes and solidify the bonds between the IBEW and the multi-racial working class as a whole, the union must establish full control over hiring, together with union-run, NECA-paid recruitment and training programs for black people and women. An important step toward putting hiring—and safety—under the union's purview would be to fight to abolish spinning and "at-will hiring." Jobs for all could be ensured by striving to reduce the length of the work day at no loss in pay, so even the most senior inside wiremen benefit from shared work.

The Local 46 LE electricians should be saluted for sticking out their necks *against* NECA. Their defeat will not have been in vain if rank-and-file IBEW electricians answer the call to try to clear the PLAs and tiers from the path of union struggle. The demonstrated determination of militant electricians to wage this fight and organize the unorganized would point the way forward to winning the war—having the working class run industry and society as well. With that in mind, we propose the following program for IBEWers:

- **Organize the unorganized through class-struggle methods!**
Down with the PLAs!
Picket lines mean don't cross!
- **Abolish all tiers!**
Equal pay and benefits for equal work at the highest levels for all!
No second-class union members!
- **For union control of hiring and safety!**
No spinning or "at-will hiring"!
Union-run, company-paid minority recruitment and training programs!
- **No reliance on Democrats and Republicans!**
For a workers party that fights for the interests of our class!

Read it here!

**WORKERS
VANGUARD**
on Labor Struggles



iclfi.org/wv/topics/labor

Netanyahu...

(continued from page 3)

Recent events only highlight the need for a new, anti-imperialist political pole in West Asia that can cut across the reactionary polarizations sinking the region ever deeper into reaction. The following article is a contribution toward this struggle.

* * *

In the year since October 7, the infernal Zionist machine has massacred tens of thousands of Palestinians. Now through continuous escalation it threatens a major regional war. In April, Israel bombed the Iranian embassy in Syria, in July it assassinated Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Teheran, and since then it has engaged in an offensive against Hezbollah, exploding thousands of paggers, killing its leaders—including Hasan Nasrallah—and raiding southern Lebanon. In response to Israel's crimes, millions have demonstrated, the International Criminal Court (ICC) has opened an investigation and Iran and Hezbollah have shot missiles at Israel. However, nothing seems to deter Israel's escalation.

Part of the explanation is that Netanyahu's government of butchers and fanatics is clear on its objective: the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from the river to the sea. The obstacle it confronts is that over the past decades Iran has gradually eroded Israel's military dominance in the region. Not only has Iran developed advanced weaponry, including the technology for nuclear weapons, but it has also taken advantage of disastrous U.S. wars in the region to consolidate a network of powerful militias. These developments are viewed as existential threats to Israel's Zionist project.

Now the Zionist right sees a historic opportunity to deal a crippling blow to Iran. Israel's population has been marshaled into a genocidal frenzy since October 7, its international reputation is already destroyed, and the U.S. promises unconditional support. In this context, Netanyahu thinks that by continuously escalating the conflict he can either secure a major capitulation from Iran and its allies or drag the U.S. into a direct war with the Islamic Republic. In either case, he hopes to ensure unopposed expansion into remaining Palestinian land and the long-term defense of Israel's borders.

However, the question remains: "Why can't anyone stop Netanyahu?" In some cases, the answer is obvious. The U.S. may not currently see a war with Iran as desirable, but this is entirely secondary to its commitment to defend Israel no matter what. Even if Biden were not senile, the lack of political determination to stop Israel's aggression would remain. As for the governments of Britain, Germany, France, Japan and other advanced "democracies," they are sycophants committed to upholding the U.S. world order even if it leads to the devastation of their own economies. They are not about to put up a fuss.

But what about the forces opposing Israel, such as Iran? Or the millions who have demonstrated against the genocide in Gaza? Why haven't they been able to stop the bloody spiral in West Asia? Here we must not only look at the balance of military force but also examine the political outlook of the various oppositions to Netanyahu. As we shall see, the real reason his government hasn't been stopped is that its opponents lack a bold and coherent program to defeat Zionism and throw off imperialist domination of the region.

The Ayatollah's Choice: Capitulation or Jihad?

First, we must look at the Axis of Resistance led by Iran, which includes Hezbollah and the Houthis in Yemen. Unlike most other Muslim regimes that condemn Israel in speeches while remaining aligned with the U.S. in practice, the Iranian regime and its allies have directly confronted Israel, including by launching missiles onto its territory. That said, dis-

plays of force like that of October 1 do not prove that the Axis of Resistance is committed to Palestinian liberation, nor that it has any sort of coherent plan to defeat Israel or more importantly the U.S. In fact, the truth is quite the opposite.

The overriding priority of the Iranian rulers is the preservation of the theocratic Shia regime. Since it was established by overthrowing the Shah, a U.S. puppet, the regime has been in continuous conflict with imperialist interests in the region. At the same time, the theocratic and capitalist nature of the regime limits Iran's ability to push back and defeat imperialism by uniting the peoples of West Asia in a common struggle.

The regime's problems start with Iran's own people, many of whom hate living under the whip of Islamic law and the mullahs. Women in particular are denied the most basic democratic rights, including that of deciding how to dress. Iran also includes different nationalities and reli-



Sobhan Farajvan/ZUMA

October 2 rally in Tehran, Iran protests assassination of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah by Zionist state.

gious groups which suffer repression and a denial of national rights. These internal tensions were on full display in the 2022 social explosion that occurred after the death in police custody of Jina Amini.

This tense internal situation means that whatever threat comes from the imperialists and Israel it must be balanced with stabilizing the domestic front, which in many ways appears more dangerous to the ruling clerics. This explains why in the midst of Israel's genocide in Gaza the Ayatollah allowed Masoud Pezeshkian to run for president and get elected on a platform of pacifying the West. This was not a u-turn but a logical outcome of the proclaimed doctrine of "strategic patience" in regard to Israel. The reformist wing of the regime thinks that if it can avoid a direct confrontation with Israel and obtain economic concessions from the West, then it will be able to reduce internal tensions and secure the stability of the regime.

The reformers are conscious that the price of such concessions is to stab the Palestinians and their other allies in the back. In late September, even as Israel was actively decapitating Hezbollah—Iran's main ally in the region—President Pezeshkian was in New York making appeals to reopen the 2015 nuclear negotiations. The shocking inaction at Israel's aggression against Lebanon was justified by a regime insider quoted in the *Financial Times* (26 September) saying that "inevitably, some important issues are being set aside for more urgent ones, at least temporarily. This is the price you pay when you adjust your approach in battle."

There is, of course, another wing of the ruling class—the so-called "hard-liners" who want to impose a more draconian religious order internally and pursue a more confrontational course against Israel. It is indeed possible that in a long attritional war with Israel and the U.S., Iran could come out on top. But this would come at a terrible price and at great risk to the regime.

Of course, the U.S. and Israel are very powerful militarily. But in addition to this is the fact that Iran's war effort would be hampered by its religious character. Given

the nature of the Islamic Republic, any war would largely be based on Shia sectarianism. On this basis it is impossible to unite the peoples of the entire region against imperialism and Zionism. Such a war would alienate much of West Asia and make it easy for the enemy—and the Sunni regimes hostile to the Shia—to foster religious and national conflicts among the various oppressed groups. This consideration makes a war with Israel much more costly and its outcome much more uncertain for the ruling clerics.

Lebanon provides a good illustration of the problem. The French colonialists consciously built Lebanon along sectarian lines in order to pit the various religious groups against each other and maintain their rule. But instead of overcoming such divisions and striving to unite Sunni, Shia and Christian against imperialism and Israel, Iran has focused its efforts on building Hezbollah, a militia based on the Shia community. This means that in

any conflict with Israel, Hezbollah must not only confront the external foe but also balance relations with other religious groups in Lebanon. This consideration is certainly an important factor in Hezbollah's restraint since October 7.

Clearly neither Hezbollah nor Iran is confident in their ability to confront Israel at the current time. In recent weeks, Netanyahu was able to exploit the indecision and wavering of his adversaries to devastating effect. Israel succeeded in decapitating Hezbollah's leadership and exposed Iran as an unreliable ally. Facing humiliation, the Iranian regime finally responded by shooting a salvo of 180 ballistic missiles at Israel. Now the initiative is back in the hands of Israel, which will decide whether it wants to further escalate the conflict.

One must keep in mind that it is by no means assured that an all-out war in the Middle East would see the position of the U.S. and Israel strengthened—in fact, quite the contrary is likely. That said, for Palestinian liberation and working-class emancipation to be advanced one cannot count on the Axis of Resistance. Instead, what is required is a program that is intransigent in its opposition to imperialism and that can unite the peoples of the Middle East. The pillars of such a program must be:

- *Defend Gaza, the West Bank, Yemen, Lebanon and Iran against Zionist and imperialist attacks!*
- *National liberation of Palestine, and recognition of full national rights, including self-determination for all nations!*
- *No state religion, no imposition of the veil!*
- *Nationalize the property of the imperialists and their domestic stooges!*

Liberal Zionism: Reactionary and Impotent

Despite the wishful thinking of the ideologues of the Axis of Resistance, Israel is not a paper tiger. It will not collapse if its narrative gets exposed or if it suffers economic blows—even severe ones. The two pillars of Israel's strength

are the support it receives from the U.S. and the existence of a consolidated Jewish nation on the territory of Palestine. This means that even if it were possible to inflict a disastrous military defeat on Israel, which would put its very existence into question, there is no doubt that the Zionists would be able to inflict catastrophic destruction and that much of the Israeli population would fight to the bitter end for their national existence. Militarily confronting the entire Israeli nation guarantees the maximum resistance and destruction. For this reason, if one is serious about Palestinian liberation, one must have a strategy to undermine Israel's national unity and break an important segment of the population from Zionism.

The past few years have shown that there are indeed important fissures within Israel. The tensions within Israel reflect the country's inexorable slide toward becoming a totalitarian militarized theocracy, even for Jews. This trajectory goes to show that a society founded on national oppression not only degrades the oppressed—in this case the Palestinians—but also drags the oppressing nation into barbarity.

Both the 2023 mass demonstrations against Netanyahu's anti-democratic judicial reform and the more recent demonstrations demanding a ceasefire to free the hostages in Gaza were movements based on the liberal wing of the Zionist ruling class. This pole of Israeli society pushes back against the most bellicose and theocratic facets of government policy while at the same time being fully committed to Zionism, that is, to the national oppression of the Palestinians. This gives liberal Zionism a reactionary character. It also means that it is totally impotent in confronting the right wing of Israeli society.

The logic of Zionism is such that the most rabid and confrontational faction of the ruling class will always be more consistent than those who drape themselves in high-minded ideals while continuing to defend the historic crime of Palestinian dispossession. The bankruptcy of liberal Zionist movements is shown clearly by the fact that they evaporate the minute Israel's national defense is posed in any kind of serious way. After October 7, some of Netanyahu's strongest opponents rushed to join his government of national unity. And following Israel's offensives against Lebanon, the movement to free the hostages immediately worked to demobilize itself. The basic fact is that there can be no serious opposition to Netanyahu's band of fanatics without a political break with Zionism and a defense of Palestinian liberation.

