

RALLY, COMRADES!

THE VOICE OF THE LEAGUE OF REVOLUTIONARIES FOR A NEW AMERICA

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What Time Is It?

We need to talk. Do you know what time it is? We have just been through a wrenching election in which many questions were raised about the times we are in, and about the direction we need to go, from going back to making big changes going forward.

These are the kinds of questions that show us that time is more than clock time, more than the tick-tock of a known quantity of time. Some describe our times as a time of “paradigm shifts,” like the “shifting of tectonic plates,” as a time in which a gigantic leap is taking place; others of a faith persuasion even talk about this being the “End Time.”

Time does not take place in a vacuum. Time is really about the motion of an object or process in space. Clock time is the measured motion of the earth rotating on its axis, or revolving around the sun. And we know that the tick-tock of time is not experienced just as “one damn thing after another,” “Time flies when you’re having fun.” Or, we kissed – “and time stood still.” Now that is an unforgettable moment! Everything changes in that moment. That is time experienced as a new *quality*.

We also think of time as past, present and future. That suggests that time has a direction, that we have come from somewhere and that we are going somewhere. William Faulkner understood: “The past is never dead. It is never even past.” In the elections of 2016, we saw a battleground in which old ideas from a past era fought it out with a new era struggling to emerge.

EPOCHAL TIME

The motion of human beings or human societies through space and time is *history*. And the trajectory of human history does not proceed as a mere chronology of time, but moves forward in jumps and starts, in the leap from one stage to another. The time we are talking about here, including the content of our own time, is epochal time. William Shakespeare said that all the world’s a stage. Every epoch is a new stage of human history, and each time the players are different.

In the beginning, the main players were hunters and gatherers. Then, with the discovery of fire, with the ability to produce new tools fashioned from iron, a whole new epoch of human history was unleashed. The revolution in agriculture forced the reorganization of society on a new stage, where the new players were kings and slaves. An epoch of early communism was replaced by an epoch in which private property dominated.

Some thousands of years later, a new kind of tool was introduced, the machine, powered by steam, and then by fossil fuels and electricity. A whole new mode of production, from production based on human muscle power to mass production with machines, required the leap from one kind of society to another. A

new epoch of revolution ensued. The world of kings and slaves was overthrown, replaced by new players – capitalists and workers.

The American revolution itself was a by-product of an epoch of revolution, and the Civil War saw the consolidation of that revolution with the ascendancy of industrial capital and the abolition of slavery. In more recent times, the introduction of the mechanical cotton-picker into the cotton fields of the Mississippi Delta wiped out the Southern sharecropping system almost overnight.

Our time is no different. As with previous epochs, a new tool, a new technology, has been introduced that is putting an end to the previous epoch of the reign of capital. We are in the middle of a giant historical leap from an old historical period to a new stage. Capitalism is broken, and the society upon which it is built is undergoing a period of instability. Destruction and the fight for new ideas reflect that new foundation. Nowhere was this more evident than in the intense struggle and debate that characterized the elections.

What is that new tool? It is the robot. As with previous epochs, its introduction changes everything. And this time, it represents a new technology that is unlike any other in human history.

How is this so? For the first time, the robot is a kind of tool that requires no human labor. Every previous epoch of human history has required a different form of labor, from hunter-gatherer to slave to serf to wage-laborer. This time, human labor is no longer necessary at all. Yet at the same time, it represents a tremendous leap in the forces of production; with the robot we can produce an unheard of abundance.

We can see this all around us. Everywhere factories are dominated by robotics – walk into increasing numbers of factories and you will find a place where human beings are almost nowhere to be found. This is really what the Rust Belt is all about. Thousands of factories were shuttered and millions of workers lost their jobs as new factories employing more robotics and fewer human workers were replacing them on a global scale.

This is also what the elections were all about. The whole debate about jobs was trying to get at the real cause of the crisis that is gripping America. An economic system based on wage-labor and capital is being destroyed by the new technology. People who are seeing their lives wrecked are desperate to have something done about it. The politicians have no answers. They can only pose old ideas and suggest going back to a bygone era. That is an illusion. Tired old formulas of the past blame it on the immigrants, or on one group or another. That only pits us against one another. Before you can pose real solutions that can solve the crisis, you have to understand the real cause.



