

# RALLY, COMRADES!

THE VOICE OF THE LEAGUE OF REVOLUTIONARIES FOR A NEW AMERICA

## NAFTA and the Politics of Transformation

**C**orporations are creating educational systems that meet the goals of the 21st Century's high-tech global capitalism. They only need a few highly educated workers. They intend to educate fewer people more, while educating far more people less. They work through national governments to pass laws and treaties to facilitate this.

A big step in that direction was taken when the governments of Canada, the U.S. and Mexico implemented the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which took effect on January 1, 1994. Understanding the impact of NAFTA is a crucial part of preparing ourselves for what is to come.

Educators from Canada, Mexico and the U.S. formed the Trilateral Coalition in Defense of Public Education, to oppose the degradation of public education from a right and a responsibility of government into "a service" that could be bought and sold on the market as a commodity: in essence, a corporatized form of profit-making property.

The teachers, parents, students and communities in North America, who have fought so valiantly against this social degradation, will continue to fight for a different vision of public education than the paltry and shriveled vision that capitalism trumpets: "get an education to get a good job." A vision of public education as a right for all shows what is truly possible for society today. It's time to raise this discussion in a broad way.

Since NAFTA was implemented, corporations have deeply penetrated public education across the hemisphere. The corporate agenda today is rapidly privatizing most of the functions of public education, as it turns this social right into a market that well exceeds a trillion dollars a year.

### NAFTA AT 20

NAFTA opened the communities and markets of Mexico, Canada and the U.S. to a flood of investment from financial institutions and transnational corporations. The treaty increased the flow of capital, profits, manufacturing and commodities across borders, but did not permit people to follow the jobs. The resulting economic effects have destroyed communities and people in each country.

It is well documented how Mexico's small farmers suddenly had to compete with gigantic agribusiness corporations like Archer-Daniels-Midland, which were heavily subsidized by U.S. farm bills. This corporation seized control of Mexico's corn production, by selling corn cheaper than Mexican farmers could grow it. The dispossession of small farms drove millions into the cities to live in the streets, to labor in industry, and to cross the border to look for work. Between 1990 and 2008, the Mexican-born population of the

U.S. went from 4.5 million to 12.67 million.

NAFTA is one of the ways that global capitalism creates the largest migration in human history; for the first time more people live in cities than in the countryside. Undocumented immigrants in the U.S. today are part of a global new class of workers whose labor is exploited, but who lack civil, human and labor rights, and who today are concentrated in temporary, contingent and precarious work.

U.S. corporations responded to NAFTA by closing U.S. plants and moving jobs to exploit the cheaper labor of Mexico, China, and other countries. Simply due to trade deficits with Mexico, the U.S. eliminated 682,900 jobs, 60.8% of these in manufacturing.

Though manufacturing certainly moved across borders, the advent of labor-less production from human jobs to robot jobs caused the real transition from regular jobs to temp jobs supported by high technology. Many of the families dispossessed from the fields wound up working in far smaller numbers in these fields again, for corporations employing technology that only corporations can afford.

Such plant closings that eliminated jobs created an internal migration in the U.S. from the Rust Belt to the Sun Belt, from regular jobs to temp jobs, from homes to living on the street. The migration is larger than the 1930's Dust Bowl. These workers are part of a new class, increasingly victims of a growing police state. Once again history shows that a society that brands some people as "other," or outsiders, finds that anyone can be stripped of all rights. In Canada, against standards demanded by the public, NAFTA-inspired legislation radically reduced the governmental powers of provinces to restrict pernicious corporate penetration that increases labor mobility.

The number of people employed in manufacturing globally fell dramatically, replaced by robots and software. The multinational electronics contract manufacturing giant Foxconn, which employs over a million workers in China alone, has already brought tens of thousands of robots on line to replace its human workers and has plans to replace almost all its workers with robots. In the auto factories of India, only highly skilled workers are permitted to work a 40 hour week. Unskilled workers are temp workers and are hired on contingent contracts.

### INTO THE FUTURE

Capitalism has always configured public education to support the labor market, thereby shifting the costs of training the workforce onto society. Corporations require an educational system that supports both poles of the labor market. Educational technology, like any technology, is just a system of tools. As private property, it is distorted to guarantee private profit, thereby reinforcing the

polarization of society. As public property it could be employed for the benefit of all.

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) could be a wonderful way to provide access to quality education, by combining the best of online video with real interactions with live faculty. Some examples exist today, but MOOCs are generally configured by corporations for their own benefit.

In 2011 Sebastian Thrun put his graduate-level class in artificial intelligence at Stanford on-line as a free MOOC. Over 160,000 people worldwide took the course; many tens of thousands completed all the work. The top student at Stanford finished 411th. Thrun crowed, "We just found over 400 people in the world who outperformed the top Stanford student."

Meanwhile, twenty miles away, San Jose State, a public university, tried out MOOC courses for remedial math. Only 23% passed the first semester, and about 29% the next. Thrun's explanation was "we have a bad product." This corruption of public education is the result of private ownership of technology as property; it is not inherent in technology itself.