There do exist in Israel small forces that stand against Palestinian oppression. However, while they face intense repression, they fail to confront the obstacle that liberal Zionism represents. In the case of groups such as the International Socialist League (affiliated with the RCIT), the argument is that because Israel is a settler-colonial state, basically nothing can be done now to break the Israeli working class from Zionism. For them the task is simply to stand in liberal solidarity with the Palestinians without seeking to affect Israeli society. Then there are the likes of Socialist Struggle (affiliated with the ISA), which cheer on liberal Zionist movements. For example, they hailed the one-day general strike in early September while raising no opposition to Zionism and sweeping under the rug the fact that it was organized by a labor bureaucracy entirely committed to the national oppression of the Palestinians. In both cases, there is an unwillingness or incapacity to confront workers' deeply entrenched Zionist beliefs.

To crack Israeli society, it is essential to go beyond the ideas in the heads of individuals and look at the material interests of the various classes. While Israel does benefit from a higher standard of living due to its role as the imperialists' thug in the region, conditions for Israeli workers—including Jewish workers—are not good. Palestinian oppression does not benefit Jewish work-

ers—it drags them down by making them powerless to defend their own interests against patriotic bosses and rulers. It also turns them into enforcers of the barbaric oppression of Palestinians, threatening their lives and that of their families and degrading their own humanity.

The key to unlocking these contradictions is to undermine Zionism with a program directed against both its right wing and its liberal wing.

- *Full democratic rights for all Palestinians from the river to the sea—Israeli workers will never be free as long as Palestinians are oppressed.*
- *Break the connection with the U.S.—serving as the agents of imperialism will never bring safety.*
- *Redistribute capitalist land and wealth to workers and Palestinians.*

Hara-Kiri for Harris

To stop the Israeli onslaught, it is essential to stop the flow of weapons from the West, centrally from the U.S. Over the past year, there have been countless pro-Palestinian demonstrations and even a short-lived but militant student movement against the genocide in Gaza. However, in the past few weeks the movement in the U.S. has to a large degree liquidated itself in order to avoid damaging the electoral prospects of Kamala Harris, who everyone knows is entirely committed to defending Israel.

Nothing symbolizes the current impasse more than the pathetic “uncommitted” movement. A few months ago, it encouraged Democratic Party primary voters to write “uncommitted” on their ballots as a pressure tactic on the party leadership. Although thousands followed the movement’s lead, it predictably achieved nothing and was shoved to the curb by the Democrats. The movement was even denied its miserable demand of having a single Palestinian speaker—no matter which one—address the Chicago Democratic convention. Now, after weeks of groveling and nothing to show for their efforts, the uncommitted movement declined to endorse Harris, advocating instead to vote against Trump...but not for a third party—i.e., to vote for Harris.

This lamentable spectacle—cheered at every step by most of the left—goes a long way to explain why the Palestinian movement in the West has been so ineffective in wresting the slightest conces-

sion, much less stopping arms shipments. Instead of building a working-class opposition to both parties of U.S. imperialism, as each competes to be more Zionist than the other, the movement has sought to pull the Democratic Party toward the side of Palestine. The absurdity of this strategy is shown by the fact that even Palestinian American congresswoman Rashida Tlaib, who has attracted the ire of the entire U.S. media and establishment, has remained in the Democratic Party despite its support to genocide. This shows that it is not the Palestinian movement that has influenced the Democratic Party but that the movement has sacrificed itself for the Democrats.

Meanwhile, tens of thousands of Boeing Machinists and ILA longshoremen have engaged in strike action. Even though the ILA criminally continued to ship weapons, the strikes certainly caused more disruption for U.S. arms manufacturers than all the campus occupations combined. The problem is that the pro-Palestinian movement is utterly incapable of connecting with these workers, many of whom hate the liberal establishment to their bones and would rather vote Trump. At best, liberal activists make a moral case to workers as to why they should support Palestine; at worst they treat conservative workers with contempt and as “part of the problem.”

What liberals miss is the basic point that it is not in the interest of American workers to ship missiles that cause death and chaos around the world. It is the children of American workers who will be the first ones sent to kill and be killed for the profits of U.S. imperialism. Many workers instinctively know that the increased insecurity and precarity they face in their daily lives has much to do with America’s forever wars. Instead of kowtowing to the very party committing genocide and breaking strikes, and instead of trying to peddle liberal drivel to the working class, the pro-Palestinian movement must seek to connect the Palestinian cause to that of working-class emancipation in the U.S. itself.

- *Stop arms shipments to Israel!
U.S. crimes abroad will come at the expense of workers at home.*
- *For black liberation, for Palestinian liberation!*
- *Oppose Democrats and Republicans!
For a Workers Party—Vote PSL!*

Where Are the BRICS?

An effective alliance is one in which the whole is stronger than the sum of its parts. The BRICS+ bloc is precisely the opposite. When it comes to Palestine, or any other great geopolitical conflict for that matter, it is utterly irrelevant. The problem is that each member country has vastly different and often conflicting interests. On the question of the war in Gaza, for example, you have one member state, Iran, which is in direct conflict with Israel. And then you have India, which has close relations with Israel and is ruled by a chauvinist anti-Muslim party. Clearly, when it comes to Palestine the BRICS+ as a bloc will not play any kind of independent role.

But what about the other big countries that compose this bloc, such as Russia and China? Russia has been providing a degree of military support to Iran,



NYC, March 30: Spartacist contingent in pro-Palestine demonstration, fighting to break movement’s ties to Democrats.

including air defense batteries. However, Russia seems more intent on avoiding a regional escalation than advancing the cause of Palestinian liberation. Ultimately, despite the hue and cry about Russian imperialism, there are no signs that Russia is trying to make use of the situation to push U.S. influence out of the region. Rather, Russia is focused on finishing the war in Ukraine and eventually reaching a settlement with the U.S. over Europe’s future security architecture.

And China? Surely a regime claiming to be communist would provide material support to the Palestinian resistance as the Soviet Union did for the Palestine Liberation Organization. Ha! Beyond empty gestures and pacifist platitudes, the Communist Party (CPC) has not lifted a finger for the Palestinian cause. This is true despite the fact that Palestinian liberation and the expulsion of American power from West Asia would go a long way toward reducing the threat China faces from the U.S. in East Asia. The CPC is too busy cozying up to the worst Gulf autocrats and Israeli capitalists to pay any attention to anti-imperialism and national liberation struggles, not to speak of worldwide proletarian revolution.

Of all the original BRICS countries, South Africa has probably done the most to signal that it morally stands with Palestine. To much fanfare, it brought a case against Israel for genocide at the ICJ. The result? Nothing, of course. The ICJ is only intended to target fallen African dictators and enemies of the U.S. This empty show of force had much more to do with shoring up Ramaphosa and the ANC’s left flank before the recent elections than with any serious commitment to Palestinian liberation. In fact, right after the elections President Ramaphosa jumped into a coalition with the rabidly Zionist heirs of the apartheid regime. It is certainly not from this government that Palestine will get any assistance.

Does this mean that the situation is hopeless? Far from it. One does not need to praise the BRICS to accept that America’s grip on the world is getting weaker. Billions of workers and oppressed have only misery and war to expect from the U.S. and its crumbling order. Once you stop putting faith in the rotten regimes that conciliate and support the status quo,

it becomes clear that there is huge potential in uniting the victims of U.S. imperialism around the world—from Palestine to Mexico to the Philippines and in the U.S. itself.

- *For an anti-imperialist front against Israel and the U.S.!*
- *Nationalize all imperialist assets and cancel the debts!*
- *No illusions in BRICS—Workers of the world, unite!*

What Next?

The situation is bleak. Every day more Palestinians are killed by the IDF and hundreds of thousands face starvation and disease. In the West Bank more Palestinian land is stolen. Israel now shows every sign of wanting to turn Lebanon into a new Gaza and to bomb Iran into submission. Whether it will succeed in this is another matter. However, if the last year has shown one thing, it is that there is no place for fatuous optimism. The UN, the international community, the ICJ, the BRICS, the Muslim regimes—none will come to the Palestinians’ rescue. It is time to face the hard reality and draw lessons from the disastrous results of the past 12 months. The current leaders of the Palestinian resistance are not up to the task. Nor is the pro-Palestinian movement internationally.

Communists and socialists have little currency in the Arab world, not least because they have so far failed to provide a road forward for genuine national liberation (see “Marxists & Palestine: 100 Years of Failure,” *Spartacist* No. 69). However, every day it becomes clearer that the forces of political Islam do not have an answer either. This provides an opening for the workers movement to enter the fray on the side of the Palestinians and provide an alternative.

The task at hand is to fuse the domestic struggles of workers internationally with that of Palestinian liberation. This will be possible only if there is a struggle against the bankrupt road offered by the labor bureaucrats, liberals and conciliators who have called the shots so far. It is the urgent responsibility of all socialists, working-class militants and Palestinian activists to start debating and organizing this struggle for a new course. We cannot allow this next year to be like the last. ■



BreakThrough News

PSL hosts Rashida Tlaib at Palestinian liberation conference in May, further tying movement to Democratic Party of genocide.

South Korea...

(continued from page 3)

that connects the struggle against the domestic exploiters with that against the U.S. imperialists who ultimately call the shots. It was the U.S. that divided the Korean nation at the cost of over three million killed before and during the 1950-53 Korean War. Seven decades later, nearly 30,000 American troops remain on the peninsula, and the U.S. has ultimate operational command over the South Korean military.

To fight reaction in South Korea and throughout the region, it is necessary to unite the working class in struggle. The starting point must be opposition to the

U.S.-led offensive against the workers states in China and North Korea. At the same time, it is necessary to oppose the Stalinist bureaucracies that rule in Beijing and Pyongyang, whose nationalist program undermines the fight for the revolutionary reunification of Korea and for international socialist revolution.

Various groups on South Korea’s socialist left oppose support to the Democratic Party and criticize the KCTU leaders for forming alliances with this or other bourgeois forces. But they do not connect this to the question of the U.S. alliance, which has always shaped political and economic developments in South Korea and is now driving them toward ruin. Far from opposing the U.S. offensive against China, some of them falsely equate China

with the U.S., claiming both are imperialist. Some even argue that raising anti-imperialism in the South Korean context represents a capitulation to the liberal wing of the bourgeoisie and the Stalinist rulers in China and North Korea. These positions are false to the core and can only mislead the working class.

How can workers be broken from illusions in the liberal wing of South Korean capitalism? This will never happen through abstract slogans or schemas which ignore the global developments driving what is happening in the country. Martial law was the symptom; the underlying illness is the U.S. drive against China which is dragging South Korea toward disaster. A fight to break the alliance with the U.S. is necessary to defend

even the most basic democratic rights and other gains wrested through struggle over the past four decades. The urgent task for socialists is to bring this central question to the fore, to ask pointblank to all the forces that claim to defend democracy: which side are you on, the U.S. or the working class?

- *Break the U.S. alliance! All U.S. troops and bases out!*
- *Oppose the U.S.-led drive against China and North Korea!*
- *Down with Yoon Suk-yeol and the PPP, no support to the Democratic Party!*
- *Build a proletarian anti-imperialist front against U.S. imperialism and South Korean capitalism!*

Where Is the U.S. Going?...

