

The Communist Party

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Colombia: there's a Change of Government but the Class Dictatorship of the Bourgeoisie Remains

A new administrator of the interests of the bourgeoisie takes the reins of the presidency of Colombia. On August 7, Gustavo Petro will take office as president of Colombia, who was quick to announce, upon winning the elections, that the backbone of his government program will be "the development of capitalism."

Every time the salaried and dispossessed masses have become agitated, still confused and disoriented by opportunism, still influenced by the petty bourgeoisie that wants social, political and economic reforms that do not threaten private property and corporate profit, every time the The social subsoil is shaken and is not fully controlled by the traditional parties, so the bourgeoisie opens spaces for new faces and new parties to manage their interests and channel the concerns and discontents that worry the masses. The so-called "historic change", as the election of Gustavo Petro as president and of an Afro-descendant as vice president of Colombia, is cataloged, is a change so that nothing changes, like any change resulting from the electoral mechanism in bourgeois democracy.

Of course, the new faces that today arrive at the presidency of Colombia are not sympathetic to sectors of the bourgeoisie and the rancid oligarchy, mainly the landowners, nor are they the faces desired by the majority of the political forces that control the government. American, but they are the necessary faces after the important street riots that have occurred since 2019. It is the same thing that has happened in Chile where the situation also required the bourgeoisie to make changes in the leaders of their government. Most of the bourgeoisie would prefer that their government continue under the administration of the traditional parties and with them execute a program of populist and demagogic reforms similar to those

that Petro and France will assume. In the past, liberals and conservatives fell by the wayside, and parties like the Democratic Center took over. The bourgeoisie has to make room for the new political version of Colombian liberalism so that it manages its interests in the context of social unrest that the traditional parties have not been able to control.

Now, from the government, the opportunists in Colombia will deepen their anti-worker and counterrevolutionary work, filling the masses with demagogic expectations and with the interests of the working class buried before a myriad of poly-class, nationalist and small and medium-sized demands. business. The only peace pursued by the opportunists who now control the government in Colombia is the one that translates into the pacification of the working class, which they will continue to demobilize, disorganize, divide and repress. Exactly the same function fulfilled today by the opportunists of the so-called "progressivism" or "the left" who govern in Venezuela, Nicaragua, Cuba, Argentina, Bolivia, Mexico, etc., or by presidential candidates like Lula and his PT in Brazil. .

The Colombian working class will have to discard the illusions that some government emerged from bourgeois democracy will meet its demands. The workers must organize outside and against the current unions and must unite in the struggle for wage increases and reduction of the working day and to pool their energies in a general strike, indefinite, without minimum services, with international projection, that bends to the capitalists. In this process, the workers' organizations must turn their backs on the calls to vote and the defense of the national economy and must resume the class struggle in Colombia with an internationalist vision.

NATIONAL STRIKE IN EQUADOR

The Ecuadorian indigenous movement rose en masse against the government. With an important capacity for mobilization, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (Conaie), together with other indigenous organizations such as ECUARUNARI, CONFENIAE, FEINE and FENOCIN, promoted a national strike against the increase in gasoline and diesel (which have historically had a subsidized price) and presented a list of 10 demands. The protests, which began on June 13 and included the intermittent closure of highways in more than half of Ecuador's 24 provinces and in at least 6 sectors of the capital, were joined by students and workers who marched in Quito. and clashed with the police.

The political arm of the Conaie, Pachakutik, is the second force in the National Assembly, with 18 of the 137 seats. Indigenous people represent more than one million of Ecuador's 17.7 million inhabitants. Conaie and Pachakutik are movements that are as opportunist and bourgeois democratic as the parties that control the government or as the opposition parties, among which the so-called "correismo" stands out. They are movements incapable of providing a proletarian leadership to the national strike.

Conaie's list of claims focused mainly on claims from small and medium-sized enterprises and agricultural production, minimizing the demands of wage earners. However, the masses were adding to the rejection of the high cost of living or, what is the same, the low wages of workers. The trade union centers and trade unions in general did not make themselves felt or promoted the workers' agitation and mobilization. The workers joined spontaneously, without their own claim

When this despicable tactic failed to yield results after almost 40 days, CAAPA's attorney attempted to circumvent the union's bargaining committee, and on July 15, sent a "final offer" to Local 150 president James Sweeney, who swiftly denounced the would-be ultimatum on the union's website: "Clearly, after dragging their feet through this entire strike, the companies wanted to put a gun to your heads."

After the repeated failure of this and other dirty tricks, including yet another rejected "final offer" and a threat to withdraw owed backpay, CAAPA finally caved in to the workers' demands. On July 26, the workers unanimously voted to approve a new contract, now including over 20 changes called for by the union in areas such as job classifications, safety, and equipment allowances. In addition, the contract provides for continued pension and healthcare benefits, and guarantees a minimum 16.14% pay raise over the three-year term of the agreement, with additional increases for members working evening and night shifts, skilled heavy equipment operators, and miners working underground.

The victory of the quarry workers of IUOE Local 150 represents yet another example of the recent wave of union struggles that has swept not only the Chicago area or the construction sector, but the US at large. Only a firm, clear-sighted class union front is capable of consolidating such victories, and extending them across the narrow boundaries of state and trade.

ICP Leaflet

**Piacenza, Saturday, July 23, 2022
On the Arrest of the SI Cobas and USB Leaders
A united class union front is the only way to defend workers from attacks by the bosses and the State**

The investigation against SI Cobas and USB, with the arrest of eight national and local leaders of the two unions, is the latest attack on class-based unions in Italy. Past police and judicial maneuvers include the arrest of the SI Cobas National Coordinator in January 2017, the searches and arrests in March 2021 against workers and leaders of the SI Cobas in Piacenza, and those in the same month against USB delegates at the Genoa port. But the denunciations, dismissal notices, and prosecutions numbering in the hundreds, and follow the physical attacks carried out on the ground, with the security forces violently breaking up the picket lines during strikes.