U.S. corporations still spend billions on training, but they are also cutting apprenticeship programs, which have dropped 40% since 2008. On-the-job training programs are vanishing, as corporations shift the training burden onto community colleges and society. Workers themselves are forced to become debt slaves by financing their own training. This is the inevitable predatory result when education as a social right becomes replaced by "consumer rights."

As productivity and corporate profits continue to skyrocket due to electronic technology, the oversupply of skilled and unskilled workers likewise increases. It's not workers that are lacking; it's the work. Every community can identify plenty of things that need to be done to benefit people, but corporations will not permit them to be "jobs" because they produce no profit.

### THE POLITICS OF TRANSFORMATION

Corporations demand new skills: developing ideas from data, identifying large-picture

patterns and complex communication that uses many forms of technology. These skills are best taught by human beings in small well-supported learning environments. They will be reserved for the elite pole of the workforce, but these skills are essential for everyone in a society that is bursting with transformation.

Everyone knows that the resources children need to unleash their individual potential are abundant, inexpensive, and can be easily made available everywhere. But in a desperately unequal society, abundant resources are only distributed according to the needs of capitalism. When the necessities of life are potentially abundant, capitalism has no choice but to enforce scarcity in order to create markets.

As the technological revolution destroys the old industrial society, most working class people hope to somehow "fight back" and return to the mythical good old days. But corporations are "fighting forward" into a new hi-tech global capitalism, that sacrifices our future for theirs. The transformation of society is not reversible, but it can be seized and directed towards the benefit of humanity and the survival of the planet.

The Chicago Teachers strike of 2012 indicated that the material conditions of transformation are passing over into the actual political process. Working together, both the union and the community gained important practical experience of the power that can be exercised when people come together. This indicates the enormous potential working people have to collaborate and transform all of society in their interests.

NAFTA was written by corporations, but it was implemented by the States of Canada, Mexico and the U.S. In every country the State steps in to block every attempt of people to control the corporations. The State therefore becomes the point of contention. Taking the offensive demands a political battle for power.

Last year Mexico's President, Pena Nieto, forced changes to the Mexican Constitution that had guaranteed quality public education, eviscerating education funding and replacing

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# Inside: Our Struggle is Universal

The articles in our May/June issue of *Rally, Comrades!* examine the revolutionary impact of the microchip. For the first time in human history human labor is being removed from the production process, making it possible for us to heal the devastation in the world and realize ourselves as fully human.

Under capitalism this technology has been used to reduce the mass of humanity to paupers, estranged in their own land. Unable to work, they are being thrown into poverty and desperation by the millions, condemned to travel the world looking for work, or to eke out a living on the world's garbage piles and trash dumps. Globalization creates this new class of workers everywhere. The ruling class cares little for their plight, whether immigrant or native-born worker, whether in the U.S. or in the rest of the world. This new reality is the foundation for the uprisings across the globe, and the struggles to connect on the basis of a growing commonality of condition.

One such struggle, the international fight for public education, is examined in our cover article "NAFTA and the Politics of Transformation." The article shows the extent to which NAFTA has facilitated the turning of public education from a social right into a commodity to be bought and sold on the market like any other commodity. The demand of public education as a right due to all echoes across borders, giving voice to an alternative vision of learning and culture, and drawing our class together in a common fight.

"Reconstruct Society on a New Basis" examines how the capitalist class uses its political control of the State to reshape society to facilitate the development of the qualitative

changes in the economy in its interests. It shows that today, only fighting back against the effects of the system will not solve the problem. The struggle is to rid society of the cause of injustice and inhumanity — the struggle for the political power to reconstruct society. In this, consciousness is decisive.

But what would this society be? Is it even possible? "Sustaining Mother Earth: Abundance Beyond Capitalism" examines the process of historical development with particular attention to the impact of capitalism on the environment. The microchip and the robot replace labor, destroy the wages system and push those who are forced to work for a living outside the margins of society. Distribution according to need is the only solution. With fewer people needed to produce the means of subsistence, a cooperative social organization can unleash the creativity constrained by capitalism. It can redirect that productivity to heal the destruction of the earth.

"A New World: What the Future Holds" reviews many of the practical ways that technology now affects our lives. It can put us in touch with the world in a way we have never known, expand our horizons, and give us a greater appreciation of both our past and our future. It can improve our health, our standards of living, and can save us from hours of useless toil. It can free us up so we can enjoy the kind of society where we can embrace humanity as we never been able to before. Yet, it also shows that the way society is organized and ruled today stands in the way of the full realization of this promise, and that communism is the only practical solution to these problems.

"The Civil War: 150 Years and Still With Us" shows that the strivings for a different world have always been with us in the U.S., as it has been with the peoples of the world. Americans have fought for freedom and equality, but the content of that freedom and equality has always been about the pursuit of life, a life that shares equally in the abundance that society produces. Now, and perhaps for the first time, we are in a position to finally settle the question. Our vision: a communal cooperative society. Our cause: the abolition of private property.

The goal of all of our work today is to spread a vision of what is possible. It is a vision that satisfies the deepest yearnings of the people for peace. It is a vision of a world where no one has to fight another for the daily bread of existence. It is a vision where cooperation and fulfilling the needs of humanity are the guiding principles.