(continued from page 1)

which was muddying the U.S.'s image. It also played up the false notion that electing a black president would show that the oh-so-progressive U.S. is a post-racial society.

Installing a black man to head U.S. imperialism cost the ruling class nothing, and it was just the thing to calm the masses (and the bosses) before the president engineered the auto and bank bailouts on the backs of the working class and deported millions of immigrants. The anti-worker attacks were aided by union leaders, who enforced tiers and givebacks in the name of saving jobs. Obama's election didn't come about because the bourgeoisie no longer needed black oppression to bolster its rule. Quite the contrary, "progressive" identity politics corresponded to its needs at the time.

But the financial meltdown also accelerated trends opposed to the liberal status quo. Economic devastation sowed the seeds of political discontent and the emergence of populism as an alternative. Within the ruling class, a conflict emerged over how best to shore up U.S. imperialism: go full steam ahead with the liberalism that had long served it so well or try something else. The two main bourgeois parties struggled internally and with one another to resolve which would be the party of the status quo and which would break with it.

In the 2016 Democratic presidential nominee contest, Hillary Clinton was the face of the party establishment, while Bernie Sanders was anti-establishment, having been brought to the fore by relentless post-2008 neoliberal attacks. His populist rhetoric against the "billionaire class" and promise of "Medicare for All" attracted crowds. He represented those liberals who thought that the status quo required some new dressing to stop the bleeding. But this option would have been a far too radical and expensive change for the liberal establishment. Why go with "Medicare for All," which would cost a pretty penny, when the party could go the Obama route again? The first woman president would cost nothing, earn some "progressive" points and keep the wheels of liberalism turning for another day.

The Republican showdown was Donald Trump vs. the party establishment. Trump reflected those in the ruling class who judged that liberalism's days were done and wanted to put U.S. imperialism on a different track: right-wing populism, protectionism and closing the border. Trump knew that a section of the class he represented was losing out to its rivals, like China, and something needed to be done. His solution—mirrored by his behavior and flouting of liberal norms—was a break with everything that had defined the previous period.

The mere possibility that this guy might be the nominee sent shock waves through the Republican establishment and liberals everywhere. Trump was everything they hated. Liberalism is polished and hypocritical, the friend who smiles before stabbing you in the back. Trump, though, was uncouth and promised to do the stabbing from the front. His rabid insults and vulgar talk of "grab 'em by the pussy" ran totally counter to the liberal veneer of concern for the oppressed.

The conflict within the ruling class spilled over into the 2016 presidential election, as captured by the candidates' campaign slogans: Trump's "Make America Great Again" and Clinton's "America is already great." But the Clinton loss was not a decisive defeat of the liberal order. In fact, the entire first Trump presidency was a clash between the forces of the status quo and the White House, making it perhaps the most chaotic political adventure in recent history. Every day, a new scandal emerged and another administration official was being fired. The Muslim ban, border wall and Trump's Charlottesville response were an affront to liberal values and further reduced America's stock as a



Joshua Roberts/Reuters

CEOs of Big Three auto makers and UAW president in Congress, December 2008. Auto bosses got bailed out, workers across the country got thrown onto the streets. Woman being evicted, Colorado, 2009.



John Moore/Getty

beacon of diversity and tolerance. Then the pandemic broke out, bringing more economic misery and the friendly advice to inject bleach.

The anti-Trump "resistance" mobilized the foot soldiers in the faction fight between the "woke" liberal Democrats and the president. The liberals viewed Trump as a dire threat to the kingdom they had built and were not going down without a fight. They promised nothing for workers and the oppressed in the elections but right after began to posture as the biggest defenders of minorities. From crying for kids in cages at the border to kneeling for BLM in kente cloths, they did everything they could to rally enough people to kick out the "fascist" Trump and reclaim the White House.

Unable and unwilling to preside over deep changes in the economy and the orientation of U.S. imperialism, Trump's bourgeois opponents used the only tool they had: liberalism. They launched a moral crusade for token measures, preaching liberal values ever more aggressively as the material basis for providing real relief shrank further and further. That is why they sometimes went to extremes, like promising to defund the police and advocating for gender-affirming surgeries for migrants.

The liberals used fake concern for the oppressed to cover for the fact that conditions for the vast majority were only getting worse and that the ruling class, to salvage itself, was squeezing the working class harder. The more the liberals pushed token measures while the overall economic situation deteriorated, the more they eroded the effectiveness of their own methods, preparing the ground for the working class to be entirely repulsed by them.

Where Was the Left?

Many white workers, fed up with their worsening economic situation, went for Trump in 2016. Plenty of others, especially black people, stood by the Democrats out of fear of reaction. This anger needed to be redirected, and those in the administration's crosshairs needed to be meaningfully defended.

The task of the left was to advance the struggle for a better standard of living in combination with a fightback against the attacks on minorities. Success hinged on giving this struggle a class-independent character. This required the left to participate in the various "resistance" movements to expose the bankruptcy of liberalism and point the way forward for workers and the oppressed. To make clear that any real improvements could be won only through confrontation with the interests of the ruling class—liberal and illiberal alike—which is responsible for and benefits from oppression of all stripes.

The perspective should have been to intervene to break the liberal chains restraining these movements and split them along class lines. In the women's movement, this effort needed to be directed against the middle-class, #MeToo feminists. In BLM, against the anti-racist liberals. The defense of immigrants could only proceed in opposition to the liberal "open border" defenders of U.S. hegemony. In each case, furthering the struggles of the oppressed required a rupture with liberalism and a fight to link these struggles to the material interests of the working class.

But this is *not* what happened. Instead, the left echoed the liberal hysteria, including by railing against "Trump's base." This liberal poison wrote off white workers who voted for Trump as unvarnished white-supremacists, and dismissed all concerns they had for their worsening conditions. The result was to reinforce racial divisions—to drive these workers deeper into the arms of reaction, and black people into the Democratic fold, despairing of the prospect of winning white workers to the fight for black liberation. The left also gave full-throated support to every liberal movement—e.g., the women's marches, sanctuary cities and BLM—all in the name of stopping Trump and the "rise of fascism." Most leftists latched onto Sanders, AOC and the Squad and fueled illusions in these Democrats, whose role was to provide a left cover for the liberal status quo and shackle anger to their party.

All this activity was a capitulation to the currents trying to keep the existing order afloat. Instead of charting an independent path for workers and the oppressed, the left chose a side in the imperialists' faction fight, hitching themselves to the liberals. Ultimately, the left became associated with defense of the declining material conditions of the status quo, which had been screwing workers for years. This could only push working people further to the right.

The consequences of the left's capitulation can be seen in the current reactionary backlash against migrants, a backlash fueled by liberal moralizing and joined by many liberals, who switched from calling for opening the border door under Trump to slamming it shut today. It was a betrayal for anyone calling themselves a socialist to have supported any aspect of the liberal "resistance." To meet workers' needs and defend minorities, liberalism must be rejected. This key lesson from the first Trump presidency must guide the struggles of the moment.

The Deathblow of the Liberal World Order

In 2020, the Democrats won back the White House with Joe Biden. But the Democratic Party left initially lined up behind Sanders, whose second bid for the Oval Office was even more popular than his first. Things had gotten so bad under Trump that Sanders's populist rhetoric had renewed appeal among working people, and some bourgeois circles were open to providing more of a social-democratic prop to U.S. imperialism. In the end, though, the majority of the ruling class and the working class for that matter did not want a drastic change, but rather a "return to normalcy" amid the COVID pandemic.

The Trump years had been a political circus and seemed like something out of a drug-fueled fever dream. But more than anything, the pandemic swung the pendulum back toward the politicians of the status quo. The ruling class was in search of tested and reliable leaders to navigate the storm. Biden rode the powerful wave of "national unity" to victory, temporarily putting the forces of right-wing reaction on the defensive.

Biden had promised to end the pandemic, revive the economy and rebuild America's reputation. He embodied a return to the liberal road, proclaiming:

"As president, I will ensure that democracy is once again the watchword of U.S. foreign policy, not to launch some moral crusade, but because it's in our enlightened self-interest." Unbeknownst to the liberals who celebrated the recapturing of the White House at the time, the Biden presidency would be the kiss of death for the liberal world order. Once in office, the Democrat, like Trump, proceeded to print money with abandon to compensate for the economic disruption caused by the bourgeoisie's pandemic response. The short-term stability this bought was soon offset by rampant inflation and sharpening social and political polarizations.

In his presidency's early days, Biden pledged to restore the country's infrastructure and manufacturing base and postured as the most "pro-union president since FDR." Accordingly, he proposed measures like "Bidenomics," Build Back Better and the PRO Act. It was looking like the imperialists had found the guy who could finally bring things back to the way they were—until reality hit. The Biden agenda fell apart as the ground was being eroded—militarily, economically and politically—from under his feet. Instead of being able to confront China as planned, Biden was drawn into one military crisis after another. The botched withdrawal from Afghanistan symbolized the waning power of the U.S.

Then the war in Ukraine erupted. Russia's invasion in response to NATO provocation was the first direct challenge to the U.S. in recent history. To the extent possible, the U.S. marshalled its resources and forces as a show of strength but failed to stop Russia, revealing weakness instead. NATO is now losing the war as Russia lays waste to Ukraine.

The U.S. bourgeoisie has little interest in Ukraine besides containing Russia. Antagonizing the Putin regime has cut into U.S. imperialism's ability to pursue more important objectives, like confronting China. But to pull out now would signal more weakness and cut against the liberal values in which U.S. foreign policy is wrapped. How could the U.S.—the great defender of democracy against the evil dictator Putin—abandon Ukraine? How could the U.S. rulers justify the expansion of NATO if not under the guise of defending the defenseless? This proxy war has cost the U.S. billions. When Ukraine and NATO inevitably lose, it will be a blow to U.S. hegemony.

The war in Ukraine is extremely unpopular with the American public, which is sinking under the inflation the war helped stoke. Billions are being sent overseas to fund a war the vast majority don't care about, while many people cannot afford groceries. But the Democratic administration tells them that everything is fine and the economy is better than ever, so stop complaining and fall behind support to Ukraine. A great way to get the public behind your military adventures!

Lofty liberal ideals again smashed up against material reality in the case of the Palestinians. For over a year, the Democrats—the party supposedly representing global enlightenment—have overseen the genocide in Gaza. Their support to Israel is ironclad, genocide be damned, because the Zionist state is U.S. imperialism's outpost in the Middle East. But it is harder to preach "democracy" and "defense of the defense-

less” when one is providing the bombs being dropped on Palestinian babies. This contradiction sparked a protest movement of outraged youth, who wanted the U.S. to stop being so hypocritical and make good on its liberal values. Widespread repression caused some activists to look for answers beyond the campus encampments, but many others were demoralized and went silent. For those who want to halt the genocide, the first step is to break with the liberal politics holding the struggle back.

Biden’s four years proved to be a catastrophe for working people and accelerated the bleeding out of U.S. hegemony. After he was forced to drop out of the presidential race by his party—because having a man who was one bad stretch away from death’s door as the face of U.S. imperialism was not very encouraging—Kamala Harris entered the fray. She was the last dying hope of the liberal status quo, and she lost in a major way.

