

RALLY COMRADES!

THE VOICE OF THE LEAGUE OF REVOLUTIONARIES FOR A NEW AMERICA

Michigan's "Right to Work" Law Demands a Class Response

May Day — International Labor Day — was born out of the bitter struggle waged by the industrial workers of the American Midwest. There is no more graphic symbol of the crisis confronting the union movement in the United States than the passage of a "right to work" law in the once mighty union stronghold of Michigan in 2012. May Day 2013 demands that we examine how such an event could have come to pass. What does it say about the state of not just the union movement, but of the overall struggle of the working class?

The passage of "right to work" in Michigan was an attack on more than the unions. It was part of a general nationwide assault on the democratic rights of the working class as a whole — whether unionized or not — unleashed by the ruling class after the 2012 election.

THIS ATTACK ON A CLASS DEMANDS A CLASS RESPONSE — A POLITICAL RESPONSE.

Today, the ruling class has no choice but to attack all the institutions that once helped workers defend their interests. This includes the unions, but is not limited to them. Today, the attack on the right of workers to file grievances at the workplace cannot be separated from the systematic years-long assault in Michigan against the right of workers outside the workplace to petition for a redress of grievances through the ballot box.

In Michigan, the anti-democratic emergency manager laws which took away the rights of all workers — whether unionized or not — laid the basis for the campaign for "right to work."

To understand what led to the debacle of "right to work" in Michigan, it helps to review how the right to form unions was obtained in this country.

The right of industrial workers to unionize was only conceded by the ruling class shortly before World War II. The ruling class needed labor peace to unite America to fight a war that the rulers knew was coming. That's why President Franklin Roosevelt signed the National Labor Relations Act in 1935.

Known as "labor's Magna Carta," the NLRA was designed not just to tolerate unions but to encourage them actively. When he introduced the bill, U.S. Senator Robert Wagner declared: "Democracy cannot work unless it is honored in the factory as well as the polling booth; [workers] cannot be truly free in body and spirit unless their freedom extends into the places where they earn their daily bread."

The NLRA protected workers' rights to bargain collectively. It set the stage for the legal victory of the massive union drive of the late 1930s in the gigantic factories that

large-scale industrialization had created. The success of that union drive ensured labor peace just as the United States was about to enter World War II.

However, once World War II ended in 1945, the NLRA had fulfilled the purpose for which the ruling class had intended. When workers in many industries all engaged in strike actions right after the war, the stage was set for political representatives of the ruling class to attack the NLRA.

After the 1946 mid-term elections, anti-union forces pushed a bill through Congress that gutted the NLRA. This Taft-Hartley Act was so outrageous that even President Truman called it a "slave labor bill." (It was passed over Truman's veto.)

Section 14 (b) of the law permits individual states to pass laws prohibiting the union shop — the "right to work" laws. When Michigan became a "right to work" state in December 2012, it was the 24th state to become one since Taft-Hartley became law in June 1947.

The Taft-Hartley Act allows the president of the United States to intervene to end strikes and prohibits secondary boycotts and sympathy strikes. It required all union officers to file a non-communist affidavit and take an oath pledging that they were not communists. (While the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1965 that these provisions were unconstitutional, by then the damage had been done. An entire generation of revolutionaries had been driven out of the trade unions.)

The Taft-Hartley Act became law at a time when industry was expanding. It was designed to limit the power of the unions and stop the spread of trade unionism into non-unionized areas, particularly the South. Taft-Hartley passed because in 1947 African-Americans in the South were still overtly denied the right to vote. Southern members of Congress stated explicitly that they wanted to stop union drives in the South because they believed such campaigns could end with workers supporting integration and communism.

Taft-Hartley was steered through Congress by a coalition of reactionary Republicans and segregationist Southern Democrats. These forces were conservative. They were fighting to preserve the status quo at a time of an expanding economy and a rising standard of living for most workers in the United States.

FASCISTS ON THE ATTACK

The situation is qualitatively different now. "Right to work" is not currently being used to limit the economic power of unions at a time when industry is expanding; it is a direct political attack on the dispossessed.

In Michigan, the forces that led the fight for "right to work" were not conservatives;

they were fascists fighting to overturn the status quo. Today, economic polarization is being reflected in political polarization. This polarization consists not only of a splitting of the progressive camp and the creation within that camp of a progressive pole and a revolutionary pole, but also the splitting within the conservative camp and the creation within it of a reactionary pole and a separate fascist pole. The struggle over "right to work" in Michigan included intense pressure put on conservative legislators by organized fascist lobbying groups. This network included national organizations like Americans for Prosperity, founded by the billionaires David and Charles Koch, and a coalition of local groups and donors led by David DeVos, an heir to the Amway fortune and one of Michigan's wealthiest men.

The forces that pushed "right to work" in Michigan exploited serious tactical mistakes made by Michigan's union leaders during the 2012 election campaign.

In 2012, unions in Michigan began promoting Proposal 2, a measure on the November ballot, which would have written collective bargaining rights into the state constitution. Opponents responded with a vicious propaganda offensive. (For instance, they asserted that the proposal would bar schools from firing teachers who sexually molest children.)

The campaign against Proposal 2 was paid for by right-wing lobbying groups and business organizations. DeVos contributed over \$2 million.