## NAFTA

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the right to a decent day's pay with the right to a temp job. Tens of thousands of teachers joined other workers in blocking Mexico City to pressure the State. In Quebec, when government at the behest of corporations doubled the fees for higher education, the people fought the State for months and forced a reversal. In Chile, where all higher education is privatized, students passed over to the offensive to fight for free, open public education and escalated the issue to bring down the president.

The future will be either all private and corporate, or it will be all public and free. Humanity stands on the threshold. The people now alive will make this determination. The magnificent vision — that public education can raise all humans to their full potential — contains the embryo of the future.

Today corporations and States are preparing the Trans Pacific Partnership to extend, among other things, the corporatization and privatization of public education across the Pacific basin. Corporations will relentlessly strive to impose this new order. The challenge of the TPP is that it forces the working class of every country to confront the capitalist power behind the treaty, while dealing with the States that are implementing it.

As we fight for public and free education for all, we must also consider how to take power out of the hands of the corporations. The role of revolutionaries is to provide the ideas that show the real cause of society's destruction, and thus to reveal how far this battle can really go.

## 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.

# Sustaining Mother Earth: Abundance Beyond Capitalism

We face an unparalleled ecological crisis, a crisis bound up with the destructive waste characteristic of capitalism. All societies, from the earliest ways in which humans lived together to modern capitalism, have been organized around their tools. In early communism, where the means of subsistence were distributed according to need, abundance and scarcity existed only for the group as a whole, not for individuals. The economic order of capitalism has led to an inseparable connection between ecological catastrophe alongside productive abundance and scarcity.

The potential of each form of social organization is limited by its technological level. Therefore as technology changes the possibilities change. What is abundance at one stage is no longer abundance at a different stage. Even more importantly, human relations in production change with each stage of development. Thus in the earliest human social groups people lived in a communal relation to each other and to their tools, sharing everything in common. Plants, game, stone tools and fire were shared in common. In times of scarcity, e.g. drought, the entire social order shared the scarcity.

Everything we know about early forms of social organizations shows that people needed to cooperate. Survival of the band required that everyone eat. Hunting large animals required working together. Knowledge of the world was narrow, limited to the area within which hunter-gatherers (foragers) moved, and required the combined experience of all members of the group, passed on to younger members. Even in early large agricultural communities (around 150 people), only a minimal division of labor existed; all that was produced was owned in common; exchange did not exist. Good times (abundance) were succeeded by deprivation (scarcity). The most important conclusion to draw from a society in which tools were owned and used in common is that what is produced is held in common, and that abundance is for the group as a whole, while scarcity also is shared among the group.

## TECHNOLOGY CHANGES

New tools facilitated the development of agriculture, which arose independently from several centers around the world. These tools facilitated people reorganizing hunter-gatherer (foraging) social groups over several thousand years into stable centers of population. Improved stone digging tools, and later, metalworking and employment of animals in plant cultivation accelerated the transition. Grain domestication led to sedentary populations that could support 6 or 7 times the numbers in foraging communities. The Bronze and Iron Ages allowed for more intensive cultivation of the land and larger population settlements.

Along with the separation of food producers and non-producers came division of labor, beginnings of class society and exchange. From the early casual exchange of things of use to expanded mercantile exchange to the development of capitalist exchange, division of labor expanded, while the numbers

of people no longer needed for food production increased. At the same time ownership of the changing tools and the means of survival produced by those tools changed hands. An owning class began to amass the product of the society's labor. Individual abundance, unheard of before this time, enters the vocabulary. At the same time as new tools changed the quantity of abundance, the tools also began to change its quality: what was necessary for survival underwent a cultural expansion.

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Communist abundance is public property — wealth held in common, available to be defined and understood in the terms of the needs of the whole of society.

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The emerging class society demanded a force to protect and expand the newly created private property. The State arose to defend private appropriation of a social product, to defend the right of exploitation and class abundance. With the beginning of class society, with the beginning of the division of labor and exchange, comes the germ that will be a society dominated by exchange value and markets, crushing everything in the way of its mad rush for profit.

As agriculture was succeeded by manufacture and industry, new tools again established the basis for people to reorganize society. Capitalism is above all a society ruled by the production of goods for sale: commodities. What distinguishes capitalism from preceding class societies is that even the ability to work — labor power — is converted to a commodity. What is common to all commodities is what makes them exchangeable: labor. Even the production of the worker's labor-power requires labor — for the production of the means of subsistence. The value in exchange of every product came to be measured by the amount of labor expended on it. That amount was reckoned in units of time and compared using gold as money.

All previous advances in technology have created the basis for the employment of more labor-power. Each new and larger machine has extended the control of industry over the working class. Each increase of productivity has demanded a new market to sell the abundance of commodities produced. Each advance in technology has reduced the number of workers necessary to produce the agricultural means of subsistence (now at about 2% of humanity world wide).

Now a technology has arrived that replaces labor itself. The microchip and the robot are driving labor-power out of existence in many industries, including the industries that produce the means of survival. Automation has revolutionized the production of food, clothing, housing, education and health care. Automation has begun to eliminate labor from playing a part in the production of the necessities of life and from the production of the commodity labor-power itself.