This time around is not the same as 2016. Trump’s victory then was considered a fluke, and the “resistance” coalesced to put things back to normal. The Democrats fought back with everything they had. But now they are busy tossing out one liberal value after another, abandoning the very groups they claimed to champion and walking away from globalization’s economic foundations—e.g., free trade and open borders.

The more the Democrats doubled down on liberalism as it was reaching its material and ideological limits, the stronger the forces hostile to it became. The ruling class is now consolidating around a radical shift in strategy to advance its interests. The conditions that made liberalism its dominant ideology are gone and not coming back in the foreseeable future. The liberal mask is slipping off to reveal the snarling teeth that have been hiding underneath all along.

The Working Class Abandons the Liberals

The working class, battered by inflation and many years of concessions, has grown increasingly restive and willing to engage in class battle. But thus far this combativity has been paired not with a leadership capable of turning the tide in favor of the workers and winning their demands, but rather with one seeking palliatives within

with a class-struggle strategy counterposed to liberalism, the left cheers Fain or pressures him to go a little further down the road he is on—which can only spell disaster for workers struggle and the socialist cause.

The working class has reacted to Trump’s re-election with a bit of a shrug mixed with a sense of dread at the direction the U.S. is heading. Many workers believe they will be somewhat better off under Trump, while others fear what he has in store. Notably, greater numbers of black people and Latinos went for Trump this time than previously. These voters, although personally repulsed by the Republican nominee, have had their fill of moral browbeating, broken promises and economic pain at the hands of the liberals. Under their hammer blows, the working class has shifted to the right.

Liberals have fed right-wing reaction by, among other things, driving a wedge between the working class and oppressed groups. They preach tolerance, while pitting different sectors of the oppressed against one another in a scramble over an ever-shrinking pool of resources. This combination punch only breeds resentment and division. For example, in Democratic-run cities, migrants are forced into black and brown communities, where they are considered competition for the crumbs on offer. Workers see migrants receive some measly state services while they can barely make ends meet, and if they say anything about their situation, the liberals label them as racists or bigots. Ever conciliatory to liberalism, those claiming to be socialist have not proposed any real challenge to this “divide and rule”—that is, the independent working-class movement needed to resolve the migrant crisis in a progressive manner—and thus have themselves helped serve up working people to the right.

Trump 2.0: Tariff Man

Trump came to power promising to fix the country’s economic ills with protectionist policies and has plans to slap huge new tariffs on all goods entering the U.S. from China, Mexico and Canada. The self-described “Tariff Man” views import taxes as a mighty weapon to restore domestic manufacturing and coerce other countries into doing U.S. imperialism’s



Al Jazeera/Zuma

U.S. imperialism stumbles from one crisis to another. Chaotic exit from Afghanistan in August 2021 symbolized breakdown of U.S. hegemony.

the U.S. electric vehicle industry from China’s far cheaper, tech-forward EVs; China responded in kind against U.S. agribusiness, causing its exports to drop precipitously. Here is the problem in a nutshell: imperialist-sponsored trade barriers are a brake on the productive forces internationally and reinforce the parasitical character of the U.S. economy. A system of tariffs, if enforced, would also cause prices to go up for both domestic production and consumers.

On the international level, an aggressive effort by the U.S. to grab a bigger piece of the pie for itself would magnify all manner of frictions. For example, this would strengthen political trends in other countries directed toward getting out from under U.S. imperialism’s umbrella and tighten the economic vise on neo-colonies like Mexico. Right after Trump’s win, the peso dropped sharply, and he has since pledged to hit Mexico with a 25 percent blanket tariff on day one to blackmail its government into further policing the border on behalf of U.S. imperialism. This raises the prospect of deepening the national oppression of Mexico and the misery of its working and toiling masses.

The U.S. working class will not benefit from this protectionism either. Contrary to Trump and the labor bureaucrats, protectionism will not bring back good-paying manufacturing jobs. Rather, in order to operate any reshored industry at a profit, the U.S. bosses will demand extensive concessions from workers. The capitalists’ devastation of the economy points to the need for workers to combine the day-to-day battle to improve their economic conditions with the fight to reindustrialize under workers control—that is, a general fight for quality jobs against the U.S. rulers.

This fight would strengthen the position of the Mexican masses by impeding heightened imperialist subjugation. In turn, a defense of Mexico against U.S. strong-arming and domination would open up more space for workers here to advance their struggles. An anti-imperialist alliance of the proletariat of the two countries is essential to maximize their fighting power against the common enemy. Making this alliance a reality requires struggle against both those in the workers movement who echo Trump’s chauvinism and those who wag their fingers like liberals at chauvinism without offering an alternative.

Trump 2.0: Deportee-in-Chief

Trump’s comeback is a big win for the forces of right-wing reaction. He has already promised mass deportations, and attacks on trans people and other minorities are to be expected. The recent influx of immigrants has come into collision with shrinking available resources, generating a widespread backlash. Many liberal Democrats have dropped the act of pretending to care about immigrants and are actively competing with Trump on border security. Other liberals look to the bosses in industries that rely heavily on undocumented immigrants to fill poverty-wage, backbreaking jobs to put up a fight against deportations. This “defense” of immigrants is premised on maintaining the oppressive liberal status quo—and is delusional to boot. The agribusiness and meatpacking bosses will benefit as much or even more than others from a reign of anti-immigrant terror. An extremely vulnerable workforce confined to the shadows outside the work-

place is primed for superexploitation.

Some workers have illusions that Trump’s deportation plans will force employers to raise their wages in order to attract and keep qualified labor. But having a layer of workers living in constant fear only undermines the ability of the working class as a whole to rip what it needs from the bosses’ hands. Mass deportations will put wind in the sails of the forces of repression and compel immigrant workers and their descendants to not cause any trouble for the bosses. The battle should not be U.S.-born workers vs. immigrant workers over the scraps from the capitalist table, but rather U.S.-born and immigrant workers vs. the bosses to make real gains and raise conditions for the entire class. The bosses want workers terrified and divided to make sure they clash with one another, not with the bosses themselves. The struggle for full citizenship rights for all immigrants would bolster the fighting capacity of the working class.

In recent major class battles, like the ILA longshore and Boeing Machinist strikes, some of the most militant workers have been Trump supporters. The union bureaucracy, including the leadership of these two unions, has worked tirelessly to divert the evident militancy of the class into the prison of the status quo. Where it will be channeled in the future depends on the ability of the left to intersect the living struggle and build an alternative leadership committed to upholding the interests of the entire working class in opposition to right-wing reaction and liberalism. The working class will be able to regain its footing only if it fights back against *both* wings of the ruling class.

Trump will likely take one of two approaches to the working class: crush it outright or try to buy off its top layer. At the moment, he is posturing as a man of the people. But he has also surrounded himself with billionaires like Elon Musk, who want to smash the unions. This balancing act cannot last long. Large-scale layoffs of federal employees are on the horizon, as Trump gears up to eliminate “wasteful government spending.” This march to government efficiency will hit a wall. Easily the most bloated and wasteful portion of the federal budget is defense spending. Such is the price of running an empire.

Trump has presented himself as anti-war and vowed to end the war in Ukraine immediately upon taking office. The likelihood of this happening is little to none since it depends on Russia actually agreeing to a deal. Russia has no interest in pulling out when it is clearly winning. To reach a deal, Trump would have to serve Ukraine on a silver platter to Russia and might even have to concede to pull NATO back from Russia’s border. This would show incredible weakness from the U.S.—something Trump might find difficult to swallow.

Where Is the Democratic Party Going?

Ever since the elections, the Democrats have been soul-searching to figure out what went wrong. Most acknowledge having lost the working class, and a consensus has emerged to shift away from the “woke” stuff—which both the ruling class and working class have turned against—to “bread and butter” issues. This means dropping any mention of special oppression.

The Democrats are trying to cleanse themselves of the liberalism that made

continued on page 12



Jim West/Alamy

Metro Detroit, December 2022: Rail workers protest lousy contract shoved down their throats after Biden and Congress outlawed strike.

the confines of the liberal status quo. The problem is that the conditions of the working class cannot be qualitatively improved while respecting the objective of the U.S. ruling class to dominate the world.

Pro-capitalist union leaders, like the militant-talking UAW head Shawn Fain, have undercut strikes through their refusal to create a crisis for the ruling class and otherwise serve as the main conduit for liberalism into the workers movement. Fain himself, trading on his role in the 2023 auto strike, became a prominent hustler for the Biden/Harris campaign. Even so, the left treats Fain as if he is a cut above the rest of the labor bureaucracy when in fact he is simply its most outspoken advocate of liberal ideals. Far from fighting right now for a new leadership

bidding. But in fact, they are an open expression of the declining U.S. empire. While throwing around the country’s economic and political weight in the form of protectionist measures might in certain instances give a short-term boost to its standing, in the end this road—like free trade—can only exacerbate the fundamental problems afflicting it.

The U.S. is not some fledgling capitalist country that needs to develop industry from the ground up but the world’s predominant imperialist power. If one branch of industry prospers from tariffs, another will take a major hit—in particular, one based on more advanced technique and better suited to the conditions of the world market. In his first presidency, Trump imposed massive duties to protect

Where Is the U.S. Going?...

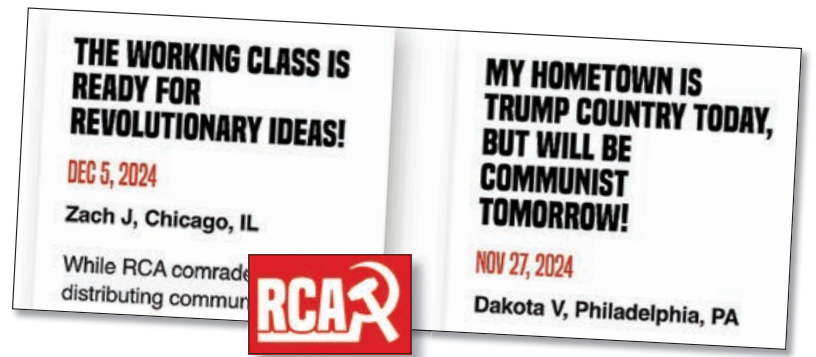
(continued from page 11)

them deplorable to the masses so they can vie for power again. It will take some time to establish the path the Democrats go down to again pull the wool over the eyes of workers and the oppressed before turning the screws on them. A shake-up in the Democratic Party is coming down the line—dinosaurs like Nancy Pelosi may well be a thing of the past.

The DSA and other social democrats want the Democratic Party to return to the road of FDR. This is a distinct possibility in light of the world situation. When an imperialist power is falling behind under the economic pressure of rivals, the natural tendency is to turn to state intervention to fortify itself through direct means. Much of the left paints this statism as inherently progressive and a boon for the working class. But in fact, the purpose would be to regiment the population and the economy in line with the interests of the imperialist overlords in preparation for great power conflict and war with China. The Democrat-initiated CHIPS Act was a step in this direction—state intervention to boost America's high-tech self-sufficiency and military systems by reviving the domestic semiconductor industry.