The zeal of the measure's opponents contrasted sharply with the complacency of a union leadership that did not educate workers about the proposal. Michigan's union leadership was sure that people going to the polls mainly to re-elect President Obama would also vote for Proposal 2.

Barack Obama won the state of Michigan 54 percent to 46 percent, attracting 2.5 million votes. Proposal 2 garnered 600,000 fewer votes. Proposal 2 was resoundingly defeated — 58 percent to 42 percent.

As soon as Proposal 2 was defeated,

DeVos and other anti-union forces moved to get "right to work" passed through a lame-duck session of the legislature.

CARROT AND STICK

DeVos personally phoned Republican lawmakers and offered to bankroll their reelection campaigns if they faced heat for voting for "right to work." He also threatened to support right-wing challengers to any who failed to support "right to work." Even Michigan governor Rick Snyder — who had previously claimed that he wasn't particularly interested in pushing "right to work" and had other priorities — was forced to say that he would sign a "right to work" bill as soon as it passed. The aggressiveness of those on the attack continued even after "right to work" became law. Adding insult to injury, the group Americans for Prosperity — Michigan staged "town hall" meetings in 11 Michigan cities to sing the praises of "right to work" just before the law went into effect in March 2013.

The 2012 election campaign showed the bankruptcy of relying exclusively on the Democratic Party and defending only the most privileged sector of the working class. Michigan's unions focused on ballot measures designed mainly to help their current members. Organized labor failed to aggressively champion Proposal 1, the referendum measure to get rid of Michigan's emergency managers. This was a terrible mistake. Michigan's major unions did take a position against the dictatorial emergency managers system — at least nominally — but they spent most of their money, time, and effort on Proposal 2.

Too many in Michigan's unions still view "right to work" solely as an issue of protecting their union's current members. This is exceptionally dangerous because the passage of "right to work" was an attack on the entire working class, which began as an attack on the unions, but will not end there. Its passage was quickly followed by the Michigan legislature's decision to pass a new emergency manager law and then the Michigan

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Inside: World Situation Sets Stage for Struggle

The current escalating situation between North Korea and the U.S. — initiated by U.S. provocations — has been moved out of the headlines, replaced by other events. Yet, the deteriorating world economic situation and the intensifying struggle for markets are nevertheless continuing, creating instability and pushing the world toward war. This is the inevitable outcome of the capitalist system as sure as night follows day. The ultimate goal of the U.S. ruling class is to contain China and to consolidate its military, political and economic power throughout the world under the new conditions of today.

The ruling class seeks to win a section of the American people to this vision with the call of national unity, attempting to convince us that the need for sacrifice and austerity are in the best interests of the country. The reality is that the American people have no common interests with this handful of billionaires who rule the country for their own benefit. The April 2013 Pew Research Center study of U.S. Census Data showed that between 2009 and 2011 “the mean net worth of households in the upper 7% of the wealth distribution rose by an estimated 28%, while the mean net worth of households in the lower 93% dropped by 4%.” The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that in March of this year the only reason that the unemployment rate dipped was because almost a half million people had stopped looking for work and were not being counted anymore.

The articles in our May/June issue document and analyze these developments from the point of view of our class. The LRNA Standing Committee report “U.S. Political Realignment Rooted in Global Changes” shows how the call for all-American unity

is rooted in the needs and demands of the ruling class, not the American people. It examines the much discussed “Rising American Electorate” and realignments in American politics within the context of the goals of the ruling class at home and internationally. It shows that a third party motion is inevitable under today’s conditions, discusses why this is significant and how revolutionaries must participate in this motion to develop the consciousness of our class.

Yet, words alone, without a decent life and future to back it up, will not be sufficient for the ruling class to maintain its control over the American people.

Fascism has already taken hold economically with the merger of the government and the corporations, politically with the radical destruction of political and legal rights, and increasingly socially with the rising culture of violence we see everyday. The article “Democracy: A Revolutionary Cause” examines the roots of these developments and shows that the only solution to this rising fascism is for our class to unite to fight for the political power as a class to create a cooperative society where “each according to need” is the constant guide.

Our cover story “Michigan’s “Right to Work” Law Demands a Class Response” shows that the passage of a “right to work” law in Michigan in late 2012 was more than simply an attack on the unions of the Rust Belt. It was part of a general assault on the entire working class unleashed after the 2012 presidential election and demands a class response. Backed by some of the same forces that brought Michigan the Emergency Financial Manager legislation, these laws are stripping the workers of their economic and political rights and Michigan workers are

fighting back.

People in Michigan and around the country are waking up to the reality that democracy is being dismantled, and our economic and political rights are being defiled. On May 1, immigration marches will take place all over the country. Our statement “Immigration: No One is Illegal” points the way forward: We wage a fight for human rights and equality for everyone. We fight for the unity of the entire working class and fight for the political power of that class to achieve their goal of a good life for themselves and their families.”

The article “May Day 2013” shows that never before has international solidarity arisen from a concrete and objective basis. Electronics, in the process of creating worldwide production with a worldwide working class has raised proletarian internationalism from a moral goal to a relation necessary to the

survival of the workers.