Added to this are the maneuvers of the regime unions, organizations that can no longer be won back by the working class, as they belong to bourgeois politics of all colors. For two years now, a CGIL counter-offensive has been underway in logistics, with the signing of

agreements with large contracting companies that, while providing for the direct hiring of workers by overcoming the contracting system, also nullify the better conditions won through struggles by the grassroots unions (SI Cobas, ADL Cobas, USB), and excluding the rank and file unions in company negotiations, and reducing or eliminating their members in those warehouses.

Since the logistics sector struggles began in 2010, the regime union federations CGIL, CISL and UIL have always called for government intervention, and collaborated with them, in order to restore "legality" in the sector, that is, to put an end to workers' struggles, as well as to see their own strength as unions guaranteed and that of the grassroots unions eliminated. Their silence in the face of the arrests of the leaders of SI Cobas and USB is complicit and consenting.

Successive bourgeois governments, with perfect continuity when it comes parliamentary chemistry, have passed measures to attack workers' struggles and worsen workers' conditions. Two striking examples of this were the so-called Security Decrees and – one of the latest acts of the Draghi government – the amendment to the Civil Code that nullifies the "joint and several liability" of the employer, which prevents workers from recovering unpaid wages from companies in contract changes.

All this acting and maneuvering – police, judicial, trade union, political – is an expression of an obvious social and political fact: as long as the workers' struggle is defeated it arouses the hypocritical crocodile tears of the bourgeois press and parties, useful for imprisoning the proletarians in a simple role of helpless victimization; when, on the other hand, it becomes victorious – in terms of determination, organization and ways of struggle – then the bourgeois class and its political regime finds it unendurable, and throws all its weapons at it. Once again it's proven that democracy is a mask of the dictatorship of capital over the working class.

This new judicial offensive today is far more intense than previous ones, involving the

two largest grassroots unions in Italy. This is no accident because the bourgeois regime is greatly concerned about the emerging social situation. The world capitalist economy continues to thrash around in the unsolvable crisis of overproduction. Rising inflation, which has been going on since the second half of last year, has worsened with the outbreak of the imperialist war in Ukraine, and continues to erode wages. Struggles and uprisings are already underway in several countries around the world. The head of the CGIL in recent weeks has warned the government and bosses about the risk of the resumption of workers' struggles over wages and reiterated the essential function of the regime unions (CGIL, CISL, UIL, UGL) in preventing this from happening. Lastly, the CGIL showed its total servility to the bourgeois regime by manifesting its support for the government.

The bourgeois political theater, for its part, has been debating about establishing of a minimum wage, for the sole purpose of preventing workers from going out in struggle to obtain, through strikes, actually substantial wage increases.

However, this new judicial maneuver had the prompt response of SI Cobas, USB and the rest of grassroots trade unionism, not by crying about supposed democracy being violated and invoking this ideological deception against the proletarians, but with strikes in the warehouses and demonstrations in many cities, in the day immediately following the arrests. SI Cobas, USB and all of grassroots trade unionism have finally responded in a unified and organized fashion with today's demonstration.

This unity is an example of a UNITED CLASS UNION FRONT and is the correct road to continue on, not only to stand in solidarity with the union militants under arrest today, but to organize the workers' struggles in defense of workers' living conditions in the months to come, for large wage increases, for a reduction of working hours for equal pay, against the State, government, bosses and regime unions!

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Life Of The Party

Party Meetings in the US -
Informal Meetings First Saturdays of the month

Minneapolis: Hard Times, 1821 Riverside Ave.- 3-5pm
Portland, OR: Neighbors Taproom 1306 E Burnside: 11am.
Pittsburgh: 61C Cafe 1839 Murray Ave. 4pm

Meetings also in:

Akron, Raleigh, Tampa, Yakima
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WHAT DISTINGUISHES OUR PARTY

The line running from Marx to Lenin to the foundation of the Third International and the birth of the Communist Party of Italy in Leghorn (Livorno) 1921, and from there to the struggle of the Italian Communist Left against the degeneration in Moscow and to the rejection of popular fronts and coalition of resistance groups – The tough work of restoring the revolutionary doctrine and the party organ, in contact with the working class, outside the realm of personal politics and electoralist manoevrings

sheet.

But the springs of the class struggle are there, strained by low wages, by unemployment, by exhausting working hours, by poor hygiene and safety in the workplace; and then, the promoters of the national strike in Ecuador may end up waking up the sleeping giant: the proletariat, the salaried workers. Precisely because of the fear that the social unrest will end up waking up the workers, the bourgeoisie is already preparing not only the demagogic and conciliatory actions of the opportunist parties, but has also let the noise of sabers sound like a card up its sleeve if things go wrong. they get out of control.

The Ecuadorian salaried workers must advance towards the organization and mobilization outside and against the current unions and resume the class struggle for salary increases and for the reduction of the working day, bringing together all their forces in a true General Strike, which paralyzes production and services and that forces the capitalists and their government to take a step back from their anti-worker policies. Only in this way will the class struggle in Ecuador be able to make a qualitative leap and free itself from the straitjacket currently imposed by the different opportunist parties, whether they declare themselves to be on the right, center or left.