Biden's COVID relief bill was a significantly more massive state-sponsored economic stimulus, hailed by the DSA's *Jacobin* magazine for "bringing back government handouts." But these payments were swallowed up many times over by the inflation that the package triggered, all to save the bourgeoisie's skin after its lockdowns had ground the economy to a halt. As Trotsky wrote: "State-ism, no matter where—in Mussolini's Italy, in Hitler's Germany, in Roosevelt's America, or in Léon Blum's France—means state intervention on the basis of private property, and with the goal of preserving it. Whatever be the programs of the government, state-ism inevitably leads to a transfer of the damages of the decaying system from strong shoulders to weak" (*The Revolution Betrayed*, 1936).

The DSA itself was largely paralyzed over the past year by the contradiction of claiming to be socialist from inside the Democratic Party. On the one hand, Biden



Two wrong roads: SA tries to resurrect anti-Trump "resistance" without drawing line against liberalism; RCA ignores rightward shift in society, thinks communism is around the corner.

was widely hated by the working class, and the genocide in Gaza burned red hot; on the other, he was the party candidate. To create some separation, it was all the rage among DSAers to hurl insults at Genocide Joe and call for a workers party. Harris taking the ticket's reins was manna from heaven. Even though she was politically indistinguishable from Biden and equally responsible for the administration's crimes, she was a non-senile black woman, not *him*. The DSA left caucuses, which formally stand for a break with the Democrats, went dark, and most DSAers held their noses and voted Harris in the name of stopping Trump.

Many signs point to the DSA making a social-democratic pivot post-election. Not only is *Jacobin* advising the Democratic Party to head that way, but also some DSA electeds are running campaigns that focus on the cost of living and have nothing to offer specially oppressed groups. For the DSA, it is again fashionable, with the elections safely in the distance, to scream the need for a workers party from the rooftops. These calls, though, will go *nowhere* absent a fight to expel the Democratic electeds now and make a clean break with the entire Democratic Party. These imperialist vipers were just soundly rejected by the majority of working people; the goal must not be to pull workers back in to the snake pit, but rather to pull revolutionary-minded DSAers out. Then, the project to build a workers party would have some real momentum, especially with the fissures in the DSA likely to increase after Inauguration Day.

The Left and the 2024 Elections

The elections were a prime opportunity for the left to turn the working class further against the liberal status quo and steer it toward friendly shores. But once

again, declared Marxists failed miserably. Some stood on the sidelines, shouting "no choice" and empty calls for a workers party, while others openly tailed liberal politicians.

Among the latter, Socialist Alternative (SA) and its Workers Strike Back (WSB) split-off drummed up votes for the Green Party's Jill Stein, claiming that support to this crunchy bourgeois liberal who has no intention of building a workers party was the best way to...build a workers party! They would have had better luck squeezing blood from a rock—and done far less damage to the cause of class independence, the foundation of a workers party. After the elections, where Stein received only a half percent of the vote, the Greens fell off the map and proved themselves completely irrelevant, as usual. Undeterred, SA is now pinning its hopes for the launch of a workers party on two of the biggest Biden boosters in the union bureaucracy—Shawn Fain and liberal "resistance" darling Sara Nelson. It is anybody's guess who SA will grasp at next, but it's a safe bet that it will not be a *socialist* fighting for an *alternative* to the status quo.

In the elections, the choice for workers was clear: the presidential ticket of the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL), which opposed not only both the Democrats and the Republicans, but also capitalism. That made it a vehicle to polarize society along class lines and give the workers and oppressed a fighting chance to advance their struggles against whichever reactionary candidate won the election. We gave critical support to PSL and helped build their campaign, but no other Marxist tendencies followed suit. While the PSL candidates received around 160,000 votes—which for socialists is nothing to scoff at—they were a non-factor in the elections.

Our main criticism of PSL was its

conciliation of liberalism—which undermined its campaign. Let's look at their intervention into the pro-Palestinian movement. To stop the genocide and free Palestine, there must be anti-imperialist struggle in the U.S. But the PSL pushed every pro-imperialist liberal illusion, from platforming Democrat Rashida Tlaib at their Palestine conference to supporting the Democrats' "uncommitted" electoral scheme to cheering UN ceasefire resolutions. Their tailing of the liberals and refusal to draw a class line are obstacles to mobilizing the needed anti-imperialist struggle.

In a final opportunist move just days before the elections, PSL endorsed Cornel West and Jill Stein in certain states in order to get their endorsement in other states. Building coalitions with liberal politicians is completely counterposed to anything resembling class independence and only hinders the struggles of the working class. While we fought for the left to help build PSL's campaign as a working-class alternative, we also fought with PSLers to stop their campaign from being undermined by conciliation of liberal politics in order to seed the ground to build a workers party. PSL's orientation toward petty-bourgeois liberals also kept it from campaigning seriously in the unions or working class more broadly. In order to build a workers party, as the PSL claims it wants, it is necessary both to go to the class and be armed with a plan of action to cut against liberalism

Whither the Left?

The left's association with liberalism has opened a chasm between itself and the working class. The left is seen by workers as either irrelevant or liberal sellouts. For this reason, the central task for the left in the coming period is to overcome this divide in order to be able to guide the upcoming struggles.

PC Partisan Defense Committee

The PDC is a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization which champions cases and causes in the interest of the whole of the working people. This purpose is in accordance with the political views of the Spartacist League, the U.S. section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

35th Holiday Appeal for Class-War Prisoners

**Free All Class-War Prisoners!
For United-Front Class-Struggle Defense!
Open All the Police Archives!**

CHICAGO

Saturday, January 25
3 to 7 p.m.

Soul Full Chicago
1508 W. 18th St.
Information: (312) 563-0442
Tickets \$5 in advance, \$10 at the door

OAKLAND

Sunday, January 26
3 to 6 p.m.

First Congregational Church of
Oakland, Reidenbach Hall
2501 Harrison St. (at 27th St.)
Information: (510) 839-0852
\$10 Donation • students/unemployed \$5

NEW YORK CITY

Saturday, January 25
3 to 6 p.m.

St. Mark's Church in the Bowery
131 E.10th St., Manhattan
(Parish Hall, entrance on 11th St.
near 2nd Ave.)
Information: (212) 406-4252
Tickets \$10 • students/unemployed \$5

LOS ANGELES

Sunday, January 26
3 to 6 p.m.

Location TBA
Information: (213) 380-8239
pdc-la@sbcglobal.net

Sponsored by the Partisan Defense Committee

(212) 406-4252 • partisandefense@earthlink.net • partisandefense.org
X @partisandefense • @partisan_defense_committee



Uhuru 3 Sentenced on Bogus Charges

On December 16, a Tampa federal judge imposed a sentence of three years probation on three supporters of the African People's Socialist Party and its Uhuru movement. Scores packed the courtroom, including Spartacist League and Partisan Defense Committee supporters. Stepping into the hall outside, the defendants—Omali Yeshitela, Penny Hess and Jesse Nevel—were greeted with chants of "Not one day!", expressing defiance and relief that they did not get any prison time. Each was convicted on a bogus charge of "conspiring" with Russians to "sow discord" in the U.S., based solely on exercising their First Amendment rights to protest U.S. imperialist war and black oppression.

As a condition of probation, they are not permitted to communicate with Russians without permission. A fourth defendant, former Uhuru member Augustus Romain Jr. (Gazi Kodzo), was sentenced to five years probation on December 9. The racist witchhunt against Uhuru is a threat to us all. The probation sentence puts the defendants in a box, where they could still face jail time for a probation "violation." They did nothing wrong and should have never been charged in the first place.

Appeals of the conviction will follow. Nodding to the packed courtroom, the judge said it would be pointless to fine the Uhuru 3 because they would just go raise the money to pay the fine. It does cost money to fight a federal witchhunt. The SL/U.S. and PDC have donated \$2,500 to the Uhuru defense, and we encourage others to do the same at every.org/hands-off-uhuru. ■



December 16: Uhuru 3 press conference after sentencing at Federal courthouse, Tampa, Florida.

Free Luigi!...

(continued from page 16)

out of touch he is—even with his own conservative audience, which is largely sympathetic to the shooter.

Shapiro's analysis, although obviously idiotic, has a political purpose. The masses don't hate insurance companies and feel sympathy with Luigi because they're all revolutionary Marxists. It's because the insurers are killing them. Shapiro's rant blaming Marxism is intended to leverage anti-communist sentiment to isolate Luigi and set up the left for repression. But let's be clear: while the shooter's action had nothing to do with Marxism, Marxists **must** defend those accused of violence against the oppressors. So, what do the so-called Marxists have to say?

Left Voice, the Revolutionary Communists of America, Socialist Alternative and the Socialist Equality Party have all weighed in. They learnedly explain that we need collective action, not individual acts of terror. Correct. Marxists certainly insist on class struggle as against the inexperience of lone avengers. But while these comrades can quote the leaders of the Rus-

sian Revolution to explain why Marxists oppose individual terrorism, they conveniently omit a central point. In the current conflict between Luigi and the state, workers have a side! **The task now is to oppose the capitalist state's crusade against Luigi!**

It is unfortunate that the self-sacrificing avenger's revolutionary energy did not find a more effective outlet. Regardless, all our sympathies lie firmly with Luigi, **not** with his jailers. The **crime** here is that anyone claiming the mantle of Marxism would only oppose the killer's methods, while **not** opposing Luigi's prosecution. Lenin and Trotsky opposed the road of individual terrorism, but they **defended** those accused of such acts from the capitalist state. The shallow statements approximating Marxist orthodoxy that these left groups spew are only a cover. In omitting the elementary act of defense, they are bending to bourgeois morality and the capitalist state, echoing the campaign in the bourgeois press—all while providing no real way forward.

The task of revolutionaries in the context of Thompson's killing is not to merely preach against assassination, but to harness the sympathies of the masses and direct them productively against the

forces of the class enemy. This starts with being clear that while the killer's methods are counter to our own, **the act was no crime**. Obviously, we must build a class-struggle movement to fight for free healthcare! But this requires a program that **breaks illusions in the capitalist state** and **politically exposes the misleaders of the labor movement**. Rallying the masses to fight for Luigi's release would be a great start.

Fight for Free Healthcare!

The "Marxists" who refuse to forthrightly call to free Luigi do so because they want to maintain an air of bourgeois respectability in the eyes of the labor bureaucracy and "progressive" capitalist politicians. These "Marxists" proclaim the need for working-class action, but suck up to the class enemy's agents in the unions who block the way. The labor traitors will never mobilize workers to defend Luigi or lead a movement to expropriate the healthcare industry. From the UAW's Shawn Fain to Teamsters head Sean O'Brien to the SEIU misleaders, the bureaucrats are bound by their respect for the capitalist system, its state and the private property it protects. Leading a fight for free uni-

versal healthcare means taking head-on core capitalist interests—private hospitals, insurance companies, Big Pharma. No matter how militant, the loyally pro-capitalist union bureaucrats won't do that.