Ours is a time of peril – and expectation. Our lives are being wrecked; what’s next? These revolutionary times compel us to make the leap – emboldened by a vision of a new world of abundance, distributed to all according to need. Let’s make history.
Photo by John Slaughter

WHO ARE YOU?

Those who are of the evangelical persuasion speak of being “born again,” in which, in an instant, a qualitative transformation takes place that changes you forever. You are the same person, yet you are not

the same. You are something new. Epochal change is like that. It all comes down to a change of *relations*. Different relations change who you are.

For example, when you meet someone new, one of the first things you ask is, “What
Continues on page 6

CONTENTS

Inside: Make History	2
Defend Reverend Edward Pinkney!	3
Revolutionary Change in America	4
Abundance is Possible for All	5
Standing Rock and the Priority of Public Good	5
The End of Money	6

Make History

Inside Rally, Comrades!

“The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.”

— Abraham Lincoln, *Second Annual Message to Congress, December 1st 1862*

All history shows that change is impossible without new ideas. These new ideas arise from need because the old ideas no longer explain the world around us. The old ideas, and the forces that benefit from them, hold on and fight to stay alive. We see how the ruling class has sought to pit our class against itself, to set those with common interests, on either side of a divide that is not of their own making, against each other. The reality is this class – in all its chaos, disorientation and yes, sometimes ugliness – is the only force that can overturn the existing order. It is the only force that can show us how to “disenthrall ourselves” and make the world anew.

The demand for a new world is already being proclaimed and defended by millions throughout this country. They don’t see yet, that within their common demand for the basic necessities of life, a vision of a new America is emerging. It is a vision where cooperation and fulfilling the needs of humanity are the guiding principles. It is a vision that satisfies the deepest yearnings of the people for peace.

Our class must have political power to achieve these goals. The first step toward achieving these goals is the unity of those who share a common economic plight regardless of color, sex, faith or nationality.

“Revolutionary Change in America” provides a framework to examine the thorny question of class unity in America, and how this unity has now become possible. It shows the relationship between the development of the new technology of electronics and the creation of this new class of workers. The new technology was first applied to unskilled and semi-skilled workers, areas where, due to their historical oppression, Blacks were concentrated. Advancements in technology are now replacing skilled and professional work, affecting broader swathes of Black workers and white workers. Now millions of workers are joined together in their growing common equality of poverty and beginning to move to defend their right to the basic necessities of life.

The struggle being led by the Standing Rock Sioux has become an international banner to highlight the growing water struggles of the people against the powers of the corporate State. All of these water struggles express the growing will of the people to protect public property rights in the interests of the people. To secure the future of humankind demands that we protect our public welfare. This requires us to take over the private property of the corporations and make it public property, to be used to benefit human society as a whole.

The article “Defend Reverend Edward Pinkney” shows how the new conditions everywhere are creating a new type of uncompromising leader like Reverend Pinkney of

Benton Harbor, Michigan. Reverend Pinkney is in prison because of his resistance to the dismantling of democracy and the emergence of naked corporate rule in Michigan. His case cannot be separated from the ominous environment in Michigan, where the basic tenets of democracy are under severe attack by corporate power. Nor can it be separated from the growth of a powerful movement of workers fighting for democracy and life itself. Reverend Pinkney is the face of this opposition in Michigan. He is one of a wave of leaders who represent the new class of workers. We the people have to stand with and defend these leaders.

The articles “Abundance is Possible For All” and “The End of Money” show that fulfilling these demands, and more, are entirely possible today. The new technology provides the basis for a new society, in which we no longer have to fight for the daily bread of existence, where cooperation and fulfilling the needs of humanity can be the guiding principles.

Our cover article, “What Time is It” shows us how what seems to be the chaos and impossibility of events today, are in fact the moment in which we can “complete the leap” to a whole new epoch of human history, in which all the long-held dreams of humankind may at last be achieved. The article shows that this vision cannot be realized without the participation of the new class of workers, created by the new means of production. The article challenges us to take up our historical role and not only “thus save our country,” but all of humanity.

Take up that mantle.
Make history.

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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

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 cooperative society. Such a society must be based on the public ownership of the socially necessary means of production and the distribution of the social product according to need.

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The *Rally, Comrades!* bilingual website provides online access to all issues of *Rally, Comrades!* It is a political resource for our readers, and provides up-to-date articles, statements and analysis of key questions of importance to revolutionaries.