## ABUNDANCE AT THE END OF CAPITALISM

Capitalists strive to increase productivity as if the whole world were their marketplace. It matters little if we are talking about clothing or candy bars. Capitalists only are interested in the immediate realization of profit. Therefore, they waste massive amounts of human labor (by destroying unsold commodities). They consume massive amounts

of resources (by unplanned overproduction). They expend mountains of resources that otherwise contaminate our lives (e.g. tar sands and shale oil). New electronic tools under capitalist control have expelled millions from capitalist relations into unemployment, leading to inconceivable abundance at one pole of society, unimaginable poverty at the other and catastrophe in the natural world.

Capitalists themselves recognize that the system built on the exploitation of labor is grinding to an end. Capitalists cannot, however, release their grip on private property. Corporations and the State merge, which is the essence of economic fascism. This is accompanied by fascism's legal and political manifestations. Capital is compelled to rely on the State to put in place a system of force and violence for saving private property without capitalism. This results from the world-changing epoch of the end of value. But fascism is not the only possible consequence.

## ABUNDANCE, THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE END OF CAPITALISM

The economic underpinning of capitalism is the wage-labor system. The capitalist purchases labor power i.e., the ability of the laborer to work, at the cost of its production. In the process of transforming the ability to work into actual production, the worker creates far more value than his or her wage. The greater the use of labor saving machinery, the less labor time goes to recover the wage and the more goes to unpaid labor time and consequently more profit. However, the worker who makes automobiles cannot eat them or wear them. There has to be some way to exchange the labor of making autos for the labor of making houses. Money, representing expended labor, is that universal equivalent. The basic exchange is money for labor power — or dead labor for living labor. As labor saving machinery expands, the cost of producing labor power falls. As electronics enters production with no human labor expended in production, money no longer represents expended labor and becomes of less and less and finally of no value. So how are people to eat

and live? A new system of exchange, based on need rather than value must develop.

The end of exchange value calls for the distribution of the social wealth according to need rather than payment. Distribution according to need means the coordination of production by a form of social organization that holds the means to produce in common, and that is capable of avoiding many of the "unintended consequences" of capitalist production. The end of exchange value makes possible a cooperative social organization; the new tools make this solution indispensable to end ecological catastrophe. Thus end centuries of accumulation of masses of wealth at one pole (along with environmental destruction) and untold poverty at the other. Thus begins the possibility, unthinkable under capitalism, of an economic paradise for all.

Abundance and scarcity under capitalism are conditions of class life. But with fewer people needed for producing the means of subsistence, a cooperative social organization can unleash the creativity constrained by capitalism. It can redirect that productivity to investigate and respond to the destruction of the earth. Humans are freed to expend their energy to solve the contradictions forced on us by capitalism. The end of exchange value makes practical that the aggregate produce of society can be rationalized as a true abundance over the long term.

We live in no ordinary period of transition: it is something totally new, a leap from class society to advanced communism. Abundance ceases to be a characteristic of one pole of society. Communist abundance is public property — wealth held in common, available to be defined and understood in terms of the needs of the whole of society. Only such a social organization can leave behind the short-term, profit driven, individual interest of a society based on private property.

The history of exchange value is the history of the increasing exploitation of labor. It is the history of human and environmental death and destruction for the protection of private property. Capitalists even use the new technology to maintain a stranglehold on private property. But a society that produces only use values spells the end of the dystopia of markets, exchange and private property itself. Producing only use values also spells the end of false utopian hopes. It opens the door to distribution according to need, not exchange according to who can pay. Finally begins the new era of a cooperative society on a higher level than early communism: not small groups discovering the world independently, but a society of billions world-wide tending our relationship with the rest of nature.

Electronic technology within a cooperative society creates opportunities for human beings to unleash their full creative potential for the first time. We can expand and build upon knowledge that is no longer the private patent of the few, but the public property of all. We can reconfigure our relationship to sustain the planet. Reaching this resolution depends on human beings introducing revolutionary new ideas, a new vision of an economic paradise.

# Reconstruct Society on a New Basis

A recent survey by the Brookings Institution found 42% of the American people believe that capitalism is either “not working too well” or “not working at all.” It also found that 44% believed that capitalism and the free market system are at odds with Christian values.

Along with this anti-capitalist sentiment comes a political awakening — an outrage against injustice and a loss of faith in the government.

They are right: Production without labor is destroying capitalist production relations. The ruling class is using its political power to protect private appropriation and their interests at the expense of the people of this country and the world.

Revolutionaries can and must politicize this awakening, unite the outrage with the vision of a new society that does away with privation and inequality, and infuse it with the confidence that this vision is possible. To do that we have to understand the underlying change. Only then can revolutionaries fight for its direction.

## NEW MOTIVE FORCE

A new motive force is replacing human labor in production.

This is no small change. At other stages of social development, the defining motive force ranged from animal and human power to electro-mechanical power driving machinery. Today’s microchip stores and transmits not only specific, programmed mechanical movements — but also the capacity to make virtually instant decisions based on new information received. As it transmits the decision-making capacity of human labor, the microchip is replacing living labor in one aspect of production after another.