Any of the parties that promoted the strike in Ecuador can only lead the movement until the change of one bourgeois government for another. Although the movement took on insurrectionary overtones and in some provinces took control of regional governments, the Ecuadorian proletariat has nothing to hope for from a new government controlled by the parties and movements that coordinated the strike, which will quickly show that they are not they will be nothing but new administrators of the interests of the bourgeoisie. Guillermo Lasso, President of Ecuador, announced on Sunday, June 26, the reduction of ten cents in the price of fuels that were already frozen, to try to respond to one of the main demands of the protests; however, this reduction was considered insufficient by the indigenous movement. While on the one hand the indigenous movement began to dialogue and negotiate with the government, in parliament supporters of former President Rafael Correa requested the removal of President Lasso. Although the dialogue with the government began on Monday June 27 without stopping the strike, it was evident that the pace of the protests began to slow down.

For the transformation of all social energy into a revolutionary anti-

capitalist movement, the constitution of a section of the international communist party is essential, which begins a serious work of organization and political orientation of the struggles of the working class.

Venezuela: Workers' struggles arise despite the betrayal of the unions and the government's repression

Several strikes, partial stoppages and workers' mobilizations have been observed, which have been freed, albeit briefly, from the control of the union corporations, mainly the government's Central Socialista Bolivariana de Trabajadores (CSBT). Although political confusion dominates the Venezuelan labor movement, there are sectors that have been filled with indignation and discontent, since the non-compliance with various offers from the government and public and private employers was added to the low wages.

In the Sidor steel company, the workers have been carrying out work stoppages led by assemblies. Initially, the workers resumed their work when the government and the union members convinced them to sit down at the well-known dialogue tables. But noticing that no response was given to their claims, the workers reactivated the stoppage of production. Sidor's top management was present at the plants, accompanied by the National Guard and a representative of the Prosecutor's Office, and they drew up a list of workers who had to present themselves to the Prosecutor's Office and threatened to fire them if they did not resume their work.

The list of those summoned by the Prosecutor's Office reached 50 names (basically from the Pellas Plant) and a summons was drawn up for these workers, who, in addition, were threatened with losing their jobs. Despite the fact that the Pellas Plant forcibly resumed its work, the "Plates and Billets" areas, as well as the "Wire Rod" and "Hot Rolling" areas, continued to be paralyzed.

To this is added the protest of an important part of the workers called "not required" who demand to return to their jobs, after almost two years under this figure that cuts their salary to 30% and who have been protesting in front of gate III of factory.

Throughout the Guayana region, workers have been agitated with wage claims and non-compliance with collective

agreements. In that area of Venezuela there is a large industrial park and a significant concentration of factory workers engaged in mineral extraction activities and in the processing of iron, steel and aluminum, among others. The main characteristic of the most recent protests has been that they have taken place outside or under the control of the unions and coordinated by workers' assemblies.

The minimum wage in Venezuela barely covers 5% of the cost of the Food Basket, which at the end of May was 477.52 dollars per month. In other words, at the end of May, 18.99 monthly minimum wages (and pensions) were required to acquire a Food Basket of 60 products to meet the consumption of a family of 5 members. In many cases, the conflicts that some groups of workers have assumed have been limited only to requesting that the monthly payment of 130 bolivars be complied with, which at the time represented 30 dollars and in June represented less than 28 dollars. A small sector of the unions and the movements of retirees and pensioners has been calling for mobilization to demand a salary equivalent to the amount of the Basic Food Basket.

An important group of PDVSA workers from the "El Palito" refinery (Carabobo state) were sent home as a prelude to what could become a massive dismissal. But also a wave of bosses' repression and terrorism has led to arrests and expulsions of workers accused of negligence and boycott of PDVSA Industrial's operations. Among the workers a discontent accumulates that is contained with repression, political demagoguery and the servility and betrayal of the union leaders. Even so, some groups of workers have escaped the control of the unions and the employer and have staged some protest actions in which the participation of retirees and pensioners has been important.

Different sectors of the workers have also been mobilizing against the salary tables imposed by the government, which ended up leading to a salary reduction mainly among public sector workers. Likewise, there are many conflicts due to breaches of collective agreements and dismissals in public and private companies. Active workers, retirees and pensioners have been coinciding in these mobilizations.

As expected, the government's anti-worker offensive has found no resistance among the union corporations, which disorganize, divide, demobilize and disorient the workers they claim to defend.

until the bargaining convention coming next spring. Delegates also voted down UAWD's proposal to allow election of retirees to the IEB.

However, the fact that over 15% of delegates voted to bring these amendments out of committee to debate at all - something which hasn't happened in many years - suggests that the Administration Caucus may be starting to lose its grip on the union.

Delegates did pass the resolution on day one strike pay too.

This coming December, UAWD hopes to elect its own slate of candidates to the IEB.

Even if UAWD manages to overcome the subterfuge of the Administration Caucus, simply passing resolutions or amendments to the UAW constitution will not be sufficient to satisfy the demands of combative workers since such formalities can always be flouted. It is imperative that UAWD uses its resources and network of organizers to prepare and conduct direct class struggles to realize their demands. For example, while codifying rejection of multi-tier wage agreements or setting "equal pay for equal work" as a priority at a bargaining convention may be useful in some circumstances, it is more important to organize workers for extensive and intensive strikes against employers so that conditions can be equalized in reality. The formal approval of a majority of convention delegates or the executive board is not necessary to begin that work. Seeking prior recognition of militant goals and actions from the less conscious or even openly opportunistic as an end in itself is a waste of time; more workers will become aware of the legitimacy of the movement as it proves itself in practice, thereby making it easier to take over leadership of the union and expel the incompetent and the corrupt.

UAWD, which has many elements of opportunism that must be fought, is no substitute for the party fraction, but if it accomplishes some of its goals, that could open up certain opportunities for communist activity and constitute the first step towards reconquering the UAW and transforming it into a class union.