The fact that new technology provides the foundation for this new society is explored in the article “Doomed by Technology or Promise of a Bright Future?” It challenges us to think differently about technology. Not to see it simply as a robot or a gadget, but as the totality of our understanding of the world. It is then that we can see technology’s potential for us to create “a world without hunger, or want, without rank, without oppression and war.”

In the end, such a world is fought for and won by human beings. Human beings with heart and a unwavering commitment to the future. “Carpe Diem” commemorates the passing of Sheridan Talbott who dedicated his life to fighting for a future in which all are provided for and none left behind. We mourn his passing, but his life is an example to us all.

Michigan’s “Right to Work” Law Demands a Class Response (continued from page 1)

governor’s decision in March 2013 to impose an emergency financial manager on Detroit.

Senator Robert Wagner was right when he said the democracy in the factory and the polling booth are inseparable. Today, democracy is under relentless assault by a ruling class that has no need for it at either location.

The passage of “right to work” in Michigan shows that one period in the history of the working class has ended, and a new one has begun. As the economic ties between the workers and capitalists are being broken, the stage is set for the struggle to become political. Throughout the United States, what

is happening in Michigan has to be seen as a harbinger of the challenges all those committed to the future of the working class will eventually have to confront. On this May Day 2013, when we declare that, “An injury to one is an injury to all,” we cannot limit that declaration just to the economic struggle of unionized workers. The crisis in Michigan shows that today an injury to one has to be seen as a political attack on our entire class and responded to accordingly. The passage of a “right to work” law in the state once known as the very citadel of labor gives us no other choice.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Rally: to bring back together and put in a state of order, as retreating troops [to return to attack]

Comrade: a person with whom one is allied in a struggle or cause

Rally, Comrades! is the political paper of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America. In this period of growing motion and developing polarization, *Rally, Comrades!* provides a strategic outlook for the revolutionaries by indicating and illuminating the line of march of the revolutionary process. It presents a pole of scientific clarity, examines and analyzes the real problems of the revolutionary movement, and draws political conclusions for the tasks of revolutionaries at each stage of development in order to prepare for future stages. It is a vehicle to reach out and communicate with revolutionaries both within the League and outside of the League to engage them in debate and discussion and to provide a forum for these discussions. Articles represent the position and policies of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America.

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League of Revolutionaries for a New America WHAT WE STAND FOR

Tens of thousands of socially conscious people declare themselves revolutionaries in opposition to the degenerating social and economic conditions. The League’s mission is to unite these scattered revolutionaries on the basis of the demands of the new class, to educate and win them over to the cooperative, communist resolution of the problem.

The demands of this new impoverished class for food, housing, education, health care and an opportunity to contribute to society are summed up as the demand for a co-operative society. For the first time an objective communist economic class is forming to become the foundation for a communist political movement. A new fascist state form, the naked rule of corporate power, is arising to oppose this motion.

Society must take over these corporations or these corporations will take over society. The new class must have political power to achieve these goals. In the

effort to achieve this political power the League supports all political organizations and sections of society that fight against the growing poverty, social and ecological destruction, fascism and war.

Nothing can be accomplished until the American people hold a vision of where they want to go and what they want to be. Creating and imbuing them with such vision is the overriding task of revolutionaries and the foundation of our organization.

Destruction of the ecology, the threat of nuclear war and the looming pandemics are calling the very existence of the human race into question. The battle is class struggle. The war is for the existence of humanity.

We in the League face the future with confidence. We call upon all revolutionaries to abandon sectarian differences, to unite around the practical demands of the new class and to secure that imperiled future.

US Political Realignments Rooted in Global Transformation

The goal of the U.S. is to dominate the world economically and politically in an era of history in which qualitatively new means of production are destroying all previous economic and social relations and laying the foundation for struggle on a world scale.

The ruling class cannot succeed in its goals without restructuring the economic, political and cultural life of America. They must continue to consolidate and expand the merger of corporations and government through nationalization in the interest of stabilizing capitalism and instituting economic “reforms” which will address the overall system.

They must win over a section of the American people to their program in the face of growing unemployment, poverty and austerity. They appeal to the “middle class” of all identity groups in the name of an all-American unity, while at the same time they isolate the masses within these groups by abandoning any social responsibility for their plight and implementing a fascist police state. The structural and racial inequalities within capitalism will make this attempt at all-American unity impossible.

GLOBAL ECONOMY AND PERPETUAL WAR

The world is now on a perpetual war footing. The economies and societies of the world are being militarized. Demonstrations in the U.S. and elsewhere are attacked with guns and tanks. Civil rights are violated. The point is we are already at war. War is politics by other means.

As the economies of the world deteriorate — as buying and selling breaks down due to the introduction of labor replacing technologies — the space for peaceful resolution of the world’s economic problems is diminishing. We see the escalating situation in the increased U.S. military encirclement of China and in the U.S. effort to install a missile shield in Europe aimed at Russia. We see the potential for smaller antagonisms to become larger wars — such as between Japan and China or in the U.S. military build-up in the Philippines. We see it in the U.S. sabotage of industrial capacities or intellectual property of the various countries.

Regional blocs between the U.S. and the Europeans on the one hand — as witnessed in the recent wars in Libya, Syria and Mali — and in the objective forcing together of Russia and China on the other hand, are consolidating. They are not simply a reaction to the military aggression of the U.S., but also an attempt to create or protect the market for their economies, which are increasingly based in electronics.

