



May Day 2015 – fight capitalist austerity, racism, and environmental ruin

Come to the May Day March on

Friday, May 1, 2015

Gather at 11:30 AM at Grand Circus Park

Sponsored by a number of left organizations

On May 1, 1886 U.S. workers rose in the powerful general strike for an 8-hour day that is today celebrated by class-conscious workers throughout the world. Their action laid bare that in America too, modern society is split into two hostile, warring camps. On one side stands the producers of society's wealth: the working class in its millions. On the other side stands the owners of the means of production, the parasitical capitalist class – backed by their police, national guard, politicians and press.

Today the class division revealed by the first May Day has further widened. The capitalists (the so-called 1%) are celebrating new highs on the stock market. Politics are dominated by two parties of the super rich. And the police forces are increasingly being militarized in order to suppress mass resistance and rebellion. But on the other side the working-class struggle remains at a very low level. The result is that the new generations of workers and youth face worse and worse futures than their parents. The only way out of this gloomy situation is to politically reorganize the working class for struggle, beginning from where we are. ■

Black lives matter!

The parade of disgraceful racist police murders of Black and Latino people is unending; every day seems to bring a new outrage. Lynching is back; it's as simple as that. The police murder you openly, then inevitably claim you had a weapon. And even when videos prove that you did not have a weapon, the white supremacist "justice" system refuses to prosecute the police or, at best, gives them a slap on the wrist.

Freddie Gray's murder by the police of Baltimore on April 19 was another in this series. His spine was severed after he was locked in a police van with no seat belt, while in handcuffs and leg irons, and then given what these beasts call "a rough ride." (The Baltimore police are skilled at this method of murder; they killed another Black man in the same way in 2005.) And hours after Freddie Gray's funeral in Baltimore on Monday April 27, a federal immigration officer murdered Terrence

Kellom in Detroit, claiming that he wielded a hammer against the heavily-armed officer.

The Black masses have had enough. They are tired of waiting for the political establishment, Republican and Democrat, to bring a halt to the murders. The only answer the establishment offers is voting for the same corrupt pro-capitalist politicians and waiting for the same administrations that have presided over year after year of police murders to set up commissions and review boards, which do nothing but talk, talk, talk.

Outraged people are going into action all across the country, with rallies, marches, protests, and some street fighting, as in Ferguson and Baltimore. These are just struggles against an ongoing series of atrocities. The establishment has written off an entire generation of black youth, condemning them to poverty, police surveillance, and murders: it is this daily horror, not those who take to the streets when provoked, which is the source of violence. And indeed police provocation continued in Baltimore even while the establishment claimed to be calling for peace. The protest movement needs to find more organized ways of struggle, but it is the protest movement which is the hope for progress. Let the protest movement grow until it reaches every nook and corner of the country. ■

\$15-an-hour takes to the streets

On April 15 low-wage workers in 230 cities held actions demanding a \$15-an-hour minimum wage and a union. In some places, like New York and Chicago, marchers numbered in the thousands. The marches and other actions were spirited and determined. In most places, young workers, largely Black and other minorities, were the majority of the participants. But older workers also hold low-wage jobs in very large numbers, and many of them participated as well. Also, it was notable that workers from various established unions, making better than \$15, came out to strongly support the demands of the protesters. In New York, on April 7, a large contingent of construction workers who were protesting another issue, came over to join the low-wage protesters.

In New York and Chicago the protesters flooded the streets. In Detroit they marched down main thoroughfares, through the Wayne State University campus, and surrounded and flooded a McDonald's location. The slogans were militant, from "No Justice, No Peace!" to "We're tired and we won't take it no more!"

The protests were organized by the SEIU union, which has been using the tactic of protests aimed at public opinion. This has had an impact, resulting in the raising of the minimum wage in some localities. But in Seattle, where legislation raised the minimum to \$15, the SEIU agreed to compromises that limited the raise to \$11 this year, and, depending on how an employer is classified, does not reach \$15 an hour for several more years. Moreover, \$15 an hour is still not a living wage. To win that is going to require organizing in the workplaces, including strikes that shut down production and hurt profits. ■

The Trans-Pacific Partnership attacks workers and the environment

The Obama regime, with most Congressional Republicans and some Democrats, is pushing through a NAFTA-like trade pact called the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Hundreds of big capitalists helped write it, and its text has been classified secret. But it's slowly leaking out as Obama tries to "fast-track" the bill to avoid amendments.

The administration says TPP creates jobs. Not really. US companies will move production overseas to exploit cheap labor. And they'll continue to cut jobs and wages here to compete with workers overseas. If US capitalists export more products their profits may rise, but profits and jobs are different.

The TPP's "investor-state system" helps the capitalists destroy the environment. Companies are allowed to challenge government regulations in special international courts, independent of the courts inside the country. And they can demand payment for whatever profits they allegedly did not make because of the regulation.

Here's one example. Many activists in the US are fighting to ban fracking, and several victories have been won at the local or state level. But in 2012, a US multinational, Lone Pine, launched an "investor-state" case under NAFTA procedures to make Canada pay it \$250 million because the country bans fracking.

While most Democrats and the trade union leaders shout against the TPP, workers cannot rely on them to fight austerity or environmental devastation. The top union officials complain about jobs moving overseas, but tell workers they must accept job cuts and low wages in order to help their capitalists be more competitive. And they often oppose environmental measures hand-in-hand with the capitalists in the false hope that this will "save jobs". A real fight for jobs requires building ties between rank-and-file activists who no longer trust the sellouts. Workers also need to join the environmental movement and orient it towards regulating the capitalists and away from the idea that the marketplace, if only there were a carbon tax or a complicated cap and trade plan, would protect the environment. ■

Will Greece escape austerity?

The Greek people are suffering from 25% unemployment and cutbacks in everything. These cuts are enforced by European officials organized in the "troika" – the European Central Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Commission.

The Greek people voted on January 25 to end austerity and the dictatorship of the hated troika. The new government is headed by Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras of Syriza ("the Coalition of the Radical Left"). The troika immediately said "no": elections don't matter, only what the rich and privileged say matters. It sought to block the Greek law of March 18 that provides emergency humanitarian relief for the poorest and most desperate of Greeks.

Negotiations have gone on for more than three months. But the troika doesn't want a reasonable agreement: it wants to humiliate Greece as a lesson to anyone who doesn't submit to what the big bourgeoisie demands. So now Greece faces bankruptcy. In April, the Tsipras government will probably have to make a choice: capitulate, or defy the troika and default on past debts. If the Tsipras government sticks to its guns and defies the troika, it might also be forced to stop using the "euro" as money and instead bring back the "drachma" (Greek currency). It will be hard to defy the troika, and it will involve many changes and sacrifices. But if the Greek people decide to do this, and if the government is capable of doing this, it will be a major challenge to the world bourgeoisie and market fundamentalism.

If Greece succeeds in escaping austerity, or even moderating it, it will inspire workers throughout Europe. In turn, how much support Greece gets from workers elsewhere will help determine how far it is able to defy the troika. Down with the troika! Solidarity with the working people of Greece! ■

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- Marxism and natural science (February 21, 2015)
- Will Pan-Africanists support the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa? (February 15, 2015)
- Anti-racist protests continue around the country (Dec. 14, 2014)
- The Russian government backs the French KKK (Dec. 12)
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