Illegal educators' strike in Massachusetts

Approximately 1000 public school teachers went on a one-day strike in Brookline, Massachusetts - a state where public sector strikes are expressly forbidden by the law - in mid May to demand wage increases and improvements to working conditions.

It was an illegal strike, but not a wildcat; the Brookline Educators' Union was instrumental in organizing the strike, and did so with the support of the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA), which is in turn affiliated with the National Education Association.

Moreover, it was not a spontaneous outbreak, but the carefully planned culmination of a protracted campaign by the teachers to pressure the school board.

Negotiations with the school board ensued the entire night following the first day of the strike, ending when all of the teachers' demands were met.

This struggle demonstrates that the law is not an absolute limit to the working class, but rather a semi-permeable barrier that can be passed through under the right conditions.

Even in the United States, "Land of the Free", legal restrictions on the rights of workers to withhold their labor are ubiquitous in the public sector, especially in economically essential industries like those of the supply chain (railroads, postal service, aviation, etc.). In industries other than education, the consequences of defying the law may be much harsher. There are numerous historical instances of severe state repression of illegal strikes, many of which ended in disaster, setting back the labor movement for many years. The PATCO strike in 1981 is one such case. But in other cases, the workers have succeeded despite similar responses from the government, as in the postal strike of 1970.

Workers of other categories and industries should look to the Brookline teachers' strike for lessons on overcoming legal obstacles to their freedom to strike, while also being aware of the differences between the situation of the teachers and their own situation. Depending on the circumstances, illegal methods may be more suitable than legal methods, or vice-versa. All options should be weighed objectively; the only reason to rule out a possible approach is ineffectiveness, not recognition by the state—an instrument of the bourgeoisie and an enemy of the proletariat.

Correction to the Starbucks article from a previous issue

The Communist Party, no. 42 featured an article on the recent wave of unionization at Starbucks workplaces across the United States.

In that article, we described Service Employees International Union (SEIU) as the “parent union” of Starbucks Workers United (SWU), the union which has been organizing Starbucks workers nationwide. The truth is that SWU is a distinct organization that merely receives legal and financial aid and advice from SEIU.

This mistake was due to a lack of generally accessible information symptomatic of the atomized state of the labor movement. With greater contact between our party and as much of the working class as possible, as well as greater association of the proletariat in general, such errors can be avoided in the future.

Chicago Quarry Strike

In response to the bosses’ attacks on their health and safety, 300 members of Local 150 of the International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE) went on strike on June 7 in Cook County, Illinois.

The local unites material production workers and heavy equipment operators, who directed their collective action against three major employers operating approximately 35 quarries and mines across Northern Illinois. The companies in question – Lehigh Hanson, Vulcan Materials, and Lafarge Holcim, united in the Chicago Area Aggregate Producers Association (CAAPA) – had unilaterally changed their policies on time off following Covid-19 exposure, in violation of the collective agreement previously negotiated by the union.

On May 22, after several futile complaints to the National Labor Relations Board, the workers of Local 150 unanimously voted to take up the class weapon of strike action if necessary, a step they proceeded to take fifteen days later, despite the bosses’ threats to fire any worker who would do so. This marked the local’s first strike since 1967.

The heavy equipment operated by these workers is essential to the continued operation of facilities supplying aggregate materials such as gravel, sand, crushed stone, and mine rock, which are in turn needed to produce asphalt, concrete, and other critical inputs for the construction industry. As a result, the strike soon made itself felt in the Chicago area as contractors depleted their aggregate stockpiles, leading to delays in municipal construction work ranging from the repaving of Milwaukee Avenue and the replacement of the Central Street bridge in Evanston to major infrastructure projects affecting some of the busiest bottlenecks and critical commuting links in the city, such as the Jane Byrne Interchange reconstruction and the I-55/Weber Road interchange upgrade.

Despite the immediate busing in of scabs lacking basic safety training, denied by CAAPA but well-documented by the picketing workers, the impact of the strike was further strengthened by solidarity from members of other trades. “We are gaining support from other unions. The Teamsters refuse to cross our picket lines,” said Local 150 spokesman Ed Maher.

The duration of the strike was deliberately prolonged by the bosses, who repeatedly stalled negotiations in the hope that the picketers, growing increasingly anxious about their livelihoods, could eventually be persuaded to return to work.

union has seemingly backed down from a strike, presumably out of fear of public backlash and being isolated.

This is why we emphasize the need for further association of the proletariat, so that the port workers can go on strike with the support of the mass of the working class. Of course, that association will not materialize purely out of thought and will-power, but can only result from the development of existing class struggles.

ILWU port workers’ decision not to cross the truckers’ “picket line” at the Port of Oakland is an example pointing towards the future. Port workers need to unify with truckers, as well as all workers of the supply chain - railroaders, postal workers, air freight workers, warehouse workers, etc. - and advance universal demands like wage increases across the board.

It is true and worth repeating that the ability to collectively withhold labor is the workers’ greatest weapon. But it is also important not to fetishize the strike, which, if done improperly, will merely squander the energy of the workers in pointless adventures in the best case scenario, and, at worst, cause the unrestrained fury of the repressive state apparatus to fall upon the labor movement before it has reached maturity. The lesson is that that great bargaining chip - the threat of a strike - should not be traded away lightly, and only temporarily. The working class is allowed (sometimes advised) to retreat, but never to surrender.

Another point to remember is that the strike may be the best weapon, but it is not the only weapon in the arsenal. A strike is not necessary for the port workers to obtain a good contract.

ILWU members are currently working in the ports without a contract, the last one having expired on July 1.

Although talks over automation (discussed in the last issue) are still at a standstill, a tentative agreement has been reached on healthcare benefits.