Thompson's killing shows that the question of healthcare has the potential to bring class polarizations in society sharply to the fore and bridge divisions that cripple the working class. A mass class-struggle movement for healthcare is needed, but that requires the left to fight for an entirely different strategy than what the bureaucracy offers. In particular, healthcare unions have a crucial role to play—the struggle to improve their own conditions is fundamentally connected to the healthcare needs of the masses. By fighting against things like overcrowding and short-staffing, workers are fighting not only for themselves but patients too. By making the call for free universal healthcare central to their struggles, healthcare workers have the potential to galvanize a mighty mass movement for medicine. Such a movement would not only have enormous popular support, but also provide a productive alternative to those considering going down the same desperate road as Thompson's killer. ■

In the arena of workers struggle, the left has either intentionally remained outside the fray or completely tailed the union bureaucracy. A picture of the problem is given by WSB's activity during the recent Boeing Machinist strike in the Seattle area, the home turf of WSB and its leader Kshama Sawant. One might assume an organization named "Workers Strike Back" would give its all to put the strike on a course to win in the face of its demobilization by IAM honcho Jon Holden. But one would be wrong. A couple of weeks into the crucial class battle, WSB shipped themselves off to Dearborn, Michigan, to shill for Jill Stein. They chose a small-time liberal politician over the working class. It would be difficult to better capture the left's bankruptcy and irrelevance.

Many on the left, while acknowledging that society has undergone a rightward shift, bizarrely deny that the working class has been swept along in that direction as well. Indeed, many working people voted for Trump out of disgust at establishment politicians, economic immiseration, forever wars, etc. In addition, large numbers of Trump voters supported pro-abortion measures. There are contradictions, and one of the key tasks of socialists is now to tap into this vast reservoir of anger, give it a working-class expression and turn it against Trump (and the liberals).

But many leftists use these contradictions to deny or downplay that Trump's victory is a reactionary backlash against liberalism. In fact, many working people who went for Trump out of legitimate anger believe that protectionism, mass deportations and Trump's strongman approach will advance their interests. It is grotesque and disorienting to deny this and to attribute to the working class a consciousness it doesn't have. This is also a way to avoid confronting the left's disastrous course in the past period in order to continue doing the same thing.

And indeed, the way forward proposed by most of the left is either to try to pump life back into the long dead "resistance" or to join their own tiny organizations and "fight for revolution." Neither of these trends can possibly fulfill the task at hand of bridging the gulf between the left and the working class. In fact, everything the left is doing will just widen that gulf.

Left Voice and SA are typical of those who put stock in reviving the liberal movements of yesterday. But these movements didn't do a damn thing for the working class or the oppressed groups they claimed to champion, besides set them up for the current reaction. Furthermore, with the defeat of the liberal order, the conditions that sparked the "resistance" no longer exist. But the attempt at revival will accomplish one thing: repelling workers who have decisively rejected liberalism. Trying to move forward on the 2016 model stands in the way of organiz-

ing the type of working-class defensive action needed.

The second trend on the left, represented by the Revolutionary Communists of America, is to engage in abstract revolutionary phrasemongering. This also does nothing to bridge the gulf between the left and the working class, making the left look even more out of touch than they already do. Lacking a concrete plan of action for the working class right now, they have no means of drawing in workers and the oppressed in struggle—the raw material for building a workers party.

Another key question for the left in this period is to bridge the divide between the working class and the specially oppressed. Doing so will require an approach that does not further alienate the working class, but rather makes clear that defense of immigrants, trans people, black people, etc., is in its interests. We need to show the working class that its hatred of liberalism is being used by the ruling class to crush the most oppressed layers, which will only further bring down conditions for **all** working people. But this is possible only if a decisive break is made with liberal politics. Anything short of that will pave the way for more reaction.

Work in the black community will be crucial to redressing the divide between the working class and specially oppressed. Racial polarization permeates U.S. society and the class, and given the importance of the segregation of black people to capitalist interests, the state of the black struggle is a strong indicator of the way the winds are blowing. That certainly was true in the case of BLM, whose liberal politics not only ground the struggle against racist police terror to a halt but also helped fuel the right-wing backlash. The Democrats went from writing BLM on the streets outside the White House to the potential first black woman president not saying a peep about the cops, except that she would be tougher on crime and never wanted to defund the police. In the same vein, all the BLM-supported "progressive" DAs are now being thrown out of office.

The shift has not only been away from BLM liberalism, like "defund the police" and community control, but also from the black struggle across the board. The left's reaction has been either denial of this reality or capitulation to it and the corresponding abandonment of the black struggle. Left Voice is an example of the first. They somehow have convinced themselves that BLM is not dead, but rather can be easily resuscitated in this right-wing climate, in which BLM cop reform politics have been rejected. The rest of the left is no better—it does nothing to address the question. The fate of BLM is a warning to every other movement of what will happen if the left does not fight to take away leadership from the liberals.



Bronx, October 8: OPA-initiated united-front rally in support of Eric Duprey's family at court hearing for his killer, cop Erik Duran.

Today, police brutality is more rampant than ever. With the liberals having washed their hands of the matter, it has fallen on the left to swim against the stream and reignite the movement—not on liberal grounds, but rather on the basis of the unity of interests of the working class and black people against the ruling class and its repressive state apparatus. That is why we launched the "Open the Police Archives" campaign. Crucial to the campaign is the exposure in action of the liberals, who claim to be on the side of black people but when push comes to shove, show themselves to be on the side of state secrecy. We encourage everyone on the left to join us in this united front to rebuild the movement against cop terror.

What Next?

The left is currently irrelevant and disoriented. Revolutionaries must break through the impasse and find ways to advance the interests of the working class. To build a revolutionary nucleus in this reactionary period, we must:

1) Debate our tasks, including what it is going to take to build a workers party. Most left groups are entering this new era without a compass, clueless about the seismic shifts that just took place and set to repeat the same mistakes that led us here. Or they find comfort in the revolutionary phrasemongering of sects, abdicating any immediate fighting perspective. It is urgent to open broader discussion and debate between left groups on how we got here and what the tasks of the socialist and workers movements are in this new era.

2) Organize formations within the unions to provide a class-struggle road forward in opposition to the current pro-capitalist leadership, which has only held working-

class struggle back. The socialist left is discredited as a political force, particularly in the working class, where many see them as bleeding-heart liberals who lawyer for the Democrats and union bureaucracy. Against this, real socialists must turn to the working class and fight to improve its most basic conditions, using the politics and methods of the class struggle. The precondition for this fight is complete opposition to all capitalist parties and **all** wings of the union bureaucracy. Only in this way can socialists gain authority among workers, undermine the appeal of right-wing populists, rebuild the power of the unions and lay the basis for a new, class-struggle leadership of the working class.

3) Build large united-front actions to defend the oppressed against the attacks to come. Black and trans people, Latinos, immigrants, Muslims, women—all the oppressed—will be in the crosshairs of the new administration. The necessary defensive struggles cannot be left in the hands of impotent liberals, whose moralist politics will further divide workers and the oppressed. Nor can socialists concede one iota to those "leftists" who are abandoning the fight for oppressed groups in the face of right-wing reaction. Socialists must place themselves at the head of these struggles, in complete opposition to the liberals, always seeking to put forward a class-struggle strategy that connects the specific needs of the oppressed to the material interests of the broader working class.

Only in pursuing such a course can the socialist movement confront head-on the strong wind of reaction, re-establish itself as a pole against the discredited liberals and rebuild the working-class movement into a real fighting force. ■

Class-Struggle Militant Gets 20 Percent

Emily Turnbull ran for president of ILWU Local 10 in its primary elections, held in early November. Her platform included some immediate steps to strengthen the local, expanding on the program of her successful run for executive board last year. She reports that a number of co-workers saw her candidacy as a way to turn the union around. She got nearly 20 percent of the 588 votes cast. Unfortunately, she did not make the runoff election. That was won by the current Business Agent, Demetrius “Sleep” Williams, who was running against the current Vice President, Vanetta Hamlin.

In a social media post written just after the first election round, Turnbull wrote:


“More than half of Local 10 members did not vote, evidence of deep dissatisfaction with the current leadership. Many despair that ‘nothing can change.’ Our leadership feeds into that despair by enforcing the tier system and clinging to the miserable status quo. In order to keep labor ‘peace’ for Biden, they kept us from striking when the contract was up. Then they threw the union’s support to Biden/Harris. By refusing to use our power to fight for what workers really need, the ILWU tops, along with the rest of the labor leadership, helped ensure Trump’s victory.”

Turnbull did not support either candidate


in the final union election round, noting: “The status quo policies that both will pursue can only ensure Local 10 remains weak and divided.” Voter turnout remained weak.

Many socialist groups insist that workers “aren’t ready” to fight for a revolutionary alternative to the trade-union misleaders as an excuse to hail pro-capitalist union bureaucrats like UAW head Shawn Fain and the heirs of Harry Bridges in the ILWU. This simply puts workers deeper in the grip of leaders who promote an alliance with Democratic Party liberals, crippling union struggle. In contrast, Turnbull has spent the past year as a member of the Local 10 executive board fighting for measures to strengthen the union and in the process challenging the bureaucracy’s losing strategy, including its support to the Democrats. This is precisely how to ready union members so they can wage collective struggle for their interests. To that end, she has won others to the Committee to End Tier Segregation, which aims to eliminate the divisions in the workforce that cripple the union. Her work provides an example of how Marxists can win authority in the unions on the basis of a plan of action that points the way forward for the labor movement. ■

Vote



Emily Turnbull
#9973
for Local 10 President



The recent strike by ILA longshore workers showed both the power we have and how the union leadership stands in the way of using it. Harold Daggett might look good compared to Willie Adams, who swore off a strike at Biden’s request and then saddled us with far less than we could have gotten. But Daggett simply took a different route to the same end—calling off the ILA strike without having resolved most key issues and then thanking Biden for this outcome.

The U.S.-dominated liberal world order is crumbling around us, and working people desperately need to fight for their interests. To prepare for the battles ahead, we need to begin strengthening our union **now**. These are the immediate steps I will take if elected Local 10 president:

- Get the Local 10 website up and running. Produce a weekly Local 10 bulletin to inform and educate the membership on the issues facing the union.
- Hire a sound engineer to improve the acoustics/sound system in the hall.
- Amend the constitution to end all fines and other punishments for failure to attend or to get a quorum at union meetings.
- Ensure that Local 10 takes control of safety by making the Stewards Council a real, representative body of stewards elected by the dispatch boards, terminal mechanics, steady men, Bs and Casuals.
- Fight to get Local 10 to take the measures necessary to bring Bs and Casuals in as full members of the union.
- Form a committee to organize non-union workers at the ports, including port truckers.
- Demand that the PMA put in a bid to reserve the Howard Terminal for an auxiliary dispatch hall in Oakland to save members who live in the East Bay the wear and tear of the SF commute.

Of course, I will continue to fight for the program I was elected on when I ran for executive board last year.

The ILWU should:

- **Not** have signed the contract and fought for better.
- **Oppose** tiers—bring Bs and Casuals into full union membership and steady men back to the hall—and fight for a shorter workweek with no loss in pay.
- **Fight** for Black Liberation.
- **Oppose** U.S. military operations, whether involving Ukraine, Israel or China.
- **Oppose** the Democrats and the Republicans.
- **Build** a workers party that aims to put working people in charge of the U.S. from top to bottom.