The more the market shrinks the greater is the competition. The more rapidly the means of production are developed the greater is the inability of the masses to consume. Along with continual war, the global rulers are attempting to solve the problem of the market through policies like the Trans-Pacific Economic Partnership or by renewing NAFTA. But national interests and the advance

of regional blocs simply intensify the contradictions. Both the U.S. and China have a first-strike nuclear doctrine. The slightest miscalculation on either side could launch the rockets.

ALL-AMERICAN UNITY IMPOSSIBLE

The striving toward an all-American unity is a key component of ruling class strategy. They are attempting to create an all-American unity by working through the leaders that they have created to move the masses. But because of the objective racial inequality within capitalism this can amount to nothing more than all-white unity.

The modern definitions of an “American middle class” were introduced by the U.S. ruling class propaganda machine during the post-World War II period. American capitalism, virtually unscathed by the destruction of the war, used the Marshall Plan rapidly to expand its financial investments and industrial production to rebuild war-torn Western Europe and Japan.

Simultaneously, it propelled massive, unprecedented capital investments into the new markets of Africa and Asia created by the dismantling of European direct colonialism. This expansion, along with the rising cold war with the Soviet Union, the anti-communist witch hunts characterized by the House on Un-American Activities Committee, the Korean War and more, required a national political unity — an all-American unity. This was in fact an all-white unity. It was made possible through sharing a small part of the new-found spoils with the white American workers.

As a result, the expanding and predominantly union section of the U.S. working class, along with a fast growing social stratum of “white collar” professionals experienced a constantly rising standard of living for 30 years. These predominantly white workers and professionals became the newly defined and commonly referred to “American middle class.”

The Civil Rights and Women’s movements were taking shape during this same post-war period. Their decades-long struggles that followed were in large part the demand to be included in the trickle-down benefits of the economic expansion. Organizations that arose out of these movements framed the political issues for equality, specific to the identity of their respective movement, all with the objective to get a piece of the American Dream.

As the massive industrial centers of the country expanded, Blacks, Latinos and women increasingly entered the industrial and professional workforce and became part of America’s growing homeowner landscape. During this period, identity politics found an economic base and stable forms of organization and ideological centers amongst those fortunate enough to join the new “American middle class.”

At the same time, racial inequality is built into the system of capitalism itself, making it impossible for Blacks and Latinos to be fully integrated into the “middle class.” Because

they started from this position in society, the Blacks’ and Latinos’ situation has declined more than other sections of the working class. America cannot overcome its history without changing the economic system. While the ruling class has to prevent these groups uniting on the basis of class, the revolutionaries must show these same groups that uniting in their class interests is an indispensable part of being able to resolve their problems once and for all.

By the early 1980s post-war industrial economic expansion came to an end, as all corners of the world were brought into the developing global market of production and exchange. The accelerated use of robotic, computer-driven production, the resultant globalization of the economy and the hundreds of millions of jobs eliminated worldwide over the last forty years have destroyed the capitalist market. The new electronic-based, global-capitalist economy produces far more than it can consume.

People cannot redress their grievances within the two party system. The result is a social motion away from these parties. This is the objective foundation for a third party to emerge.

The result is an economy that is rapidly polarizing as its economic middle is being destroyed. Most of America’s old industrial centers and their suburban rings have been boarded-up, abandoned and otherwise destroyed. So too has been the fate of a large section of that broad, post-war, industrial “middle class.” As the economic middle is destroyed, what remains still provides the ideological and political glue — the center — that ties the working class to the strategy and politics of the capitalist class and the two corporate parties.

Ruling class propaganda appeals to and targets this economic middle every day, to politically influence the country as a whole. The two ruling class political parties are working overtime to make social issue appeals to the “middle class” cores found in all of the various identity groupings, including whites. These appeals include “protecting the middle class,” “equal rights of opportunity,” “middle class values,” “right to choose,” “same sex marriage,” “paths to citizenship” and declarations about strengthening the economy and creating jobs.

However, today the significance of the term “middle class” is purely political and not at all economic. The ruling class has no economic expansion and no trickle-down bribe to offer. But it still needs to keep its ties to the masses. To do this, it needs to ideologically win over those — that core — who still own property. This includes a large section of

the working class. It is here that we find the central importance of the ruling class term “middle class.”

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL REALIGNMENTS

The Democratic Party’s victory in the 2012 elections gave rise to much discussion about a “Rising American Electorate” (RAE). The media has reduced this RAE to only a question of ethnicity or gender, but this is only its features.

As early as 2002, in their article “Majority Rules — The Coming Democratic Dominance” published in *The New Republic* in 2002 and in their book *The Emerging Democratic Majority* published in the same year, John Judis and Ruy Teixeira wrote of this rising new American electorate. They showed that the change was not simply a matter of numbers or identity groups. Instead, they argued, the significance of this new electorate

lay in its role in and the connection to the developing new economy based in electronics and the society that was being created by it.