As an economic system defined by the buying and selling of labor power as a commodity, capitalism cannot survive this new motive force. But the ruling class can use its political power to preserve its wealth and continue private appropriation of the social product.

## PRIVATE PROPERTY AND THE STATE

Productive forces that replace labor mean that property relations built around mechanics, labor power and value are becoming untenable. Although the new motive force begins to destroy capitalist production relations, the State still has to protect and promote private property — the private appropriation of the social product. The ruling class uses its political power to give legal expression to the needs of private property under new conditions.

Private property is not simply a big accumulation of wealth. Nor is it the same as personal property, in the sense of someone’s bed or books or bicycle. Property relations refer to relationships in society, relations between people and property.

At its essence, property is a legal question — in the broad sense of ownership and

appropriation. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels described in their writings the main stages of appropriation of the social product — the stages of private property up to and including capitalism. In mediaeval society, the means of production were suited for individual use, and accumulation was based on individual production.

The emergence of large-scale industry called for the concentration of the means of production in the hands of the capitalists and the separation of laborers from their tools. In the first volume of *Capital*, Marx summed up this centuries-long period of social development in a few words: the “expropriation of the immediate producers... [the] dissolution of private property based on the labor of its owner.” He also anticipated the possibility of the end of all systems of private property: the “expropriators are expropriated.”

Property relations, in the sense of who owns what and who appropriates the product of labor, are the legal expression of the production relations at a given stage. They are the legal framework in which those production relations operate, whether those production relations be ancient slavery, feudalism, or capitalism.

Here we are not talking about “legal” simply in the narrow sense of “laws.” There need be no law on the books that says the owners of the factories get to appropriate the product of the workers’ labor. Yet everything in society is set up that way: Workers have to work in order to get money to buy the necessities of life. Capitalists hire the workers and appropriate the fruits of their labor.

Changes in private property relations recast relationships within society — relationships among classes in society, government, the State, corporations, and property. When the owning and appropriating class needs to re-shape these relationships in order to continue private appropriation under new conditions, it uses its political power to do so.

Legal and political changes at the origin of capitalism shaped society to facilitate the new production relations. Capitalist relations of production first developed in agriculture, in a particular area in England. Beginning in the 16th century large landowners fought for a series of laws that began the private enclosure of lands that had previously been accessible to the whole village. People could no longer graze their sheep or cut their hay where they used to.

These laws began to reshape society in the interest of the rising capitalist class. They separated workers from the land, forced them to sell their labor power to the capitalists, in agriculture and then in industry. They promoted the rise and expansion of capitalist production relations and, ultimately, the export of a new form of inequality to places far beyond the English shores.

Specific legal and political relationships also shaped U.S. capitalism. Here there was no 19th century capitalism without the depraved and murderous enslavement of millions of African Americans. Propelled by the capitalist market, slave labor — especially on the cotton plantations of the Mississippi

Valley — drove the explosion of the U.S. onto the world market.

In the irony and dialectic of history, at a certain point the property relationships of slavery had to be abolished in order for capitalist production relations in the U.S. to move on to their next stage of growth and expansion. After the Civil War the 13th Amendment abolished the right of one person to own another as property. But it did not end the capitalism whose expansion was made possible by that slavery. As the world so painfully knows, the period after the Civil War saw an expansion of capitalism that catapulted the U.S. from the second-rate country it had been in 1840 to a first-rate imperialist power within 60 years.

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To protect its interests, the ruling class is wielding the power of the State to direct key aspects of the economy, serve corporate interests and protect private property. What must revolutionaries do?

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Particular relationships of private property were suited to capitalism’s growth at one stage. At another stage they became a fetter. Laws were passed. Books were written. War was waged. Political and legal changes ensured capitalism’s growth under new conditions.

## LEGAL AND POLITICAL CHANGES SHAPE SOCIETY

Today, the foundation of American society is again shifting — this time in a qualitatively new way. The introduction of the microchip into production replaces human labor and introduces an antagonism to the production relations of capitalism. Production without labor calls for distribution based on need.

The ruling class cannot stop the economic revolution and its fundamental threat to exchange based on labor and value. But it can wield its political power to protect its interests under these new conditions. It is acting directly and openly to wield the power of the State against everything, from public education to the earth’s endangered ecology.

This economic and political motion has been the merger of the corporations and the State. It uses the power of the State to direct key aspects of the economy, serve corporate interests and protect private property.

This merger is the basic structure of fascism. It has been a protracted process. But when the cyclical crisis of under-consumption came to a head in the financial crisis of 2008, it gave the ruling class the opportunity to advance this merger to a higher phase of its development. The merger required and made possible a wide spectrum of domestic laws and regulations, legal contracts and global agreements that subjugate society to the corporations.

Protecting private property today is not only police guarding surplus food from

hungry people. As immoral and obscene as that is, there’s more to it. Today a vast array of new laws, regulations, legal agreements and precedents aims to protect the economy and uphold the private appropriation of the social product, even as the production relations of capitalism are being destroyed.

One spot on this spectrum addresses the reorganization of the financial sector. The Federal Reserve granted exemptions to the financial sector and Congress approved its deregulation, opening new avenues of investment.