Railroad Workers

Two union coalitions representing twelve crafts have been negotiating with freight rail carriers for a new national contract since 2020. The main areas of dispute, which have functioned as a barrier to any agreement, as indicated by the rail unions themselves, are wages and healthcare benefits.

Staffing is a major issue for the rank-and-file as well, although it has apparently taken the backseat in negotiations. The carriers were preparing to reduce the size of train crews from two people to one until a recent announcement by the Federal Railroad Administration - the federal agency responsible for regulating the railroads in the United States - prohibiting the expansion of one-person crews.

The Railway Labor Act (RLA) - the labor law governing labor relations in the

railroad and airline industries - makes the bargaining process extremely convoluted and drawn-out.

On July 15, three days before the expiration of a thirty-day cooling period, at the end of which the rail unions would be free to strike, President Joe Biden appointed a Presidential Emergency Board (PEB) which has thirty days to issue a report with its own recommendations on the situation in the rail industry. This move was to be expected, since the government is not going to simply allow a strike in such a vital industry.

After the report is issued, another thirty-day cooling period will follow; then, in mid September, the unions will theoretically be free to strike, if a decision/agreement still is not reached. However, Congress has the power to issue more cooling periods and force arbitration or the PEB’s recommendations on both parties, so a legally-permitted strike remains extremely unlikely.

On the other hand, railroaders seem to overwhelmingly support a strike. Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen held a strike authorization vote in early July in which 99.5% of the nationwide membership voted to strike.

If railroaders are going to strike, they will need to break the law - a big gamble. Going against the state could result in the destruction of the rail unions, as PATCO (the now extinct air traffic controllers’ union - which was also regulated by the RLA) was destroyed by the Reagan administration when they went on strike in 1981.

Moreover, since the rail unions are not preparing to strike, the rank-and-file would have to defy their leaders and engage in a wildcat strike. Without the organizational and financial support of the unions, a successful strike is all the more daunting.

That being said, it’s still possible to win an illegal, wildcat strike, even in such an indispensable industry with the fierce opposition of the state: for example, the postal strike of 1970.

Finally, there are alternative means available to the proletariat to force the bourgeoisie to meet its demands, many of which remain within legal boundaries. Though we should not rely exclusively on state-recognized methods since the state uses its recognition to divert struggles into relatively harmless channels.

Strike or no strike, the key to victory for the railroaders is the same as it is for all proletarians: association. For instance, railroaders can link up their struggles with truckers, port workers, air freight workers, warehouse workers, and postal workers to create a unitary movement of workers of the supply chain.

UAW constitutional convention

The United Auto Workers (UAW) 2022 Constitutional Convention began in Detroit, MI on July 25 and ended on the 28th. The convention, which takes place once every four years, was attended by delegates elected by local union memberships across the country who will set the future course of the union through democratic mechanisms.

But underlying surface-level formalities, there was a power struggle between two factions taking place at the convention: one side which claims to represent a relatively militant rank-and-file and the other nakedly representing the influence of the employers within the union. There is the incumbent Administration Caucus, heir to the legacy of corrupt leaders which uses its entrenchment in the upper echelons of the UAW to manipulate convention proceedings and suppress opposition while forcing concessions upon the membership; and the union caucus Unite All Workers for Democracy (UAWD), which aims to expand democracy within the union and elevate the level of combativeness with respect to employers.

In 2021, UAWD led a campaign for “One Member, One Vote”, resulting in a referendum that won members the right to directly elect the International Executive Board (IEB), which controls the union in between constitutional conventions. In May 2022, the IEB increased strike pay from \$275 to \$400 per week after UAWD added improved strike pay to its platform for the 2022 convention and IEB election.

Another promising move by the UAWD was pushing the IEB to invite SINTTIA, an independent union of Mexican auto workers, to the convention— an example of the practical internationalism sorely lacking in the labor movement.

At the convention, UAWD’s stated aims were to reform the union to commit to rejecting tier systems (contracts that divide the workforce into sections that receive different pay and benefits); to ensure strike payments arrive on day one; to retain all interest and earnings on the strike fund (for years it has been siphoned away by blatantly corrupt higher officials); to implement ranked choice voting for IEB elections; to make retirees eligible for the IEB (because some of UAWD’s candidates are retirees); and to organize in electric vehicle production in anticipation of the energy transition.

During the proceedings, a resolution codifying “equal pay for equal work” (seeking to eliminate the tier system) advanced by UAWD, which has been passed by a substantial number of local unions, failed to secure the support of a majority of delegates at the constitutional convention. The issue has not been dropped entirely though; discussion has merely been postponed

ROME, SATURDAY, JUNE 18, 2022

FIGHTING NOT TO PAY THE COSTS OF IMPERIALIST WAR IS THE FIRST CONCRETE STEP TO STOP IT!

The war being fought in Ukraine is a clash between imperialist powers vying for the world. Of the living conditions of the Ukrainian people, the regime in Moscow, but also those in Kiev, Europe and America, do not care: they are all bourgeois regimes interested only in the economic gains that country and the exploitation of its working class can offer them.

Ukraine's ruling class - a crock pot among iron pots - has always been divided and doubtful whether to sell out to Moscow or Washington. Either way for it Ukrainian workers are just tools to be exploited and sent to slaughter for its own bourgeois interests.

The same, of course, is true of the Russian bourgeoisie - which sends young Russian proletarians to kill and be killed, exploits and oppresses the working class of that vast country - and in all countries: whether totalitarian, democratic or still usurping the name of socialist, as the Soviet Union already did after the Stalinist counterrevolution, in all countries the social and political reality is that of the dictatorship of capital over the working class.

That is why workers have no homeland to defend but only a political regime to be overthrown, by revolution, and a whole world to conquer, uniting above fictitious and anti-historical national boundaries. "Proletarians of the whole world unite!" is the first and ever more relevant communist watchword.

