

MAY DAY 2015

INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' DAY RALLY & MARCH: Friday, May 1, 2150 S. Norman St. (Judkins Park) **March departs at 3:00 p.m.** Sponsored by El Comité & May 1st Action Coalition
Anti-Capitalist March: 6:00 p.m. at SCCC (1701 Broadway)

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 stood the producers of society's wealth: the working class in its millions. On the other side stood 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.

The strike movement and Fight for \$15

In defiance of police repression, over the past years the workers of China have been going out in record numbers of strikes and "incidents," resulting in rising wages. But in the United States the number of strikes remains at record lows, and wages have either stagnated or dramatically fallen. Additionally, the number of private sector workers even in unions has fallen to 6.6%, and the leaders of the AFL-CIO and CTW generally oppose strikes, or work to weaken and sell them out if they occur. This reality drives home the need for workers to organize unions where they do not exist as well as to organize themselves independently of the union hierarchy in order to fight for strikes and other class-struggle policies where unions exist. And there's a certain motion in this

direction.

On April 15 tens of thousands of low-wage workers—who are disproportionately national minorities and immigrants—took to the streets demanding "\$15 and a union." This movement has extremely wide support among all workers, and it has led to the raising of the minimum wage in a number of cities and states during the past two years. But reliance on SEIU-led publicity walk-outs is not enough. In fact, in Seattle, where the minimum wage was already one of the highest in the country, the SEIU cut a deal with the local establishment in which the minimum remains at \$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 the profits of the exploiters.

An example from low-wage workers in Mexico

Beginning March 17, tens of thousands of Mexican agricultural workers stayed out of the fields to launch a powerful strike in Baja California. Many were Indigenous people from the southern states, who had not received a raise in 20 years. And they had to strike under the auspices of an independent union because the unions which supposedly represent them are completely sold out. Hundreds of police and soldiers were called out to break up the strikers' blockades and they suffered more than 200 arrests. But with their crops rotting, the big growers agreed to a 15% wage increase. This is less than what the workers were demanding, but they've now gained experience in fighting, and more confidence about using their collective power in future harvests.

Another important movement: Black Lives Matter!

Police killings are the highest in 20 years—about 1,100 last year. These shootings are often cold-

blooded murders, with victims being repeatedly shot, including being repeatedly shot in the back or while their hands are raised or while they lay bleeding on the ground. Or people are savagely beaten and then killed by gangs of cops having sadistic “fun,” e.g. Freddie Gray in Baltimore.

But the anger in the land against these atrocities has given rise to riots and mass demonstrations with each new police murder or publicized beating, and to the Black Lives Matter movement. Obama wants to sidetrack this movement by suggesting *society in general* is the source of the problem. But no! The murderers are the armed representatives of the capitalist state, and they're acting out the racist and class hatreds of the ruling class toward those whom it exploits and oppresses. And those being murdered are nearly always from the working class, and disproportionately national minorities and immigrants (e.g., Antonio Zambrano-Montes of Pasco).

Full rights for all immigrants!

The capitalist class wants immigrant workers, but it wants them slaving without rights and under threat of deportation so as to be able to super-exploit their labor-power, which they then use to drive down the wages and conditions of all workers. Thus, the demand of the working class must be for full rights for all immigrants, whether they have papers or not.

A lesson about the Democrats

In 2006, after huge numbers of immigrants poured into the streets protesting Bush's proposal to make undocumented immigrants felons, Bush abandoned that idea while continuing to support reactionary legislation. But the legislation proposed by the Democrats was *also reactionary*, and the leaders of the mainstream immigrant rights groups plus SEIU and other unions *hid this* from the immigrant rights movement in order to help get Obama elected as a supposed friend. Some of these groups also supported the reactionary bills! Well, the truth is now out: Over the past 7 years the Democrats' “comprehensive immigration reform” bills have not been radically different from those of the Republicans. They always

put “border security and interior enforcement” first. They included fines, fees, and sometimes 20 years of legal red tape before you could get citizenship. They contained bracero-like programs to serve agribusiness, “English proficiency” requirements, favoritism for highly educated immigrants in a few industries, etc. And, meanwhile, the Obama administration set new records in deportations.

Now, when the Democrats are worried about getting immigrant votes next year, Obama has made an executive order (which has been held up by court challenges and can be overturned by the next president) temporarily exempting a minority of undocumented immigrants (est. 3.7 million) from deportation if they can prove they've been in the U.S. for over 5 years and have children and “roots” here. So while they pay taxes and will have temporary papers, these people will continue to be denied full rights, and the majority of undocumented migrants will still have no rights. Thus, the immigrant rights movement must stick to its demands for full rights for all.

May Day as a revolutionary holiday

In 1886 it was the class-conscious activists who were the most capable and successful leaders of the eight hour movement. They fought for the eight hour day as part of the all round struggle against the capitalist class, attempting to use the eight hour day fight as a lever to build up the workers' revolutionary movement. So it should be today with the “fight for \$15,” immigrants rights, “Black lives matter,” environmental and other progressive movements. Class conscious activists within these movements should unite in work to give them greater strength; while as we fight the effects of the capitalist system—mass impoverishment while the rich get richer, super-exploitation and denial of rights to immigrants, racial discrimination and police murders—we should at the same time be building a movement consciously aimed at overthrowing capitalism itself in a socialist revolution that ultimately ends the division of society into exploited and exploiting classes.

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