End Tier Segregation in the ILWU!

Equal Pay, Benefits and Union Rights for All!



September 2017: Casuals protest outside ILWU hall in Wilmington (Los Angeles) for more pay, work. Union leadership enforces tier system, which pits sections of workforce against one another, undermines union. Thomas R. Cordova/Daily Breeze

This article was originally printed in an October 30 Workers Vanguard supplement.

The “Committee to End Tier Segregation in the ILWU” in the union’s Bay Area Local 10 has taken up the fight to end the division of the workforce into A, B and casual workers. For decades, these divisions have been eroding the ILWU’s collective strength and its members’ consciousness, as the different tiers are pitted against one another in a dog-eat-dog struggle to get, or stay, ahead. The casuals struggle to get any work at all—at lower wages, no benefits and no union membership. If they pick up enough hours, which often takes years, they can advance to B-man status, largely working the most backbreaking jobs at less pay and still no union membership. If B-men put in enough time, they can become A-men, often working around the clock and destroying their bodies driving the heavy equipment to make up for the time they were on the bottom rungs of the tier ladder.

The Committee to End Tier Segregation is fighting for full medical benefits, equal pay for equal work and full union membership for **all** longshore workers. At Local 10’s May meeting, members voted to send a resolution in line with this perspective to the ILWU Longshore Caucus. Put forward by local executive board member and Committee founder Emily Turnbull, it demanded that all casuals get the same pay as A-men for the same work, with full contractual medical coverage as well as an intensive two-week training and safety program paid for by the PMA bosses and controlled by the union. This wouldn’t end the casuals tier, but it would significantly improve their conditions. The Longshore Caucus did not take up this resolution but referred it to a Caucus meeting for the 2028 round of contract negotiations.

The purpose of trade unions isn’t just to fight for their membership at contract time. It is to organize the workforce to

fight collectively for its interests **all** of the time. Contrary to the ILWU leadership’s line that union membership is a “privilege” that has to be earned by climbing up the tier ladder, membership in the union is a **necessity** if longshore workers are going to mobilize their combined power as one fist against the bosses.

The Committee to End Tier Segregation has stepped forward to begin that fight **now**. It scored its first victory at the June Local 10 meeting, when union members voted overwhelmingly against the local leadership’s attempt to institute a new “A minus” tier that would have restricted the jobs available to A-men with less than five years’ seniority. Founded by a small group of A-men, the Committee put itself on the map by taking a stand. Turnbull told *Workers Vanguard* that a number of A-men came over to the Committee’s table at the meeting to sign on to its mission statement, and others have since signed on.

The whole tier setup is designed to make B-men and especially casuals think that the only way they can get ahead is to keep their heads down. Many fear that the union won’t back them if they fight to improve their conditions, and for good reason. In 2017, longshore workers—many of whom had been casuals for a decade or more—protested outside the ILWU Local 13 union hall in Wilmington to demand more work and benefits. The local leadership turned its back on them, issuing a statement of their commitment “to fill all labor needed for the movement of cargo in the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach.” That commitment is to provide a cheap labor pool of casuals, who only get to work when the PMA needs them.

There are thousands of casual workers at the L.A./Long Beach port, where it can take 15-20 years to work up to B status. Some hope to collect enough hours to make it into the ILWU, eventually. For others, picking up some work at the port as a casual is a side gig to earn some extra money. Still others look to get in as skilled mechanics, becoming steady men who are hired directly by the shipping companies in order to bypass and subvert the union hiring hall. The L.A./Long Beach port is the largest in the U.S. Bringing casuals there into the union is especially crucial to strengthening the ILWU as a whole. The Committee to End Tier Segregation is looking to spread its fight to the union’s locals up and down the West Coast.

At the Oakland port, where fewer jobs are available, there are now 1,000 casuals, more than there has ever been. These workers are barely getting one shift a month, having to work other jobs just to survive. Many want to push the union forward as their very futures depend on making it as A-men. But they often see little way to do so other than getting in the good graces of the union leadership.

The Local 10 leadership blames the membership for weakening the union, arguing that most A-men put getting more work and money for themselves above the union’s interests. This finds an echo among casuals, who see A-men work double or sometimes even triple shifts while they get no work. But the mentality of getting yours while you still can is itself the product of the tier divisions, which the ILWU leadership helped set up and works together with the PMA to enforce. With

ILA Strike...

(continued from page 16)

throwing away the leverage that the union had in halting the supply chain at a crucial time—right before the elections and peak shipping for the holiday season. The way that longshoremen were hustled back to work was in fact designed to discourage them from striking again, since doing so risks losing the wage offer being dangled before them. Many workers who militantly defended the picket line yesterday are scratching their heads in confusion and anger today, wondering what it was all for.

But the battle is not over. Union militants can begin now to put the ILA in a better position to unleash the collective action needed to win their demands. But to do so requires drawing the lessons of what happened in order to figure out how to proceed.

ILA Partnership with Bosses and Their Politicians Hinders Union Struggle

Why did the same leadership that set the strike in motion simultaneously sabotage it? On the one hand, the ILA tops had to deliver some kind of results to the ranks. In an industry at the center of the U.S. economy, this requires confrontation with the ruling class. On the other hand, their underlying commitment to the status quo where the bosses call the shots means the ILA leaders do not want to cause a crisis for the U.S. rulers. They never were going to wage the strike as an intransigent fight for what workers need against the bosses and their government.

Daggett's strategy could only lead to capitulation because it relies on a partnership with the bosses and their politicians. While workers displayed a desire to fight for relief from staggering prices and job insecurity, the ILA leadership has done everything to restrain those impulses and keep them within the bounds considered safe by the establishment. While they have to produce results to not lose control over the ranks, the union tops are loyal to the ruling class, which has bestowed privileges on them in return for their service.

The strike was a calculated move by Daggett to allow workers to blow off a little steam, and so he cut it off before it took on a life of its own. His plans were orchestrated with the White House so that the Democrats came out smelling like roses. Afterwards, he even wrote Biden to praise the administration for its help. The Democrats didn't have to invoke Taft-Hartley—Harold Daggett did it for them by taking down the picket lines and voluntarily imposing a three-month "cooling off" period. USMX got what it wanted: longshoremen off the picket lines, the sup-

ILA president Harold Daggett (right) and Executive VP Dennis Daggett (left) line up with Trump. This is how you lose a strike. The ILA must rely on its own strength, not the bosses' politicians.



ply chain back up and running and labor peace until mid-January after peak season and the elections.

"National Unity" Blackmail Shackles the ILA

When longshore workers went out on strike and disrupted the supply chain, it put them in direct confrontation with this country's ruling class. But Daggett told longshoremen that the battle was only with the foreign-owned shipping companies. Let's get real—USMX and its affiliates like Maersk are overseen by the U.S. rulers, who are in charge overall at the ports. That's why White House officials like Labor Secretary Julie Su intervened—so things didn't get out of hand. It is why Florida's Republican governor, Ron DeSantis, called out the National Guard to break the strike if Daggett didn't halt it.

On its eve, Daggett undermined the strike by claiming that ILA means "I Love America" and vowing to keep military cargo flowing. This pledge was a declaration of love to America's ruling elite, who squeeze working people at home and fuel wars and genocide abroad. Workers here—whose kids will pay with their lives for these wars—have no interest in supporting the government's military operations. The ILA Facebook page reposted a video stating that ILA workers and Palestinians have a common enemy in Maersk. Longshoremen not handling military cargo would do far more to help the Palestinians than any video reposted by the ILA's PR team—and would go a long way toward putting the union on top in its battle with USMX.

Some ILA workers believe that the reason Daggett capitulated was the *New York Post's* hit job against him for bringing workers out. Its purpose was to turn public opinion against the strike, painting ILA members who face harsh working conditions on the job upwards of 100 hours a week as ungrateful and greedy. The truth is, workers already know who parks the Bentleys in the employee lot.

improving their standard of living.

Abolishing the tier divisions will take a major coastwide showdown with the PMA, and behind it, the government whose sinking economy depends on keeping the supply chain up and running. This is not going to happen under a leadership that limits the union's demands to what is acceptable to the PMA. Instead of fighting for what the workers need, the ILWU bureaucracy operates more as labor contractors for the shipping bosses, supplying them with workers who can be brought in when needed and discarded when not.

The very leadership that enforces the tier divisions, beginning with the exclusion of casuals and B-men from union membership, appeals to the casuals that the way to become union members is to follow the path it has set. The Committee to End Tier Segregation is acting to change this equation and seeking to unite A's, B's and casuals in struggle to abolish the tier divisions. It has made this fight a real issue in Local 10, crucially winning the support of some A-men. The situation is ripe for B's and casuals to join the effort to rally greater numbers of longshore workers behind the Committee. This is a crucial first step to strengthening the union, bringing *all* longshore workers *up* and preparing them for the struggles to come. ■

They also know who has a camper in the lot because they are at the bosses' beck and call and have to sleep on site, instead of at home with their families.

Segregation Holds Back the ILA

The U.S. ruling class preserves its profits and power by pitting white workers against black workers. In service to the bosses and their government, the ILA bureaucracy enforces their "divide and rule" schemes and oversees racial, craft and tier divisions among workers at the ports. In Newark, there are separate locals of longshore workers, one predominantly white and the other predominantly black. There are only a small number of black workers among the well-paid checkers and mechanics, who are organized into separate, largely white, locals.

After decades of being told this segregated setup is "the best we're gonna get," many workers, especially black workers, can't imagine the ILA being run any other way. In Newark, a large number of black workers fear that they will lose job security in a merged local. They see that "integrated" ILA locals in the area are much whiter than the Newark piers under the ILA's segregated structure.

In the southern ports, where there are few white union longshoremen, segregation is no less a problem, only it takes the form of segregation by tier and craft. To alibi their own role in maintaining these union fault lines, black local ILA bureaucrats blame all problems on Daggett and "right to work" state governments. Among other things, though, they refuse to wage the necessary struggle to bring white non-union port workers into the ILA, handing the bosses a club to drive down work conditions and a labor pool to be mobilized against the union. Similarly, separate local contracts pit dockers at one port against those at another, fueling a downward spiral. For example, in the rich oil port of Houston, ILA longshoremen have no pension whatsoever.

To break down its divisions and maximize its fighting capacity, the ILA needs to fuse its segregated locals. This must be done in a way that prevents any attempt to force black workers to the bottom of a combined local. What is necessary is *more* decent paying union jobs for both black and white workers and integrated union-run, company-paid job training and upgrading programs, so that the gains for one group of workers will not come at another's expense. *For a six-hour day with 12 hours pay for all in the North and South! Top pay and benefits for new hires!*

The fight for these demands would also transform the locals that are formally integrated right now, crucially by throwing open the door of the union and actively recruiting black workers into all crafts while allowing workers of all races to carry their seniority to easier jobs. In every port, there should be one union local that includes longshore and warehouse workers, mechanics and checkers. Making this perspective a reality demands the kind of political struggle against the ILA bureaucracy needed to cohere a new, class-struggle leadership of the union.

