



No to austerity, environmental ruin, and attacks on immigrants!

All out for May 1st — International Workers Day!

Four years into the depression, workers everywhere continue to be devastated by the capitalist austerity drive. But around the globe, workers and other oppressed peoples are replying with an outburst of revolts, strikes and protests. They are fighting both starvation and political repression.

Mounting global resistance

Last year the long-ruling tyrants of *Tunisia, Egypt and Libya* were toppled by mass uprisings, and today the people there are pressing demands upon the new regimes. In *Syria*, the people are fighting to bring down the Assad tyranny. And in *Bahrain*, while their uprising was overwhelmed last year by US-supported Saudi Arabian military intervention, the people are again filling the streets and demanding democracy. The Arab Spring has been a reaction to both tyranny and the misery caused by “free market” policies.

Protests and general strikes have wracked Europe. In *Greece, Spain, and Portugal*, hundreds of thousands of workers have taken to the streets against cuts in jobs, wages, pensions, schools, and other social programs. They are fighting bankers, capitalists, and establishment politicians who aim to solve the debt crisis by crushing the masses.

In *Nigeria*, more than a million workers and poor waged a week-long general strike against rising fuel prices caused by the removal of subsidies, a removal demanded by the IMF and World Bank. In *India*, as many as 100 million workers waged a one-day general strike against rising prices, privatization, and substandard pay for contract workers and in favor of a better minimum wage. A million *South Africans* conducted an anti-austerity general strike.

The Fukushima nuclear disaster spurred thousands to protest in *Japan*, while construction of the Kundankulam nuclear plant sparked large demonstrations in *India*.

Here in the *US*, nation-wide protests demanded justice for the murder of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin in Florida.

These are but a few of the actions brought on by the savage policies of world capitalism in the last few months.

But while the masses are fighting, they're hamstringed everywhere by many organizations that speak in their name. The fake “socialist” parties in Europe, for example, demand austerity just like the right-wing parties, and have even sent police to put down protests. Likewise, the dominant trade union bureaucracies, such as that in the US, routinely give big concessions to the capitalists, and work to limit the mass actions or outright squash them.

Thus, to beat back the class offensive of the rich—to say nothing of overthrowing their rule—the working class is going to have to overcome this treachery by organizing in a way that is independent of the capitalists and all their apologists. In the US, this means opposing all the capitalist politicians, whether Democrat or Republican.

The Republican insanity

The Republican leaders cheer on the austerity drive. Their motto is that the capitalists should be free from any restraint, and then there will be a veritable heaven on earth for

all. Hence, taxes and regulations on the rich, and definitely unions of course, should all but disappear. Workers should be seen, but not paid, at least not very much.

As for global warming, they say it's a hoax, or at least not caused by human activity, and pretend that industrial and corporate activity have nothing to do with the climate.

And the health care crisis? They don't worry about that. So what if 50 million people are uninsured? Supposedly young people have decided to “self-insure”, and the free market will take care of everything else.

And women's rights? The Republicans are backing one more crazy law after another, from eliminating equal pay provisions in Wisconsin to opposing abortion rights and limiting the availability of contraception and birth control.

As for racism? They are eager to expand the police state at the Mexican border and to harass Latinos with racial-profiling measures in Arizona, Alabama and elsewhere. And they often don't bother hiding their anti-black venom.

But the Republicans are first and foremost for slashing social programs. They blame unemployment on unemployment insurance, and poverty on anti-poverty programs. They moan about balancing the budget in order to slash social programs, but their worry about deficits disappears when it comes to granting millionaires more tax breaks, or expanding the trillion dollar war-machine.

The Democrats are no real alternative

What, then, is Obama's alternative?

Social programs? Even before taking office, Obama lined up Democratic support for Bush's bank bail out. Then, when he had a large Congressional majority, he put social programs on the chopping block in the name of deficit reduction! And he is ravaging public schools, teachers and students alike, with his “Race to the Top” program.

Tax the rich? No, Obama extended Bush's tax cuts for the rich. Then this February, he proposed lowering the tax rate for companies from the present 35% to 28%, and down to 25% for US manufacturers. His State of the Union Address preached the Reagan-style trickle-down economics of cutting regulations and taxes for the business elite.

Jobs? While millions are out of work, Obama has no real jobs program. Instead he backs measures that would cut hundred of thousands of postal service jobs. And his bailout of GM and Chrysler may have revived their profits, but it was at the cost of cutting tens of thousands of jobs.

Climate change? Beneath Obama's sweet talk about “green energy”, his program is drill more oil, strip-mine more coal, frack more natural gas and license new nuclear power plants. This year he has boasted of opening up millions of acres of land and offshore for drilling, and of helping develop fracking technologies to extract natural gas from shale rock. Never mind that fracking poisons water resources and produces large carbon emissions just like coal and oil.

Union leaders give in to the capitalist program

Faced with this bipartisan onslaught, one might think the trade union leaders would be organizing a revolt. Hardly.

Rather than opposing Obama's pro-capitalist program, the AFL-CIO bureaucrats have endorsed him for re-election and promise to mobilize tens of thousands of workers to doorbell for him this fall. The UAW bureaucrats heap praise on Obama's auto bailout despite its major job cuts and half wages for new hires.