Defend Reverend Edward Pinkney

Reverend Edward Pinkney has had 30 months of his life stolen. Reverend Pinkney is in prison because of his resistance to the dismantling of democracy and the emerging naked corporate rule in Michigan. Pinkney was convicted of bogus charges related to his community's fight to unseat a public official, who had opened doors for the town's public assets, such as a cherished lakeside public park, to be handed over to the corporations.

The case of Reverend Pinkney cannot be separated from Michigan's ominous political environment, where the basic tenets of democracy are under severe attack by corporate power. Nor can it be separated from the growth of a powerful movement of workers fighting for democracy and life itself. Reverend Pinkney is the face of the resistance in Michigan.

The foundation of the most recent legal case waged against Pinkney was the accusation that he had changed dates on petitions for the recall of James Hightower, the Benton Harbor mayor, who was a puppet for Whirlpool Corporation. During Pinkney's appeal, the prosecution admitted to having only circumstantial evidence, but Michigan courts upheld the legal lynching. There was no evidence, no eyewitness, and no confession presented during his trial. The jury was not of his peers. The jury was all white and Reverend Pinkney is Black. The jury had relatively high incomes and none were from the impoverished city of Benton Harbor. Further, none of the jurors had experienced what it is like to live under the Michigan corporate dictatorship.

TEST CASE FOR FASCISM

As this case shows, Michigan, once the most industrialized and unionized state in the nation, is a test case for instituting fascism – the merger of the giant corporations and government. The story of Reverend Pinkney, Benton Harbor and Michigan exposes how all levels of government, including both major political parties, are colluding to eliminate democracy and support the corporate takeover of the cities and the state.

Michigan Emergency Manager dictator laws have thrown out publicly elected officials, eliminating democracy in order to hand public assets over to the corporations. Emergency Managers, whose dictatorial powers include the breaking of union contracts, abolition of local democratic rights, and overturning legal agreements and elections, have been established in Michigan municipalities and/or school districts. Where Emergency Managers have left, some form of them remain through transitional advisory boards.

Meanwhile, this political model is spreading throughout the country. Aimed first at the minority population in cities with chronic unemployment and poverty, this form of attack is the "low hanging fruit" that is ushering in the spreading assault on democracy. The poisoned city of Flint dramatizes the dire results. Unelected state-appointed officials there decided to switch the water source, poisoning a city of 100,000, while laying the groundwork for the privatization of water. Under Emergency Management, the people had no

say in making or reversing the decision.

Today, Michigan is becoming both the center of the fascist assault sweeping the nation and also the response of millions of workers to it. A short historical review will illustrate this process as it unfolded in Benton Harbor.

In 2003, Benton Harbor saw the mysterious murders of several Black men. When Terrance "T Shirt" Shurn was murdered by police, an uprising of youth, whom the city had abandoned, shook the region's power structure. Reverend Pinkney helped organize community protests that were met by Democratic Governor Jennifer Granholm's use of the National Guard to quell the protests.

"Reverend Edward Pinkney is in prison because of his resistance to the dismantling of democracy and to the emergence of naked corporate rule in Michigan. As we defend Reverend Pinkney, we defend democracy against corporate dictatorship."

In 2004, a Benton Harbor city commissioner led an effort to give Whirlpool Corporation the city's coveted public beachfront property. This property, known in part as Jean Klock Park, had been deeded to the city for public use. The community fought to prevent Whirlpool from seizing this property. Reverend Pinkney helped organize a successful recall election of the commissioner, who was instrumental in handing the property over to the corporations. However, the community's vote was set aside by a local judge.

In 2007, Pinkney was arrested and charged with voter fraud. The trial ended in a hung jury. Pinkney was retried, but not before a jury of his peers: the government ensured that no Blacks would sit on the jury. He was convicted and placed on probation. Later, Pinkney was sent to prison for a probation violation, after he quoted the Bible in a newspaper article. The judge felt that this biblical quote (from Deuteronomy) was a threat. After serving almost a year in prison, a victory for the people was achieved, when Reverend Pinkney was released, after the ACLU proved his imprisonment was illegal. Around this time, Benton Harbor residents voted out the Whirlpool majority of city commissioners. What followed was an appointment by Democratic Governor Jennifer Granholm of an unelected, Emergency Financial Manager to run Benton Harbor.