The point is to make the union *stronger*. The ILA is increasingly an island in an ocean of non-union labor. Port truckers who demonstrated their solidarity with the ILA during the strike are overwhelmingly non-union. The way to help port truckers is not by servicing them faster on the job, as the ILA tops propose, but by helping them organize and get paid by the hour. Speedup only makes the bosses richer and more workers jobless, while eroding safety for truckers and longshoremen alike.

Hundreds of thousands of black, white and Latino warehouse workers who stuff and strip containers are non-union. In the ports, janitors, secretaries, computer techs and cafeteria workers are also unorganized. The ILA should take leadership in assisting all these workers to unionize.

The ILA must prepare now for the next battle. What is urgently posed is redoubling efforts to bridge the union's divisions through integration of the locals and crafts and to strengthen the ILA based on a strategy that benefits all its members:

- **Top pay and benefits for all ILA members. Equal pay for equal work. Eliminate tiers. Six hours work at 12 hours pay for everyone!**
- **Organize joint local meetings to undercut racial, craft and pier divisions. Build interracial class-struggle strike committees for next January. Fuse the locals at every port!**
- **Organize port truckers and all unorganized workers!**
- **Dump the Democrats and Republicans, for a class-struggle workers party!**

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

1. Publication title: *Workers Vanguard*.
2. Publication no.: 09-8770.
3. Filing date: 30 September 2024.
4. Issue frequency: Quarterly.
5. No. of issues published annually: 4.
6. Annual subscription price: \$5.00.
7. Complete mailing address of known office of publication: Spartacist Publishing Co., 299 Broadway, Suite 1618, New York, NY 10007-4104.
8. Complete mailing address of headquarters or general business office of publisher: Spartacist Publishing Co., 299 Broadway, Suite 1618, New York, NY 10007-4104.
9. Full names and complete mailing addresses of publisher, editor, and managing editor: Publisher—Spartacist Publishing Co., 299 Broadway, Suite 1618, New York, NY 10007-4104; Editor—Michael Davisson, 299 Broadway, Suite 1618, New York, NY 10007-4104; Managing Editor—Jeanne Mitchell, 299 Broadway, Suite 1618, New York, NY 10007-4104.
10. Owner: Spartacist Publishing Co. (Unincorporated Association), 299 Broadway, Suite 1618, New York, NY 10007-4104.
11. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities: None.
12. Tax status (For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at nonprofit rates): Not applicable.
13. Publication title: *Workers Vanguard*.
14. Issue date for circulation data below: 17 September 2024.
15. Extent and nature of circulation: Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months: a. Total number of copies (Net press run): 9,833; b. Paid circulation (by mail and outside the mail): (1) Mailed outside-county paid subscriptions stated on PS Form 3541: 1,526; (2) Mailed in-county paid subscriptions stated on PS Form 3541: 0; (3) Paid distribution outside the mails including sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales, and other outside USPS: 4,306; (4) Paid distribution by other classes of mail

through the USPS: 80; c. Total paid distribution [Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3) and (4)]: 5,912; d. Free or nominal rate distribution: (1) Outside-county copies included on PS Form 3541: 0; (2) In-county copies included on PS Form 3541: 106; (3) Copies mailed at other classes through the USPS: 206; (4) Distribution outside the mail: 0; e. Total free or nominal rate distribution [Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3) and (4)]: 312; f. Total distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e): 6,224; g. Copies not distributed: 3,609; h. Total (Sum of 15f and 15g): 9,833; i. Percent paid (15c divided by 15f times 100): 94.99%.

No. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: a. Total number of copies (Net press run): 10,000; b. Paid circulation (by mail and outside the mail): (1) Mailed outside-county paid subscriptions stated on PS Form 3541: 1,541; (2) Mailed in-county paid subscriptions stated on PS Form 3541: 0; (3) Paid distribution outside the mails including sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales, and other outside USPS: 4,495; (4) Paid distribution by other classes of mail through the USPS: 91; c. Total paid distribution [Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3) and (4)]: 6,127; d. Free or nominal rate distribution: (1) Outside-county copies included on PS Form 3541: 0; (2) In-county copies included on PS Form 3541: 104; (3) Copies mailed at other classes through the USPS: 204; (4) Distribution outside the mail: 0; e. Total free or nominal rate distribution [Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3) and (4)]: 308; f. Total distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e): 6,435; g. Copies not distributed: 3,565; h. Total (Sum of 15f and 15g): 10,000; i. Percent paid (15c divided by 15f times 100): 95.21%.

16. Total circulation includes electronic copies. Report circulation on PS Form 3526-X worksheet: 0.

17. This statement of ownership will be printed in the December 2024 issue of this publication.

18. Signature and title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner: (Signed) Michael Davisson (Editor), 30 September 2024. I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).

WORKERS VANGUARD

Counterproductive but Not Criminal

Free Luigi!

The cops say Luigi Mangione killed hated UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson. The media denounces widespread support for Luigi among the oppressed of all political leanings. They smear Luigi and try to explain away what everybody already understands. It's no mystery why someone would want to off a bloodsucking insurance millionaire, and it's certainly *no crime from the standpoint of the working class*.

Given the miserable state of healthcare, it's almost surprising that such shootings aren't more common, but gunning down CEOs—while certainly a bold, decisive and courageous act—is not an answer. The strategy of individual terror and assassination is counterproductive. The ruling class is responding by ratcheting up their forces of repression, which can only be bad news for workers and everyone else it oppresses. Luigi was indicted on multiple counts, including “terrorism,” an ominous charge in the hands of the capitalist state. Companies are expanding private security, and a Florida woman was charged for simply uttering “Delay, Deny, Depose” to her insurance provider during a dispute. More is sure to come and will be wielded against labor and the left.

The shooting and its popularity reflect deep-seated hatred of the insurance para-



Cameron Croston/EPA-EFE

PA State Police/MEGA

CEO slaying unleashed hatred of insurance industry. Task now is to free Mangione and channel anger into organized working-class fight for free, quality healthcare.

sites and the healthcare system. But they are also symptomatic of demoralization and desperation in the population. Few

have hope that the system can change but find solace that one of the parasites got knocked off. It's possible that others

will be inspired by the act and choose the same road—a waste of potentially revolutionary human material. But if lone gunmen aren't the answer, the question is: What to do now?

The situation has inflamed class polarization in society. On one side, the elite and their media mouthpieces recoil at political violence against the rich. On the other, many of the oppressed oppose Luigi's arrest. There is burgeoning class hatred against the bosses and their state that defends for-profit medicine. But while self-proclaimed “revolutionaries” offer words of understanding for Luigi, they refuse to defend him. The capitalists prepare to make an example of Luigi and take measures that threaten us all. *Labor and the left must demand Mangione's release. Free Luigi!*

Free Luigi!

Liberal and conservative pundits alike are proving they have more in common with each other and the wealthy insurance execs than with the working masses. Notable right-wing nut job Ben Shapiro tried to blame all the sympathy for the assassin on Marxist influence and equated defense of Luigi with calls for revolution. His rant backfired and showed just how

continued on page 13

ILA Tops Scrapped Powerful Strike

Longshore Workers: Prepare for Next Battle

In October, Harold Daggett sold out the ILA strike based on a false promise that if longshoremen gave up their advantage and kept USMX profits rolling during the peak shipping season, they would get a good deal come January. Many workers were angry he ditched the strike. Since then, none of their key issues have been resolved, and they are working under a contract extension. The ILA leadership is doing all it can to avert a strike set for five days before the presidential inauguration. This time, it is based on the false promise that Trump has the union's back.

Trump has said that the foreign-owned shipping companies make record profits that should go to longshore workers and their families. Sure, and ditto for the U.S.-owned companies' profits. But any kind of alliance with Trump against the foreign-owned shipping companies in USMX will backfire on the ILA. He is spearheading an “America First” crusade not to improve the situation for U.S. workers, but to strengthen the position of the ruling class at labor's expense. The Daggetts have jumped on board.

Don't be fooled. Trump's goal is to make you think he is your friend in order to prevent the ILA from fighting for anything better, like much higher wages, safe working conditions and future job security. Whatever bone Trump throws at the union in the short term will only screw the ILA in the longer term.

Longshore workers have nothing to gain from Trump's plan to put “America First” by knocking out its foreign rivals and putting a brake on trade, which will eliminate

many longshore jobs. This will also lead to a raising of prices. Who is going to pay for that if not ILA members and their families? The Daggetts' pact with the devil may very well nail the coffin on the ILA before automation ever has a chance to.

The truth is, the biggest enemy of U.S. workers is at home! No foreign government ever outlawed an ILA strike, called out the National Guard against ILA strikers or brutalized them for “driving while black” on the Jersey Turnpike. The red-white-and-blue ruling class—represented by the Democrats and the Republicans—does all that and more. They call the shots at the ports. They are the class enemy that needs to be confronted.

In November, the ILA broke off contract negotiations with the USMX shipping bosses over automation. What should be the ILA's strategy for dealing with automation? As we wrote in our article titled “Prepare to Strike! Fuse the Locals!” (WV No. 1182, 17 September):

“Daggett's strategy has always been to try to stop automation by making longshoremen work faster. This is a losing proposition. It is cutting your own throat, sacrificing safety and allowing the boss to employ fewer workers.

“Automation always happens in industry, the question is: Will technology work for longshoremen by *reducing the length of the workweek with no loss in pay*—or will it screw them out of a job? Workers, not the bosses, must control the process of



Savannah, Georgia, October 1: Placard says “no work” but passenger ships and military cargo were all worked during strike and then ILA tops pulled plug without contract.

automation to make it benefit them. The union must have the right to strike over safety and automation decisions at any time. *Eliminate the no-strike clause!*”

The union needs to prepare to strike on January 15! The single most important step toward that end is to reject the bureaucracy's alliance with Trump and fight to end the segregated locals and craft divisions at the ports, which only undercut union struggle. Instead of an alliance with the bosses' politicians, the ILA must seek alliances with other unions and port workers. This time around, elect strike committees and picket captains on the basis that “No contract, no work” actually means something. Without a contract that the ILA deserves, *nothing* moves—no perishables, passenger ships or military cargo.

Below we reprint an October 12 *Workers Vanguard* supplement on how to prepare for January 15 and beyond.

* * *

“No contract, no work!” rang out up and down the Atlantic and Gulf Coast seaboards when the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) went out on strike October 1. But less than three days in, ILA president Harold Daggett called off the strike and extended the old contract. Workers celebrated an announced 62 percent pay increase, only to learn the next day that the increase is not immediate but rather depends on reaching a new contract with the USMX bosses by January 15. While the wage offer is sizable, even this is not enough. The tentative wage package doesn't mention raises for newly hired workers, who make only \$20 an hour. The key issues of pensions, healthcare, wage tiers and job losses through automation are all unresolved.

ILA leaders are claiming victory while patting themselves on the back for delaying the wage increase and thereby preserving the union's right to strike during contract negotiations. But this begs the question: Why pull the plug on the strike in the first place? Every striker on that picket line knew that they had immense power, and every worker knows that timing is everything. Daggett and local ILA officials at every port succeeded only in

continued on page 15