Postal workers are under attack, and postal management wants to cut wages, lay off another 220,000 workers, and tear up union contracts. Yet the leaders of the postal unions refuse to organize serious protests. They haven't yet even asked for support from Occupy, and instead lobby politicians, sometimes first supporting a politician, and then having to oppose the same one.

The AFL-CIO leaders denounce the Republicans, but even here they try to please the capitalists. They have organized rallies and a recall campaign against Republican Governor of Wisconsin Scott Walker who wants to effectively end negotiating rights for public sector unions. But this was only after Walker failed to accept big contract concessions offered by the bulk of the union hierarchy.

Far from organizing a serious fight, the present pro-capitalist AFL-CIO and CTW leaders subvert it. For example, when Occupy activists successfully organized port blockades on the West Coast in solidarity with longshore workers and truckers battling anti-union measures, ILWU longshore union officials denounced them and even physically assaulted an Occupy planning meeting.

Stop deportations! Full rights for all immigrants!

While the sellout union leaders promote Obama as the savior, he is brutal toward the undocumented immigrant workers. He has deported more immigrants than Bush or any other president. Yes, he condemns Romney, whose advisor on immigration helped craft the racial-profiling laws in Arizona and Alabama. But Obama's raids on immigrants at workplaces and communities are racial profiling on a grand scale: last year alone some 46,000 immigrants with children who are US citizens were swept up.

Obama sheds tears about families torn apart by ICE raids and deportations, but the raids continue. He keeps repeating his old promise of "comprehensive immigration reform", but his proposals offer hope only for a few, while stepping up oppression of the majority of immigrants.

The real concern of politicians of both parties is to fatten business profits by driving undocumented workers into the shadows through the threat of deportation. This hinders them from organizing and subjects them to severe exploitation. It makes them into a hunted, second-class labor force.

The denial of rights to one part of the working class makes it easier to deny rights to all workers. And it breaks up class solidarity among workers. This is then used to drive down the conditions of all workers. Demanding full rights for all immigrants—no matter what their legal status—is therefore in the vital interest of every worker.

Occupy Wall Street lives!

The wide spread of the Occupy movement shows the burning desire for resistance to the capitalist onslaught. It could only take place outside the bounds set by the mainstream union leaders and establishment groups. The ruling class has tried to divert Occupy into mild establishment-approved activities, and, failing that, has unleashed brutal police attacks, many by Democratic or liberal mayors. These blows have had some success, but they have also increased the determination of many activists to persevere.

For example, Occupy held dramatic protests in several West Coast cities. 15,000 people marched on the Port of Oakland last Nov. in response to police attacks. In Dec., protests in solidarity with longshore workers and truckers

shut down port operation in Portland, Oakland and Seattle in spite of opposition by ILWU officials.

The coming of new people into struggle and the militant mass actions have been inspiring. The spirit to fight capitalism itself has also been spreading. But Occupy is merely an initial step in the struggle. There are many trends in Occupy, with competing views of what to do. Some of these trends are opposed to militant action or even back the Democrats and the union officials. The future of Occupy as an active movement of struggle that brings new sections of workers and oppressed around it depends on whether it stays independent of the Democrats, establishment politicians, and no-struggle union leaders.

So there are many controversies over orientation in the Occupy movement. One is whether to go along with the trade union bureaucrats or to take militant action despite them. Some activists rightly despise the main union leaders and their ties to the Democrats. They are willing to defy the do-nothing trade union leaders, and that has been important for carrying out militant Occupy actions such as solidarity with longshore workers. Another issue is that some activists think that unions in general are bad. But there is a difference between the present pro-concession union leaders, and union activity in general. Unions aren't the only form of workplace organizing, but they are a major part of it. To spread the struggle widely among workers, it's important to have as much contact with workplace issues and both organized and unorganized workers as possible. One must fight the pro-establishment union leaders from within as well as without the unions, and deal with workplace issues despite the obstruction of the present union bureaucrats.

There is also a growing interest in Marxism. Marx showed that the capitalists aren't simply bad individuals, but squeeze the masses as part of the inherent nature of the drive for profits. Marxism also shows that workers have a vital interest in the liberation struggles of oppressed peoples. It also shows the need to overthrow capitalism altogether if we ever are going to end exploitation and oppression.

A critical part of Marxist theory is exposing how the tyrannical Stalinist USSR, or Cuba or China today, are not socialist, but a new form of state capitalism. These false "communists" revised real communist theory beyond recognition. The refutation of their "revisionism" is essential if Marxism is to be a theory of liberation, and not an apology for oppressive regimes.

Revive the militant spirit of May Day!

The great movement for an 8-hour day, culminating in the general strike of May 1, 1886, showed the power of the working class, while the hanged Chicago martyrs of that struggle showed its heroism. Today's crisis demands the same heroism. As we fight against economic austerity, persecution of immigrants, resurgent racism, the assault on women's rights, and destruction of the environment, let's be inspired by the working-class heroes who defiantly battled the capitalists over a century ago. Let's use May 1st to rally more workers into the battle. Let's make true the historic words:

"We have nothing to lose but our chains! We have a world to win!"

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