“If this emerging Democratic majority has eluded many observers,” they wrote, “perhaps it is because it differs substantially from the New Deal Democratic coalition that dominated American politics from 1932 to 1968... The [Republicans] can scour the coal pits of West Virginia or the boarded up steel mills of Youngstown for converts, but America’s future lies in places like Silicon Valley and North Carolina’s Research Triangle. The party that most clearly embodies the culture and beliefs of these areas will dominate political discourse in postindustrial America at the dawn of the new century, just as the McKinley Republicans dominated nascent industrial America at the dawn of the last.”

The Democratic Party began to restructure itself in the 1990s to align with the massive shifts that were taking place as a result of electronics. It positioned itself to represent the capitalist forces that were driving the development of a world economy. Among the American people, it moved away from its traditional base, becoming a party of this “new electorate,” as Judis and Teixeira wrote, “professionals, women and minorities rather than blue-collar workers.”

The Republican Party is going through its own process of restructuring and its current

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From the Editors: Immigration: No One is Illegal

The issue of the undocumented immigrant today has to be seen in the context of globalization and capitalism in the age of electronics. The flow of poorer workers to richer countries is an objective part of that process. One out of three people worldwide are migrant workers. The internationalization of capital and the development of a world market demands open borders for immigrant workers.

The world as we knew it is becoming a thing of the past as workers are being uprooted and displaced around the globe. In this country the immigrant worker is an integral part of the process where the “middle class” is being eroded and the workers are being thrown down to the level of the last hired and first fired. They are a part of the growing mass of dispossessed workers. Their demands reflect the common demands of this new class and its dispossessed core — health care, decent housing, education for their children, jobs and a way out of poverty.

The workers, including the undocumented, can't live without jobs, and the capitalists can't deliver jobs in an economy based on electronic production, which is systematically eliminating jobs. In this context immigra-

also the entire class. Their aim is to criminalize a section of the working class in order to prevent its unity as a class.

As such the question of immigration presents a key front in our battle for the hearts and

development of working class unity, and as a veiled attack on the working class in general by the introduction of repressive measures such as Secure Communities, e-Verify, private prisons, heightened repression of the border and the general militarization of U.S. society, and the climate of fear and mistrust that these policies entail.

Even so-called immigration reform is no solution. If we as revolutionaries allow the ruling class to dictate the political terrain, the working class will only wind up fighting one another for the crumbs dispensed by the capitalist class. We wage a fight for human rights and equality for everyone. No one is illegal.

We raise the issue of a new type of society, a cooperative society, where everyone can have what is needed to lead a decent and cultured life. Above all we fight for the unity of the working class and the fight for the political power of that class to achieve their goal of a good life for themselves and their families.

tion itself becomes the issue that masks fear over the loss of jobs, housing, etc. The ruling class, which has no real solutions, resorts to scapegoating and divide-and-conquer tactics to control not only the immigrant worker but

minds of the U.S. working class in general and the Latino and Spanish-speaking section of it in particular. For the larger class as a whole, the immigration question is being used as a major stumbling block to the

Revolutionaries fight for the unity of the working class and the fight for the political power of that class to achieve their goal of a good life for themselves and their families.

May Day 2013

May Day! This is the day when politically conscious workers of the world put forth their demands and demonstrate their strength and international solidarity. May Day 2013 finds the workers faced with new, historic opportunities and with grave and growing dangers.

The shifting of production from human labor assisted by electronics to automated, electronic production without or with very little human labor is the central content of our time. It is re-doing all the economic and social relations of the past. It is putting social revolution on the agenda of our time.

Electronics shifts production from advanced industrial countries to low wage areas, and then from low wage areas back to the advanced countries as fully automated production. This process disarms the workers in their economic battle with the capitalists. They are now forced into the political arena and ultimately into a battle for state power and control of the economy. This is the prelude to political revolution.

New conditions have created a solid, objective foundation for revolutionary ideology. The struggles of the workers for the better world will, upon this new foundation, be victorious. The demands of the workers have moved from the realm of morality to the realm of necessity. Never before have the workers of the world been so interdependent and in

such close communication. Electronics, in the process of creating worldwide production with a worldwide working class has raised proletarian internationalism from a moral goal to a relation necessary to the survival of the workers. Never before has their international solidarity arisen from a concrete and objective basis.

In years gone by, the workers could only achieve reforms made possible by changes in the economy. Today, the capitalist class is faced with the demand for fundamental, revolutionary social change because fundamental, revolutionary change is taking place in the economy.

May Day 2013 sees the shredding of the façade of bourgeois democracy by unending war, the looting of the national treasury and the steady decline of the living standards of the workers. As the bribery of the workers in the advanced countries declines and the people awake politically they are confronted with the rise of a violent fascist police state.

The world is on course for the decisive and final conflict. The exploiting class is already fighting back with the ferociousness of a wounded and dying beast.

Our forces are scattered, politically and ideologically confused. Yet, we celebrate this May Day with confidence in our class. Despite the exploiting class' technology, their network of spies and agents, their seeming overwhelming military superiority, we know that the future belongs to us.

Carpe Diem

On behalf of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America, the Editorial Board of *Rally, Comrades!* commemorates the life and revolutionary contribution of Sheridan Talbott, comrade, teacher, loving husband and father.