Banks are now allowed to buy up infrastructure that stores and delivers commodities. JPMorgan is moving to gain control of the copper supply. Goldman Sachs collected about

\$5 billion in fees over the last three years by moving aluminum back and forth among its 27 industrial warehouses in the Detroit area — money making money based ever more remotely on labor and production of value.

The path is cleared for the owners of money to make more money in new arenas of speculation made possible by the microchip. Credit default swaps bring in high returns for some investors — and wreak havoc on cities that have to pay off the banks and cut allocations for the public good. The microchip can put knowledge about anything — from the genetic structure of plants, animals, and humans to changes in interest rates and currency values — onto the market for sale or speculation. Scientific knowledge about natural resources is thrown onto private markets. Some hedge funds now focus their speculation on water supply, drought or how fast a glacier dissolves into the earth’s warming waters.

Changes to the legal and political superstructure are destroying relationships in society once assumed stable. A new generation of global trade agreements protects the profits of the world’s corporations at the expense of the people of the world. Banks that are deemed “too big to fail” become exempt from the rule of law, and are given the funds and liquidity to become even bigger. Under the banner of “austerity,” legal contracts are broken, cities cut essential services, and public workers lose their pensions. The regime of austerity is reshaping society in the U.S., Greece, Ukraine, and around the world.

## MEANING OF LEGAL AND POLITICAL CHANGES

Adjustments to the legal and political superstructure are cementing the bonds of the merger between the armed force of the State

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# The Civil War: 150 Years and Still With Us

The bloodiest war in the history of America was fought some 150 years ago on its own soil. Our past and our history are inextricably intertwined with our present, and consequently our future. In some ways the Civil War is still being fought.

What was the Civil War all about? Today the fundamental issues that gave rise to the Civil War are in many ways still shaping the debate and the struggle that is developing over what shall finally be the resolution of what kind of America we shall become. One might say it is the battle for the completion of the American revolution. The War of Independence set forth a vision and a cause that could not be completed, which made necessary the Civil War to continue that struggle. Today the battle lines are shaping up to attain the vision and cause that links the history of the American people from its origin to now.

The Georgia state Senate has passed a resolution which calls for a Constitutional Convention, whose primary purpose would be to set aside and/or amend the current U.S. Constitution, in order to reassert the power of the states over the federal government. In other words, replace the Union with a confederacy of states. The resolution has also already been passed in Virginia and Alabama, as well as Indiana and Wisconsin. The “Southernization” of America is no myth.

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It is an indication of how, in this time, the corporations are merging with the State and are preparing to abandon even bourgeois democracy, in order to defend private property at all costs. Their path to that end is to go back, and to dredge up and rely upon the worst aspects of our history, in order to reorganize the State to impose their rule. We cannot forget that the Southern solution to the aftermath of the Civil War was the defeat of Reconstruction and the formation of the world’s first fascist State, the Black Belt South.

There is also, however, a movement that is arising, an expression of a developing polarization antagonistic to the retrograde motion described here. Marching under the banner “forward together, not one step back,” we see a powerful new movement rising to confront the State, and in so doing, relying upon history to frame and define its direction and goals. It sees itself as a kind of Reconstruction movement, whose aim is to complete the process turned back with the defeat of the first Reconstruction. This time it is about a class that is systematically denied and cut off

from access to the basic necessities of life, including food and shelter, but also health care, education and even a government of, by, and for the people.

## A SOUTHERN COUNTRY

The Enlightenment thinkers of the 18th century from Rousseau to John Locke spoke of equality and the universal Rights of Man. Thus the bourgeoisie could put itself forward not as the representative of one class but of all of suffering humanity. So workers, farmers, slaves, and toilers of every stripe, with their own ideas of freedom and equality, enlisted to fight for a country founded on the principles of freedom and justice for all. But the outcome was a bourgeois democratic republic, and in America, because of the peculiarities of its economic foundation, it was an agrarian bourgeois republic.

The leader of the American Revolution, George Washington, was at the same time the richest man and the largest slaveholder in America. From the beginnings of the republic until the outbreak of the Civil War, America was essentially a Southern country. Washington was the first of a series of slaveholding presidents, and Southerners dominated the Supreme Court and the Congress. It is this unresolved fundamental contradiction at the very core of the American experiment that

made the Civil War necessary. The cause was independence, but its vision was “all men are created equal.”

While its means of production was bonded labor, the hoe, and the plow, the Southern economy operated within a capitalist market, with cotton its main commodity. With the introduction of the steam engine into production, and the transition from manufacture and production with hand tools to industry with machines, the domination of capital was complete. The North, which up until this time existed primarily to service the agrarian Southern economy, began to develop its economy on the basis of a maturing industrial capitalism. Now Southern agrarianism and the slavery that defined its mode of production came to be seen as a fetter to development.

## ABOLITION

The Erie Canal, completed in 1825, opened up trade and commerce from New York to the Great Lakes, in direct competition with the South. These states became a hotbed of anti-slavery sentiment. The battle over free

states or slave produced a “bleeding Kansas,” and the Border Wars were a harbinger of the coming Civil War, as the North and South bitterly fought out the question over whether the new states being admitted to the Union would enter on the side of free (wage-labor) or slave labor. The strife produced both a John Brown and an Abraham Lincoln.