Then in 2012, Michigan voters, including a majority of both Black and white, passed a statewide referendum to outlaw Emergency Managers in the state. Republican Governor Rick Snyder countered by signing a new Emergency Manager Law that is "repeal-

proof." This process clearly shows how both parties – Democratic and Republican – are complicit in the corporate takeover of the state.

In 2013, Benton Harbor residents proposed a 1% income tax, aimed at Whirlpool, to help the people, but the tax was defeated by a corporate blitz of misinformation. The citizens worked to recall Benton Harbor's mayor James Hightower. The mayor directed the Sheriff's department to investigate the petitions. The Sheriff's investigation intimidated many of the poor, who had signed the petitions. Even though the people of Benton Harbor had twice the number of signatures for a recall election, the successful petition

these workers pose a threat to the ruling class. Which way they move politically will impact workers everywhere.

In this sense, the corporate assault by Whirlpool Corporation in Benton Harbor is part of the overall assault of the ruling class to take over local and state government in Michigan and nationwide. Their only option is the elimination of democracy and to install in its place a new fascist State apparatus of control, which includes the corporations, government, courts, military and police. This is the significance of the fight against the Emergency Manager model and fascism, and of the critical importance of the Pinkney case. Reverend Pinkney alerted the people to the danger of Emergency Management and fascism. This is why the corporate government treats Reverend Pinkney so harshly.

CANNOT STOP THE STRUGGLE FOR LIFE

Yet the struggle for life itself cannot be stopped. The attack waged on Reverend Pinkney for his activism against corporate power is already spreading to other fighters throughout the state. From the uncompromising fight for redress over the poisoning of workers, to the bitter fight to save public education for the children, leaders like Pinkney, who stand up for the workers against corporate rule, are rising to the fore. The people need a government that provides for their needs, not for the needs of the corporations. In an increasingly jobless economy, people's necessities like food, homes, water, housing, education, and healthcare must be distributed by need and not by money. Michigan is a preview of what is to come across the country.

The new conditions everywhere are creating a new type of uncompromising leader like Reverend Pinkney. These new leaders represent the interests of a new class of workers, those who are increasingly thrown out of the capitalist system and unable to survive. Their stance is in the interest of society. These leaders are clear and honest opponents of the corporate grab of public assets and are a real threat to corporate power. These leaders are advocating using public wealth to address public need. They are calling for the corporations to be taken over by the government and run in the interests of the people. We the people have to stand with and defend these leaders.

The collapse of manufacturing has left millions with no way to survive, pushing the capitalists to use fascist methods of rule to control the people. Reverend Pinkney's struggle is a clear example of the complete picture of fascism and modern politics, and is a perfect case to show the uncompromising struggle of the workers for a new kind of society.

What happened in Benton Harbor and to Reverend Pinkney will sweep the nation, if not stopped. Michigan shows the pressing need for revolutionaries to help unite the people around a vision of a new cooperative society, where everyone's needs are met.

As we defend Reverend Pinkney, we defend democracy against corporate dictatorship.

Revolutionary Change in America

Editors' Note: Originally published in 1994 this excerpt from Revolutionary Change in America by Nelson Peery was farsighted regarding the formation of a new class of workers being created by qualitatively new technology, its stages of development and the political tasks this sets for revolutionaries.

All of us sense or understand, in one way or another, that the accelerating development of electronics is the basis of the worldwide economic and social disorganization. Being human, we are so involved in grappling with the immediate problems of homelessness, unemployment, the rise of a new racism that only a few have studied, discussed and really understood the historic implications of our time.

The term "electronic" means different things to different people. To some, it means a qualitative improvement in their sound and entertainment systems. To others, it means a new quality in the process of producing our means of life. I would like, for the moment, to speak of electronics as a new quality that is emerging and forming the basis of not any particular aspect of life, but creating, or has the potential to create, a whole new form and quality of life.

When we speak of the electronic revolution, we are not talking about electricity. By electronics, we essentially mean processing knowledge with matter other than the brain. The electronic revolution should be compared to the discovery of fire. Fire was more than a means of production – it was the foundation for the quantitative separation of humans from animals. Everything that the following social and economic formations created was based on the discovery of fire. Steel and the steam engine, to name just two things basic to our civilization, are unthinkable without fire.