Born in 1944, Sheridan Talbott grew up in a rough working-class neighborhood in Mobile, Alabama. Toughened by the Catholic school that he attended as a youth, Sheridan developed into a true proletarian intellectual. After graduating from the University of South Alabama with a degree in philosophy, he attended Southern Illinois University. He completed all of his course work for a Masters degree on Karl Marx, but left SIU-C in protest over changes in their doctoral requirements.

At that time the world was in turmoil, particularly in the South, and Sheridan began to look outside the walls of the University for answers to how he could be a part of transforming society in a fundamental way. He returned to Mobile, Alabama in the 1970s and began working in a factory, and through his writing and speaking out influenced and united white workers and black workers in their fight for control of their union.

Sheridan went on to continue his quest, eventually returning to southern Illinois in 1981, grounding himself in the working class, plying his trade as a carpenter. He also worked as a substitute school teacher, relishing the opportunity to impart his knowledge of history, science, and literature to the youth. In 2007, he joined the League of Revolutionaries for a New America and up until his death never stopped teaching those around him.

Sheridan and his wife Cathy grasped and held on to what is key for any revolutionary: that in order to really build a revolutionary movement and a revolutionary organization, you had to center it around a press. *Rally, Comrades!* became a vital part of their work in Southern Illinois, and they used it to teach about the need to replace this system with one that meets the needs of the people, and how that age-old vision can be realized.

Sheridan Talbott will truly be missed, but his legacy is an inspiration on which we can build. We mourn his passing, but we also celebrate his life.

— The Editorial Board of *Rally, Comrades!*
League of Revolutionaries for a New America

Doomed by Technology or Promise of a Bright Future?

It is increasingly clear to many that we must build a movement to put political power in the hands of humanity and take it away from corporations. Knowing that the shape of our future depends on how we form our movement now, we consider here the role of technology in shaping our lives, its potential, and our ideas and understanding about technology.

The way to use technology differently is to understand it differently. We're taught to think of technology as the stuff, the gadgets that increasingly dominate our lives, but that doesn't serve us very well. Just as the old saying goes, "can't see the forest for the trees," we can't understand something just by looking at examples. We must pull the camera back to get a larger view.

Suppose instead that technology is the *totality of our understanding of the world, and how we apply that to our lives*. This changes everything; we are no longer doomed to be ruled by robots or blow ourselves up; we can now see what technology really offers us. It means that productivity (how much we can produce with a given person-hour of labor) is much broader than just robotic automation. Technology in that broader definition has allowed us to achieve the potential of an absolute abundance for the first time in human history.

Abundance, the ability to satisfy the basic living needs of all humans, lays the foundation for a human future without hunger or want, without rank, oppression or war. Yes, we could destroy ourselves, we've reached that point of power, but there's nothing that says we have to.

Technology (Greek *techno* "art, skill, method" + *logy* "to speak of") offers us choices; do we use our knowledge of atomic decay and the energy of atoms to create bombs, to see inside solid objects, or to track the age of ancient objects? We are not commanded to any of these by the knowledge itself, but by the necessities of the social system and its dominant, or ruling class. The atomic bomb was not created for the greater good of humanity; it was made and dropped for political purposes having little to do with Japan or military strategy, and more to do with the Soviet Union and China as threats to global corporate expansion.

ONCE WE ARE FREE OF CAPITALISM

Once free of the laws of the market system, we can make choices based on what's best for the continued development of humanity, which in the larger sense means rebuilding and maintaining the dynamic balance of conditions that are the natural foundation for our lives. We need no longer be dominated by the corporate market version of abundance — endless marketing to create incessant desire for instantly obsolete commodities. We don't have to automate everything, and we don't have to create systems that can "Terminator" us. Again, we will have choices. We don't have to become sedentary dolts for whom

all is delivered without human effort, but we will have to choose to use physical, mental, and emotional effort.

While it makes great sense to continue automating manufacture of electric motors, or vehicles, or many other kinds of everyday machinery and processes, it would be dangerous to eliminate human involvement in creation of the things we use. It's to our advantage to use computers where precision and speed beyond human capability is essential, and where conditions are dangerous for humans, but we'll want to maintain our ability to override them and shut them off, and to decide their purpose.

The way to use technology differently is to understand it differently. Then, we can see the new world we're fighting for and understand why it's worth fighting for.

With this in mind, there are many areas in which we will find it important to rely on human "touch." In healthcare, for instance, it's increasingly documented that human relations and even touch play a vital role in healing. Capitalist healthcare constantly seeks to reduce and eliminate human contact in both quality and quantity, for the same reasons it seeks to reduce human labor elsewhere. It evaluates medicines and procedures based on their profitability. It looks at humans without acknowledging that we are still the same species that walked the plains of Africa 100,000 years ago, living then and now in a complex, intertwined relationship with the natural world.

This dehumanizes and de-professionalizes the entire field, making it impossible to evaluate the validity of various technologies. Ancient herbal medicine is used by a modern, clinically trained practitioner to rid a patient of two debilitating, parasitic diseases after doctors at UC San Francisco Medical Center pronounced him "incurable." Nurses once studied therapeutic massage as part of their training, and considered it part of their calling to use that in their work with patients. In Cuba, doctors live in the community they serve, know every family and its household, and make house calls. Health is the total functioning of a person in his or her environment. The highest technology in healing is and will be human knowledge and care, aided by tools both "old" and "new."

