Internationalism Will Defeat Racism!
The Juneteenth Port Workers' Strike

Though the attitude of the state and the action of the police against workers of color, specifically black workers, has not changed over the course of American history, neither has the reciprocal push labor has taken to stand against the racism of the state. Nothing more exemplifies these actions against racism than the International Longshoremen and Warehouse Union (ILWU) of North America. For more than a century the ILWU has wielded its class power at the ports along the west coast of the United States to oppose racism and supported black workers across the planet. From striking after the shooting of Martin Luther King Jr. and the apartheid regime of South Africa, to establishing housing coops and providing training and education the union has shown the power working people have as an international class. In their demands and in their opposition to employers for racial equality through the years, the ILWU has also shown that the working class is international in character, standing together against this oppression strengthens ties of the working class across countries and racial lines. Even within their own organization, the ILWU has been able to combat the pervasive racist sentiments that are encouraged in capitalist society. The economic system, and the political state that maintains the economic dominance of the ruling class, benefits from the indiscriminate killing of workers of color. Labor itself has a massive role to play in the protests against this pervasive social relationship. Society depends on the flow of commodities both in the market and across the globe to stay profitable; and it is this profitability above anything else that capitalists and their institutions listen to. The flow of commodities is where the working class can make its actions noticed! This fact is what has given the ILWU the ability to defend its members through a strike.

Anti-racism, especially that which has grown and been the cause of waves of protests and riots across the United States, can only be functional and potent in bringing racism to its knees by the international union of the working class. Racism has been historically enriched and perpetuated to the benefit of the ruling class and capitalist institutions. By allowing this division among the working class internationally, between white and black workers especially, capitalist society is able to prevent the class from uniting under a common banner to make its demands known and realized. From the continuation of indiscriminate killings of black people by the police across the globe to the quietly ignored but ever more apparent profiling of communities through redlining, the historic racist policies of the various capitalist states comes out from under its peeling proletarian democratic representation. And so it is the case that on the 19th of June, the ILWU takes actions it has taken in the past to protest the racism that has been perpetuated against so many black people, in particular the killing of George Floyd. The union will walk off the ports, across the west coast, to make their demands, much like in the 1973 strikes against apartheid. The impact to the shipping ports will be a loss in profits to capitalist institutions across the globe, as this wretched economic system is starved of it’s own life blood, the actual products that make it function.

Except, the union will have little power to make the demanded changes to the state that have been called by many across the country. What lessons the ILWU’s actions show the working class is that it’s power is at the workplace and in the fact that it can stop the flow of commodities; it is not only the class that produces them, it is the class that distributes them too! Without the coordinated effort of the working class across the whole planet, united as the working class of the whole of society, these demands will slide into the background, as capitalist institutions play their impotent parliamentarian games in hopes that they will be able to hide their half-hearted legislative attempts to balance their favoring of capital over human lives. They only give in to the demands of the working class to placate a revolt on the scale of a social revolution! But the working class can only see the change they demand from the state through this revolution, a coordinated effort of the united international class, using state power by their own hands and the destruction of the state that exists to perpetuate capitalism! This effort can and must be achieved, realized only by walking hand in hand with the class party, the international communist party, who has been able to guide the class through the quagmire of capitalist democratism and the racial divides that have plagued society for centuries. It isn’t any one movement of workers in any one specific location or industry that will put a stop to racism, it is the international working class that will make that possibility a reality.
The Imaginary "General Strike" on May 1

A mountain had gone into labor and was groaning terribly. Such rumors excited great expectations all over the country. In the end, however, the mountain gave birth to a mouse. As has been the pattern for several years, in the build-up to May Day this year, a call was put out for a general strike in observance of International Workers' Day. Many on the left called for solidarity with workers at various establishments, such as Target and Amazon, they believed would be taking action. To cross the picket line would indeed be a grave sin. And yet, when the day came, few, if any, workers took action. What happened? Why did no action occur? Who could be responsible? Were the workers unworthy of our support, or is the bourgeoisie more cunning than the truth? The answer is, as usual, much more prosaic: The so-called "general strike" was nothing more than an attempt by bourgeois NGOs and regime unions to use the increasing state of labor unrest to their own advantage by increasing their profile and thus attracting more donations. This sort of grift not only gains the working class nothing, it retards the development of the necessary organization to effectively combat the increasingly desperate maneuvers on the part of the bourgeoisie to increase the rate of exploitation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the weakness of the US economy, which never truly recovered from the economic crisis of 2008. On paper, the freefall of the economy was retarded via the assumption of a crushing debt burden and other financial chicanery, which, as the Republicans have repeatedly harshly reprimanded the Democrats, the US government must now service, resulting in increasingly draconian labor discipline measures and cuts to vital services, including public health, that have served to soften the burden of exploitation, including public health, that might have been a somewhat more serious version of the 2002-2004 SARS outbreak to turn into a full-blown global pandemic. In a pattern that has been going since the economic crisis of the 1970s, the Democrats and their allied NGOs, as well as the regime unions, continue to legitimate these measures. However, the outbreak of the COVID-19 disrupted the already listless progress toward restoration of profitability.