Above the contrasts of economic and - consequently - military interests, all national bourgeoisies are united by the interest that the war be fought, and toward it they push the workers, inundating them with rivers of bellicist, nationalist, partisan, resistance propaganda.

War suits the bourgeois regimes because it is the only solution to the world economic crisis-otherwise unsolvable and caused by the overproduction of goods-and because it divides and subdues the international working class, with fratricidal slaughter. The vital interest of workers around the world is to refuse to fight the imperialist war and instead fight their own social war, in defense of their living and working conditions and to free themselves from capitalism.

The war in Ukraine - the latest link in

the chain of imperialist proxy conflicts that have never ceased and have first battered the Middle East, Afghanistan, Africa, and the Balkans - is a decisive step toward a third world war, to which capitalism's global economic crisis inexorably pushes all bourgeois states and which will be inevitable if the working class, the only one capable of doing so through its mobilization, does not prevent it.

The war in Ukraine affects first and foremost the people of that country and the Ukrainian and Russian soldiers, that is, as always, largely the proletarians. But it is already affecting workers around the world as well, with its economic consequences. Already there are uprisings going on in Iran, Sri Lanka, Peru. In all countries the bourgeois regimes want to make the workers pay the costs of the war, convincing them that it is a necessary sacrifice.

Meanwhile, the bourgeoisie with the war does big business. In Italy the major industrial and financial groups - Eni, Enel, Leonardo, Fincantieri and related banks - are increasing their profits. All industrial groups owned by the Italian state, which like every bourgeois state is the first interested in the imperialist war being fought.

The first step to prevent and stop the imperialist war is to start fighting the social war of the workers, the class struggle in defense of their living conditions, not to pay the economic costs.

To the rising inflation that reduces real wages, we must respond by organizing in confrontational unionism -- fighting for unity of action of the grassroots unions and of them with the confrontational areas in CGIL -- to promote a general strike movement to obtain:

- strong wage increases, greater for the worst paid categories and qualifications !
- full wages to unemployed workers !
- reduction of working hours for equal wages !

On the Thread of Time “Horrors” and “War Crimes”

Battaglia Comunista, no. 10 of 1949

Yesterday

We only need to go back for a single generation to remember that in journalistic controversy and in discussions among “educated” people or in bourgeois drawing rooms, judgment on the great French Revolution of 1789 was still considered

controversial. No one in the spheres of the well-educated still disputed its historico-social and political achievements, since there were no longer any parties or currents advocating absolutist restoration, which claimed that the “conquests” achieved in the world on the basis of those immortal principles should be abolished. (Well true, one thing that never failed to astound Benito Mussolini, when he was still a revolutionary in 1912, was that a Bourbon weekly, *Il Vero Guelfo*, was still being printed in Naples...).

Yet it was still controversial for posterity to judge and openly debate, at least in the eyes of the man in the street, the serious question of the horrors, the ferocious methods that the revolution used, in its renewing struggle and its unstoppable advance. Go for liberty equality and fraternity, go for the liberal and parliamentary regime and the rights of man and citizen, go for the repression of absolute monarchies and of aristocratic and church privileges, but to achieve all this they should have thought about it and maybe then given it up rather than go to the heinous extremes of the Temple (1), to the legendary disembowelments of hairdressers – who had not yet discovered perming – on curly-haired duchesses.

The decisive social topic thus became the giallo (2), to say it openly, the fictional and colorful chronicle on these expressionistic contours of historical facts, the painting of horrors. If a not-so-foolish Italian had long since explained that in the political and historical process the end achieved must be considered far more important than the means employed, the descendants could only blush at such a cynical and immoral ancestor as Niccolò Machiavelli.

To wean all propagandas from this mania that revolves around “the gore argument” always appeared an impossible undertaking since it formed the very core of the popular diffusion of Christianity, and if the reactionaries first went for sentimental moves and pleading every indictment on the Widow (3) and the Terror, the radical democrats, the anti-clerical Freemasons found nothing better than to do than to counter-point to the Inquisition and the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre (4).

It was never possible to end this debate with an agreed-upon judgment: which of the two contenders was most cruel, who was gorier? There is always a rebuttal; not even Gandhi and Tolstoy get away with it. But the trouble is that the aforementioned man in the street does not realize that this is a futile undertaking and that, assuming it’s even possible to discriminate between the scams propounded and believed by one side and the other, it is by no means certain that it is convenient to opt against those who are on the side, in the past in the present and in the future, of the harshest means, and that the question always lies elsewhere.

In the wars of a generation back, it was a contest on both sides to discover the dum dum bullets (5) in the flesh of their wounded. The bullets allowed by the international conventions of the civilized capitalist world had to be conical and come out of rifled barrels, they could not be designed to produce infection or gruesome devastation of tissue – in short, they had to be made to legally send someone else to the other world. Back then there was still no talk about combat planes, toxic gases,

atomic bombs and similar jokes.

The highlight of the polemical battle parallel to that of the cannons in the 1914 war was around the severed hands of Belgian children (6) and the atrocities of the Tsar’s Cossack hordes, which took no prisoners.

Today

The despicable spectacle of the Kravchenko (7) trial would be enough to establish that we are still at the same point and that compact propaganda mobilizations point to the idiotic capital of horrors. The Anglo-Saxons specially are so convinced that they put a quick end to two world massacres that they’re not willing to let up. Mountains of printed paper are spilled over the world, and they also constitute good business because if books and journals on historical and social science are indigestible or in small popular demand, the public instead throws itself tremendously “incannarutito” (i.e., like the wolverine on the best delicacies) on the pages that explain the laws of the science of history through sublimely anatomical descriptions on third-rate interrogations based on ripped out nails, obscene mutilation and vivisection of human guinea pigs.