Food production is another area for transformation. No one debates that we must grow food on a massive scale to sustain humanity, but we can't go on as we are. Corporate agribusiness toxifies and depletes soils and oceans, de-nutrients food, produces drug-resistant pathogens, and wastes astonishing

amounts of food, water and energy. As with medicine, the capitalist scale of food value is based on "added value" — the more they do to it, the more profitable it becomes.

Contrary to agribusiness doctrine, we are learning that petrochemical-based, monoculture farming is destructive, and that farms utilizing sustainable, organic, polyculture techniques are not only more productive in the long run, but create more true nutritional value as they continually build and rebuild the soil. (See *The Omnivore's Dilemma* by Michael Pollan) The capitalist fantasy of getting any food anytime, grown with petrochemical fertilizers and poisons, from anywhere in the

to eat food and have no idea where it comes from or how to grow it, and to have no sense that we take life to sustain ourselves? What happens to a society whose citizens understand nothing of the technologies pervading their lives?

Capitalism drives us in that direction because it has use for us only as workers and consumers; they educate us narrowly to work and consume for them, and only for that purpose. It has no use for our development as citizens of a whole society. Fully developed citizens are dangerous to a ruling class. Fully developed citizens know something about every aspect of life, and a lot about the things that interest them most.

These questions also reach over to philosophy and education. Food is an important connection to the natural world; life lives off of life, and most of what we eat was once alive. Is there a connection between health and survival, and respect for life? How are destruction of exchange value (the core value of the market system), devaluing of life (a commodity under capitalism), destruction of our environment, and the capitalist approach to food production manifested in each person's life?

What do our children need to understand about their world? Hundreds of students were asked where "chicken" comes from. Most answered "from the store"; many said "from KFC." Many didn't know that it had been a living being.

Our answers to these questions, and our process of answering them, re-shapes how we think about the world and in turn gives form to our movement. In this way, we see the new world we're fighting for and understand why it's worth fighting for.

When we shift discussion from "what will technology do to us at the hands of corporations?" to "how to use technology to meet the needs of humanity living *in connection with* the world?" we are saying that we will do something different with it when we have political power. This is how we take the political offensive.

world, is just that; a fantasy to guarantee we stay tied to them through our emotions, taste buds and stomachs. They are destroying humanity with the implications of that fantasy.

Does this mean going back to some idealized, olden-day version of farming? Not at all; we are already seeing new forms of farming, carried out by families and communities instead of "corporate persons." It takes more people to farm well. They integrate and communicate with each other on a cooperative basis more and more, they are more connected with urban life than ever before, and they use electronic technology integrally with the natural biology of cultivating food. The only thing old-fashioned is that farming is once again becoming a life of real people, close to the soil and seasons, good-natured and respectful of life, as life should be.

There is nothing to say that this type of agriculture can't be done on a nationally, even globally networked basis. How best to do that is for farmers, their communities, their regions, and on up to work out, in collaboration with the best science we can muster. That, in turn, speaks to what a new kind of government might be like; wouldn't the government we need be an integrated network of groupings related to a particular field, including farmers, biologists, zoologists, ecologists, geologists, meteorologists, marine scientists, nutritionists, health practitioners and food distributors, plus others we don't know of yet?

FRIGHTENING QUESTIONS ARE BEFORE US

Is it good to use devices, yet know nothing about their source and process of manufacture? Is it good to know how to operate a calculator, but be unable to do math? Is it good



Democracy: A Revolutionary Cause

The American people have a long history of fighting for the ideal of democracy, of rule by “we the people.” When they kicked off the chains of monarchy in the Revolutionary War and fought in the Civil War to end slavery, they were led by an ideal and a vision of democracy. Yet this has never found its completion, and cannot, under the capitalist system, which is based on class domination and exploitation — incompatible with true democracy and equality. Today as the capitalist system crumbles, destroying society, people are becoming aware that this ideal so valiantly fought for has become little more than a vote for a ‘lesser evil’ candidate — all beholden to corporate interests.

care. These things were always sold for profit; however, a majority of workers were able — through selling their labor — to buy these basic things. This kept the system going and ensured a measure of social peace.

The struggles between workers and capitalists were mainly over how much of the fruits of their labor would be kept by themselves, and how much expropriated in the form of profits (a form of theft) by the capitalist class. In fact, the super-exploitation of weaker and poorer parts of the globe allowed for a section of workers to live relatively stable lives, with the ownership of some personal property and the prospect of a better life for their children.

With the introduction of computerized au-

poor and dispossessed — from the various laws against homeless people’s acts of survival (sleeping, begging, etc), to the rise of the privatized prison industry that profits on slave labor, and the establishment of debtors’ prisons — all represent this move toward a fascist police state.

The stirrings in the form of resistance to the takeovers of local governments, the people’s occupation of the Wisconsin State Capitol, the rise of the Occupy movement with its anti-corporate message, and the surge of interest in creating a Third Party, are understood as true exercises of democracy in the best American tradition.

With the latest drastic budget cuts and abandonment of the poorest workers, the legislative administrators of the capitalist system are showing their hand: that those of us they no longer need to exploit for our labor are

expendable, and won’t be housed or fed or kept alive, much less given any civil or human rights.