Seeking to take advantage of workers' anxieties during this crisis, regime unions like SEIU and NGOs like Nation of Change, joined by the opportunist left that seeks to gain influence via capture of these groups, both openly and through proxies, have adapted the utopian slogans they have employed for years to the present situation, but neither they nor the opportunist, so-called "revolutionary left" have at no point ever adapted their tactics to encompass the one tactic that would actually produce results, namely the difficult task of building the class union. And thus, on May 1st, 2020, despite all of the hype, they gave a strike, and nobody came. None of the targets of this action reported any significant drop in attendance on that date, and business went on as usual.

None of this is to say that a general strike, demanding fewer hours for the same pay, access to protective equipment at the employer's expense, or what-have-you, is necessarily a bad idea: Just the opposite. However, even had these organizations devoted the money and effort that went into designing the nice websites and carefully-crafted press releases been put into developing relationships with people on the shop floor, they would only serve to draw these efforts into the same futile struggle within the narrow range of options presented to the proletariat by the bourgeoisie. What the proletariat needs is to organize itself and to lead itself, not to accept the patronage of, not to say patronizing by, bourgeois NGOs: regime unions, and opportunist leftists whose purpose is to contain, not expand, the struggle and to cause any benefits from that struggle to accrue to them rather than the class itself. Only by organizing itself into a class union will the proletariat successfully defeat capitalism.

Action by Agricultural Workers in Yakima, Washington

The worker’s movement has found itself being realized in the most remote parts of North America. Yakima, Washington has found itself caught in the midst of a massive wave of strikes from agricultural workers. Yakima County is the leading county in the nation in apple production with over 55,000 acres of apple orchards producing premier apple varieties. The protests began on May 7 at the Allan Bros Fruit Co. when 50 workers walked off the job voicing concerns over the company’s response to COVID-19. On May 13, 2020 strikes by agricultural workers in Yakima County continued, with a walkout at Manson Fruit Company in Selah, Washington. Workers complained of unsafe working conditions including a lack of supply of protective equipment, sanitization and social distancing. Workers stated that, inside the facility, workers were required to work in close proximity to one another and that their employers failed to inform them when co-workers tested positive for the Coronavirus.

Shortly thereafter, workers walked out of three additional fruit packing company facilities for the same reasons. Jon Devaney, President of the Washington State Tree Fruit Association said that the association “asked for the State’s help with protective gear”. No explanation was given for why employers and owners of fruit packing facilities could not themselves provide protective gear, given that the production of fruit such as apples constitutes perhaps the largest segment of commercial agribusinesses in the state of Washington. Devaney appeared to lay blame on the workers, stating that workers complain about lack of social distancing while inside but, during protests outside congregate in large numbers in close proximity.

On May 28, 2020 Washington state Governor Jay Inslee issued an Executive Order regarding agricultural workers and Covid-19, presumably intended to address health concerns of the workers. Unfortunately, the Executive Order exempted food processing and meat packing plants, the latter being perhaps the place which, nationwide, has had among the highest levels of Covid-19 contracted by its workers. The proletariat finds its strength in association; the language used by the workers signifies this.

Walk-Out at Portland Whole Foods

The Pandemic Demands Class Consciousness

On July 3rd, workers at the Pearl District Whole Foods Market (owned by Amazon) in Portland, Oregon walked off work in protest of Covid-19 conditions and the death of one of their co-workers. The walk-out was organized by the workers themselves without an official union and show a good sense of class consciousness.

Workers coming to start work joined with those already out on pickets. They stated:

Whole Foods and its parent company Amazon have repeatedly demonstrated that it cares more about profits over the Team Members who put their lives on the line every day they clock in for a shift and we will not stand for it.

The grievances of the service workers of Whole Foods are a deeper reflection of the working class as a whole, and in the time of a global pandemic we see that the flow of customers is far more important than Team Members safety. You treat us as disposable, even following the death of one of our own...Team Members make your profits so put us first.

Unlike many of the “Advocacy Campaigns” at such stores as Walmart and Target, heavily promoted by capitalism’s left, these workers themselves drew up demands on management that are straight forward and actionable. “Following the passing of our friend and coworker,” they wrote, “we have experienced a tepid response to health and safety concerns and are now demanding justice.”

The workers’ demands read:

-We seek the re-instatement and increase of hazard pay as cases of COVID continue to grow and we continue to put our health and well-being at risk.
-We demand that every customer be required to wear a mask or opt for a personal shop to be carried out by a Team Member to prevent exposure to customers who do not wear masks.
-We demand strict enforcement of capacity limits no matter how well staffed we are and enforcement of directional signage.
-We expect that all punitive actions expire on their original timeline and not be extended to make-up for the leniency allowed during the uncertain times of a global pandemic.
-We expect the right to express our support for marginalized communities, via buttons, pins, flare, and other apparel without punitive action being taken.
-We stand in solidarity with Team Members all across the country who have been forced to leave their shifts or have been suspended for voicing their support for Black lives.

Well done and much needed, fellow workers!