The campaign against the Russian Revolution has been waged for decades with these despicable inventions, and the same accusations have bounced filthily in the last war from one front to another. Half the world swears that the grave-diggers in Katyn (8) were Germans, half believes them to be Russians. 90% of this sort of literature is just impressionistic accounts about Russia and war memoirs and the slurry of borderline fictional autobiographies of the maniacal (and entirely passive) persecuters of Nazi and Stalinist policies.

Many of these infamies may very well be true, whoever they are attributed to, and it is impossible to get to the bottom of these investigation. But, more than impossible, it’s useless, because recounting them can never serve anything besides the shady ends of propaganda organizations.

The Stalinists will struggle poorly against the skillful jurisprudence of Kravchenko’s book and the whole movement of that nature, after their own gawking in their propaganda method employed by the same capitalist establishment against Nazism and Fascism. They will be victims of these filthy propaganda tricks and rightly so because they have been its accomplices.

They have thus disrupted the whole proceeding of the formation of the new historical consciousness in the proletarian vanguard. They foolishly accept the discussion of whether there is more freedom in Russia than there was in Germany under Hitler or there is today in America. They are no longer up to the criticism and condemnation of bourgeois freedom that police officers and sellouts are well within their power to ignore. They can’t just say that communists, as far as they’re concerned, choose revolutionary dictatorship, since as far as they are concerned they have traded and exchanged everything, they too have traded and speculated with the imbecilic

slogan of the struggle for freedom tout court and today it’s just the proverbial snake that bites the charlatan.

It may make an impression that the German opposition communist Heinz Neumann, a generous and loyal fighter of the proletariat, ended up silently repressed and his comrade was dribbled between the Soviet and Nazi police as were so many other unhappy people, poor human undertow of the sway of great power politics. But reading the poor widow’s account does not make one think about and study the more serious historical problems for the conduct of the proletarian struggle. Why was it that Russian tactics in Italy in both 1923 and 1943 were all in the style of “fight for freedom, choose freedom, forms blocs with liberals of every hue”? – and why, on the other hand, in Germany when Neumann wanted to form a bloc of all anti-fascists against Hitler, the united front for freedom, he was disavowed? – and why again after 1941 did they go back to the cry of the crusade for freedom and the anti-Nazi united front with all the democrats of the world?

These are far weightier questions than whether the individual militant Neumann was kept in a hotel, a prison or a gas chamber, however chilling these images may be.

These are questions that have relevance to the sabotage and defeatism of all the resources of world revolution.

For only communists who have not at every turn chosen something in the enemy camp, who regard bourgeois freedom and bourgeois oppression as the same thing in every situation, can today have the right to spit in the face of the Kravchenkos and the factory that produces them, hidden like the ones that produce atomic bombs in the deserts of New Mexico and Dakota.

1. Prison of the royal family in 1792.
2. “Yellow”, detective story.
3. Marie Antoinette, after Louis XVI was executed.
4. Gigantic and notorious massacre of Protestants by Catholics in France in 1572.
5. Also known as “expanding bullets”. They expand on impact thus dealing greater damage to a living target. Generally considered “prohibited” in warfare.
6. One of the many myths around the “rape of Belgium”, used to stir up anti-German sentiment.
7. Victor Kravchenko, the noted Soviet defector to the US and writer of I Choose Freedom, a classic in the sappy bourgeois sentimentalist defector memoirs of the sort.
8. A reference to the mass graves of Katyn, a gigantic massacre of Polish officers by Stalinist Russia, that the Russians and Germans endlessly accused each other of committing.

FOR THE CLASS UNION

Intervention at the Labor Notes conference

Some years in planning, postponed twice by COVID, the American membership of the International Communist Party (ICP) sent four comrades to attend the Labor Notes conference. Attendance has been reported at 4000 militants.

Our plan was to meet rank and file worker militants on their own ground. On this, our intervention was a success. Our comrades met with militants in a number of strategically important industries including Rail, Longshore/Ports and Logistics. We were also able to meet with workers from China, Mexico and Eastern Europe. We edited a special issue of our monthly newspaper, The Communist Party, especially for the conference attendees, but led with the party’s leaflet regarding a general strike held in Italy against the bourgeoisie’s international war preparations. Several hundred leaflets were distributed as well as 150 copies of our newspaper distributed.

UK Government Introduces Scabs’ Charter

Effective from July 21, 2022, the United Kingdom has lifted a ban on the provision of agency staff to do work normally performed by workers taking part in a strike or other industrial action. The government has also quadrupled the maximum fine for “unlawful strikes” to £ 1 million (\$ 1,220,000) and plans to make strikes illegal in “essential services” including the railways.

Striking workers have condemned this as a “scabs’ charter”.

According to an article by the Transport Secretary in The Daily Telegraph, mouthpiece of the ruling Conservative Party, other measures intended to weaken strike action include “banning strikes by different unions in the same workplace within a set period”, limiting the number of workers on any picket line to a maximum of six, and making it compulsory for unions to hold a ballot for each individual strike or industrial action.

This is primarily in response to a series of strikes taken by the three rail unions, ASLEF (representing drivers), RMT (representing other manual workers such as guards, engineers and cleaners) and TSSA (white collar workers). These strikes have had solid backing from the workforce. Despite a barrage of hostile propaganda from the government and media, they have met with a sympathetic response among the general public and stimulated overwhelming votes for strike action in other sectors.

Further RMT strikes are planned for

August 18 and 20, and these will coincide with strikes by thousands of TSSA members across seven train operating companies. London Underground workers represented by the RMT will strike August 19.