No democracy is possible under these conditions. True and universal democracy can only exist in a society where people have full economic and political rights, based on public ownership of production and distribution — “to each according to need” — not for the private profit of the few.

People are beginning to join their scattered struggles under the banner of a vision and understanding that the only possible alternative to this exploitive dying system is one based on cooperation. The struggle for reform and for democracy is now in reality a revolutionary one — to remake society along cooperative and truly democratic lines.

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Under capitalism, there has been as much democracy as could be allowed as long as the ruling class maintained its domination and the system of private property. In an era when labor power was needed by the corporations to produce goods, a certain amount of democracy was permitted, and in fact was needed to keep social peace and the system functioning. With the introduction of the new labor-replacing and labor-eliminating technology — computers, automation, and robotization — these relations are being broken, as capitalism, the economic system based on one class profiting off the labor of another, objectively destroys itself.

While the American people hold this ideal of democracy as their highest value, and have been willing to repeatedly fight for it, the structure of capitalism only allowed it within certain boundaries. Two hundred and even a hundred years ago, the large number of Americans who were property owners, of small farms and businesses, made democracy based on small capitalist enterprises possible, with many people having some stake in the capitalist system. Since then, the consolidation of economic production in the hands of a few monster corporations has forever put an end to this.

In the past, “bourgeois democracy” allowed for certain rights and an illusion of fairness. Economic rights were never guaranteed as a part of this — that is, rights to the necessities of survival: housing, food, medical

tomation in production, which is accelerating ever faster, the basis of capitalism is being destroyed, and the result is social destruction. As Marx and Engels so poetically described it in *The Communist Manifesto*, “all that is solid melts into air.” The introduction of this automated, labor-replacing production, by destroying the basis of capitalism, is also breaking apart capitalist relations. No institution built on this collapsing foundation can remain standing, including that of bourgeois democracy, with the laws, traditions, and institutions that in the past upheld these class relations.

People are waking up to the reality that what they thought of as democracy is being dismantled. They are seeing that no matter who they vote for, the results are basically the same: the stripping of civil and constitutional rights and due process, attacks on workers’ rights to bargain collectively, and the takeovers of local towns and cities by non-elected bodies, as in the “Emergency Financial Manager” in Michigan and the Rust Belt. The legislative creation of corporate personhood and the Supreme Court’s Citizen United decision, which allows corporations a free hand at buying elections, represents a huge step toward the imposition of fascism — the merging of the corporations and the government.

Militarized police forces act as occupying troops in poor neighborhoods, where they kill at will. The criminalization of the

US Political Realignments Rooted in Global Transformation (continued from page 3)

situation is reflected in the 2012 Presidential election results. “Telling is Romney’s defeat in 13 of the nation’s largest 15 cities,” Sam Tanenhaus wrote in the February 10, 2013 *New Republic* online, “but also Indianapolis, San Diego, Houston, even Dallas. If the trends of the 2012 elections continue,” he went on, “the GOP could find itself unable to count on a single state that has as many as 20 electoral votes.”

Despite its current problems, the Republican Party is not finished yet. It remains key to the two-party facade of capitalist democracy. Neither is the capitalists’ method of rule finished yet — the use of the South as the political reserve to control the entire country. This Southern program for power is expressed politically in the neoliberal mantra: slash social programs, privatize public services, deregulate the economy and the environment, cut taxes for the rich, increase military spending to fund the drive for empire. Under today’s conditions, this program is the end of democracy and the implementation of a fascist order.

The missing piece in the analysis of commentators trying to understand the RAE is the qualitative transformation taking place in the economy and how this is reshaping politics in America. As the economy deteriorates society will only polarize even more. There is a narrowing of who is able to participate in the political process. This is being justified by using the historical divisions in American society to facilitate the development of fascism, race being a central factor.

The attacks on democracy in Michigan under the Emergency Financial Manager laws were instituted first in predominantly Black cities, and with the addition of Detroit, stripped almost half of the African Americans

in Michigan of local democracy. This obvious ploy to use race baiting to destroy democracy throughout the state and impose dictatorship as a solution to the fiscal crisis was soundly defeated in November. (The Governor has flouted the wish of the people and instituted yet another EFM, this time in Detroit).

The promoters of this vision of a “Rising American Electorate” are in reality referring to the upper strata of all the identity groups, including whites. In fact, a huge section of the RAE “coalition” is poor, and part of the growing dispossessed. They are economically unstable, faced with foreclosure, unemployment, and poverty. Programs to help the “middle class” will not help them, yet they are being pulled along in this coalition under the leadership of the upper strata.

The two-party system is not over yet, and it will continue to play its role to enforce capital’s rule. At the same time, the rulers are not afraid to let the idea of a third party float to the surface — as long it is under their control. On the other hand, a third party is not simply a subjective thing. It is an expression of real political and economic motion. While the Republican and Democratic parties appear to be moving apart, in reality they have the same program. Because people cannot redress their grievances within this party system the result is a social motion away from the two parties. This is the objective foundation for a third party to emerge.

Revolutionaries must be prepared to use the developing social motion for a third party to lay the foundation for a workers party that can represent the independent political interests of our class.

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