The slaves themselves became a key factor in the developing struggle. Not only were there slave rebellions and other kinds of resistance, the Underground Railway became a force in the anti-slavery battle. As a counter, the Southern-dominated Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act, and the Supreme Court published the Dred Scott decision, which ruled that slaves could not sue for freedom, because as private property they had no rights.

The abolition of slavery arose to become the central idea, upon which the ensuing conflict was to be fought out. William Lloyd Garrison’s *Liberator* fanned the flames of abolitionism, as did Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, and Harriet Tubman arose as outstanding speakers for the cause of freedom. The resolution of the course forward was decided by John Brown’s attack at Harper’s Ferry; it made the Civil War inevitable.

The aim of the Southern slaveocracy was to establish an empire based on slave labor; the aim of the North was to establish a bourgeois democratic republic without slavery. Out of this irrepressible conflict arose a third political party, the Republican Party, and in 1860, it was able to split the vote and elect Abraham Lincoln. With that, the South knew the deal was up. They immediately began the process of secession and the formation of the Confederacy. In 1860 the war began with the South’s attack on Fort Sumter.

Lincoln had to navigate a treacherous and difficult path to steer the nation through the war and to accomplish its aims. He knew that he could not come out early on with the call to abolish slavery. The Union needed the slaveowning border states to win the war. A Southern-dominated Congress and Supreme Court would have impeached him. The Emancipation Proclamation, issued in 1862, was a military action. Emancipation was a blow to the Confederacy, and the tide of slaves and freedmen who came to fight for their freedom on the side of the North was the indispensable factor required to assure Northern victory. The war became revolutionary, leading to the overthrow of the ruling elite and the reorganization of society without chattel slavery.

At Gettysburg in 1863, Lincoln gave voice to the “unfinished work” of America, that “cause” that the nation shall have a “new birth of freedom.”

The war was won, its cause attained. Slavery was abolished; \$4 billion in private property was expropriated. After an intense struggle the abolitionists within Congress, the Radical Republicans, were able to establish a period of Reconstruction in the South; for a time Black and white poor Southerners were able to vote and pass progressive legislation

that was in their interest. The breaking up of the plantations and the redistribution of the land to the former slaves was on the agenda, but the industrial capitalists of the North could brook no more abolition of private property. They had already accomplished their aim: to make the Southern ruling class subservient to finance capital. Former slaves and poor whites were driven back into a condition of near-slavery — the sharecropping system and Jim Crow.

So now it is about us. History repeats itself, but on a higher and higher level, a kind of spiral development where the cause and vision of one stage gives rise to another, where the battle is continued under different conditions. Our history is connected even as it advances.

## OUR CAUSE, OUR VISION

So what is our cause, our vision today? We stand once again at a nodal line, a time of epochal change, where humanity is preparing to take a leap forward to a whole new stage of human history. We are in the midst of a revolutionary process that is of world-historical proportions. Something has happened that the world has never seen before. The tools of production have achieved a level of technology where human labor is no longer necessary: from slave labor to wage labor to production without labor. How can a capitalist system based upon the exploitation of human labor power survive in the face of this new automated electronic technology? It cannot.

A consequence of this development is that a whole new class of workers, now excluded from their very right to exist as human beings, stand in stark antagonism to a ruling class that defends private property at all costs, even abandoning bourgeois democracy in order to continue their class supremacy.

But we know nothing comes from nothing. Our revolution will be an American one, and it is integrally connected with, and is a continuation of, American revolutionary history. In that sense, we are still fighting the Civil War, but it is really about the vision and the cause that lies at the core of the American trajectory.

An integral aspect of our history has been the toiling and oppressed masses of workers who have struggled to have their fundamental needs as human beings achieved. We have fought for freedom, yes, and for equality, yes, but the content of that freedom and equality has always been about the pursuit of life, a life that shares equally in the abundance that society produces. Now, and perhaps for the first time, we are in a position to finally settle the question. Our vision: a communal, cooperative communist society. Our cause: the abolition of private property.

# A New World View: What the Future Holds

If we as revolutionaries understand that dialectical and historical materialism, that is, the science of how and why things change, is an application to the real world, we see a reflection of how things really are. Thus we get an actual view of history. Dialectics holds that internal contradictions are inherent in all things — that is, negative and positive, past and future, and something dying away and something developing.

Historical materialism goes on to describe the importance of the dialectical method in the study of social life and the history of society.

If the world is in a state of constant movement and development — if the dying away of the old and the growth of the new is a law of development — then we look forward, not backward. What does it mean for the future with what we know of the advanced development of the productive forces?

What is technology? What does it do? These questions appeared in a television commercial showing technology working in many walks of life. We see someone able to walk with a digital leg; we see an artificial hand that can sense feeling and we see someone able to talk via the computer.