Around 6,000 train drivers represented by the ASLEF union went on strike at seven rail operators on the last Saturday of July and will strike again on August 13 at nine operators.

While the lift on the ban on the use of agency staff to replace striking workers may be effective in certain situations, it is unlikely to curb the rising militancy of the British working class. First, because there are few train drivers, nurses, teachers and other qualified workers available, and many will be reluctant to cross picket lines. Second, because temporary work agencies may be reluctant to get involved in industrial disputes, especially where safety is an issue, such as on the railways. And third, because bringing in scab labor is likely to provoke more militant tactics by angry workers.

This last point is a worry for the trade union bureaucracies, who fear losing control of strikes at a time when real wages are falling dramatically. The TUC General Secretary Frances O’Grady pleaded for a more conciliatory approach to prevent strikes, saying, “This is all about culture wars [...] It’s more about being seen to pick a fight – with hostility, sowing division. That is the point. So policy success [averting the strikes] isn’t really the goal.”

Trucker activity in the United States

Close to 1000 truckers have established a blockade of the Port of Oakland on the West Coast of the United States, aggravating the already-existing supply chain crisis.

Most sensationalized by the media has been the demand to repeal California Assembly Bill 5 (AB 5), a recently implemented state law making it more difficult for a worker to qualify as an independent contractor. Many companies misclassify their employees as independent contractors in order to circumvent the relatively strict rules on employee rights and wages.

Also at issue for truckers, ironically enough (and predictably glossed over or ignored by the bourgeois media), are workers’ rights and wages.

In Houston, TX, truckers who are classified as owner-operators but only work under the authority of HUDD/ Maersk (a large carrier) have halted work in protest of their employer’s mistreatment of workers. Their demands include improvements to pay rates and fuel surcharges (extra money for drivers to compensate for above-average fuel prices), as well as better communication between the carrier and drivers. Truckers across the country face similar conditions.

Clarity on this phenomenon requires an understanding of the fact that the category of “truckers” spans diverse social strata.

A majority of truckers are “owner-operators”, meaning they (theoretically) own their own truck(s) and operate their own small business transporting goods. AB 5 will force many owner-operators to seek work with a large carrier as an employee, while others will have to pay substantially more for licenses and insurance so as to remain “independent”.

Prior to 1980, the trucking industry was heavily unionized, in particular by the Teamsters. Truckers had obtained high standards for their jobs through their militancy. The Reagan administration subsequently deregulated the industry and broke the power of the unions, cultivating a new system based on owner-operators, who are fragmented and more easily exploitable.

While some truckers prosper as owner-operators, every one of them first has to accumulate the capital necessary to purchase their own truck.

A large proportion of owner-operators are working under “lease-to-own” agreements with large carriers, whereby they deliver exclusively under the authority of the company while making regular payments on the truck until it’s completely paid off. In the meantime, they have no ownership rights, they cannot choose their jobs or customers, and they’re unable to negotiate their pay. Some truckers fall into serious debt with the carrier; the most unfortunate become trapped, perpetually crushed beneath the weight of their employer.

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters has been involved in organizing truckers, but for the union to properly negotiate for higher wages and better working conditions, and to cement those gains in a contract, it’s necessary that truckers be reclassified as employees - hence Teamsters support for AB 5.

Around 100 International Longshore and Warehouse Union workers at the Port of Oakland have expressed solidarity with the truckers by refusing to cross the “picket line”.

Despite reservations regarding the mixing of classes and widespread belief in the false promise of individual entrepreneurship, any action towards the unity of all proletarians - as opposed to betrayal of the truckers, stoking division between workers - is commendable. As Engels put it in a letter to Wischnewetsky in 1886: “It is far more important that the movement should spread, proceed harmoniously, take root and embrace as much as possible the whole American proletariat, than that it should start and proceed from the beginning on theoretically perfectly correct lines.”

Nevertheless, we urge those truckers exploited by the lease-to-own system to reject the reactionary “American Dream” of owning their own small business

(which will never be realized in a satisfactory way for most truckers); to advance demands centered on wages and working conditions above all else; and to organize as employees into a proper combination of wage-laborers against the large carriers, in order to conquer the behemoths rather than abandon the battlefield and allow future generations to go through the same tribulations. Do not ride the coattails of the most privileged section of the truckers - lead the movement for progress in the trucking industry yourself.

Truckers should feel their power as they stand together as one. The word “independent” in “independent contractor” means separation from your fellow truckers; competition between workers means a race to the bottom in terms of job standards. The only truly progressive independence is the independence of the proletariat from all other classes.

Finally, truckers should answer the solidarity of the port workers, who are currently engaged in their own battle for their livelihoods, by growing closer to their class brethren, unifying workers’ struggles above the division of labor. A real win can only be achieved by the working class in its entirety, moving as a single body. The first step in that direction is unity between truckers and other workers of the supply chain, with whom they interface daily at work.

Updates On The Struggles Of Port Workers And Railroad Workers

Port Workers

In The Communist Party, no. 44, we wrote about the deadlocked negotiations between the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) over a new contract for port workers on the West Coast of the United States.

At the time, a major strike at a crucial choke point in the American economy seemed like a very real possibility. Although the probability of a strike occurring was low even then, the magnitude of such a strike, if it were to occur, made it appear quite threatening anyways. Now, the window seems to be closing.

In mid June, the ILWU and PMA met with President Joe Biden to discuss the supply chain crisis and their ongoing negotiations. This visit was a warning that the government is watching developments closely, ready to intervene to immediately suppress any potential labor unrest.

Shortly thereafter, the ILWU and PMA released a joint statement stating unequivocally: “Neither party is preparing for a strike or a lockout, contrary to speculation in news reports.” Thus, the