The research done years ago by a Georgia Institute of Technology professor has

recently become the basis for merging humans with a machine through the invention of Google Glass. This is a wearable computer in the form of eyeglasses. Some of the things Google Glass can do: if the wearer wishes to take a photo, he/she just winks; people can record what they see hands free and stream what they see. One can speak to send a message, upload photos and videos to social media, and access a GPS for directions. The wearer of the eyeglasses can search the web for information, can take phone calls and access emails and calendars.

There is an automobile commercial that shows robots on an assembly line building cars with very few humans working. We also see commercials of automobiles parallel parking without the driver. We can go into the Post Office and buy stamps and/or mail a package via a machine. We use automated kiosks when we shop for groceries or in department stores. Amazon is already planning on developing drones that can pick up orders and deliver them to customers within an hour or less.

On December 24, 1968, three astronauts on Apollo 8 were the first to orbit the moon and take a colored photograph of the earth rising. On December 22, 2013, NASA recreated this moment. Now, for the first time we

can see this on You Tube thanks to the data from the NASA Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter spacecraft.

These commercials and You Tube videos show the impact of technology and science but fail to give a vision of a better future. Technology has definitely changed our lives for the better. We can email our relatives and friends anywhere in the world in a matter of seconds. We see the news as it happens either on our televisions, iPhones or iPads, etc. And we can enjoy movies at home via DVD's.

There is even research being done to create "the Infinity Machine," a quantum computer which is able to solve multiple problems. Creators of this have visions of being able to discover more effective drugs by analyzing our DNA; help cars drive themselves; forecast weather precisely so that people will be given more time to take cover; and helping cut back on travel time by an analysis of traffic jams.

The basis of capitalism is that the capitalist owns the means of production and the worker sells his/her labor power to buy back the necessities of life. Profit is realized. Now the electronics revolution comes along and robots replace the worker. Many workers today are temporary or part-time workers who make minimum wage and/or become

permanently unemployed. The capitalist relations are being destroyed.

If robots are displacing human labor and eliminating jobs, then how will our needs be met? Technology can provide an abundance of resources if distributed according to need.

If historical and dialectical materialism shows us that the productive forces and thus society are developed from primitive communism, to ancient slavery, to feudalism, to capitalism to advanced communism we can see what the future holds for us. In different countries there were different paths of development.

Capitalism is being destroyed in this era of the electronics revolution and private property needs to be eliminated. A cooperative society must be created with public ownership of these resources, which is necessary for goods and services to be distributed to all. Thus the scientific development of technology makes it possible for us to live in a totally new kind of society where we can have a new world view, which embraces humanity in all its possibilities.

*Building Block articles help explain a basic concept of the revolutionary process, challenging readers to explore its meaning for political work in today's environment.*

## Reconstruct Society, Continued from page 4

and the economic power of the corporations. The consolidation of the economic, political, and legal framework of fascism is well underway.

These are not subjective choices, nor policies that can be chosen or repealed. They are the attempts of the ruling class to protect its interests in the face of the objective forces that are destroying a system based on labor and value.

Out of this process is evolving a new system of private property — a system where money makes money, where wealth and exchange become ever more detached from labor and the production of value. No new system springs fully developed from someone's mind. It takes place step by step, as the ruling class uses its political power to solve specific problems.

The ruling class has to try to ensure the continuity of private property. They cannot forever preserve a system of exchange based on labor when labor is being replaced and value is being destroyed.

In this objective sense the ruling class is on the strategic defensive. There is no economic solution. The only route to protecting private property is political force. They have political power, but political laws cannot overcome economic laws. They cannot ensure the continuity of a system of exchange in an economy that is increasingly separated from value.

But they have to try. As destructive and far-reaching these political and legal adjustments are, their offensive can only be a tactical one. The beginning of the end of value based on labor sets the objective basis for the abolition of private property.

### PROFOUND REVOLUTIONARY POTENTIAL

Despite its dangers the current political moment also holds tremendous revolutionary potential. As it is for the ruling class, so too is it for the working class. The subjective, conscious aspect of the process is decisive.

Each political step awakens more people and brings them into awareness and struggle. Now is the moment to meet the anti-capitalist awareness and anti-fascist sentiment and politicize it with widespread propaganda.

With the political power of the State so openly in the hands of the corporate exploiters and appropriators, with these private interests so nakedly assaulting the public, there arises the potential for a break in the continuity of political thought. It is urgent that revolutionaries take advantage of the objectivity of this political moment to politicize the growing sense of the injustice of these laws and develop class consciousness.

The conscious aspect of the revolutionary process is more than the awakening and response of people to the disruption in society. It may start there. But more decisive is the stages of the consciousness of the need and possibility to reconstruct society on a new foundation. Consciousness is not just more and better struggle *within* the system and against its effects. Consciousness is indispensable to the struggle to rid society of the *cause* of injustice and inequality — the struggle for the political power to reconstruct society.

Will the abundant physical and cultural wealth, scientific understanding and

productive capacity, that are the results of thousands of years of human knowledge and production, continue to be subjugated to private profit? Or will humanity transcend the world governed by the laws of private property to achieve a new level of its development? The future is up to revolutionaries who feel deeper and see farther — and who organize

themselves to unite the consciousness of the solution with those who are struggling against the problems.

*Political report of the LRNA Resident Standing Committee, January 2014*

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