Electronics should be viewed the same way. Far from being simply a "Third Wave" in the production of social wealth, we are constructing the launching pad for humanity's second great leap. The result will be humankind's complete separation from the animal world and its restrictive, brutal systems of natural law. Unfettered by such restraints, humanity will begin the journey toward its full realization.

Great social problems do not happen out of the context of a certain time. To understand a problem, we must understand the period of time in which it occurred. I do not think it is possible to understand a period of time by simply describing a series of events. Events are a chain with a key link which drags the entire chain forward. We must identify and concentrate our thinking on that key link. Or to put it another way, it is necessary to understand the crucial content of a time in order to understand the time.

The content of our time is the historic shift from production by electro-mechanics, that is production by human labor aided by electrically driven machinery, to production by robotics, or production by computer-controlled machinery with very little, or no human labor involved. This ongoing economic revolution shapes and determines the social destruction we see around us. It is bringing to the forefront a political struggle unknown to our country.

BEGINNINGS OF THE NEW CLASS

With this in mind, let us dig beneath the form that this historic shift is taking – the millions of homeless, the tens of millions of jobless, the acres of burned-out neighborhoods, the slaughter of our youth, the "in your face" looting of the public treasury, the decline of health care and education and the elimination of social services. The important thing is to understand why this is happening and what the political results are bound to be.

I am the poor white, fooled and pushed apart,
I am the Negro bearing slavery's scars.
I am the red man driven from the land,
I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek –
And finding only the same old stupid plan
Of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the weak.

...

O, yes,
I say it plain,
America never was America to me,
And yet I swear this oath –
America will be!

— Langston Hughes,
"Let America be America Again" 1936

Naturally, robotics entered industry at the lowest and simplest level. Its first victims were the unskilled and semiskilled workers. Part of the legacy of slavery was that a huge section of the African American work force remained tied to the land and especially employed in cotton culture after emancipation. Tractored off the land after the development of the cotton-picking machine, they were the last section of the rural population to join the industrial work force. Consequently, they were concentrated in that sector – the unskilled and semiskilled sector – that was first attacked by the robot.

The social oppression of the African American is the fulcrum for the political leverage of the economic elite of America. We are used to using this historic oppression as a context of understanding the economic and social motion of the country. Last hired and first fired has been the economic lot of the African American since Emancipation. Therefore, it was natural that the wholesale wiping out of African Americans from industry was understood as racism. It is one of the rare times when this analysis was wrong.

The effects of robotics on the white unskilled and semiskilled workers were not so easily seen. They are scattered throughout the general white population, especially in the suburbs. The African Americans were highly visible, being concentrated in a relatively small urban area. Also, the percentage of Black laborers among the African American population was higher than white laborers among the white population. Racism provided the form, but the content is the beginnings of a

social revolution. The first expression of that revolution was the wrecking of the economy of working-class Black America. That revolution now is moving on to wreak its havoc against the formerly secure sections of the blue-collar, white-collar and lower management levels of the white workers.

The economists, their social vision distorted by racist ideology, were unable to understand the difference between the reserve army of unemployed created by industrial

ers also benefited from integration. Holding stable jobs, they too, moved from the inner city into much more stable neighborhoods. With the factories shutting down, the land around these factories quickly lost their value. Those who could flee did so. Taxes fell, maintenance dwindled and the combination of the American form of apartheid, plus the liquidation of jobs, created a new type of slum: the Black, permanently destitute, rotting inner core of the formerly central working-class area of the city. This was also accepted as simply the result of racist economic policies of capitalist industry, rather than the social expression of an economic revolution that was couched in the historic American form of racial discrimination.

Since that phrase "underclass" was coined, the process of social destruction has continued. We can see now that this new group of permanently unemployed is not the result of the welfare system, but of the new means of production.

The results are broader than the social problems caused by racism. It is acknowledged now that, in fact, the white so-called underclass is larger and growing faster than the Black. What we are dealing with is not an underclass, but a new class. A new class outside the constraints imposed by the worker-capitalist relationship is a mortal danger to the system.

CLASS UNITY AND THE BUILDING OF A NEW WORLD

Electronics as a new means of production is producing more than an irresolvable depression. It is creating a social revolution. By social revolution we mean the process of qualitatively new means of production disrupting the economic order. In turn, new classes are created that disrupt and disorganize the existing society. The new class (or classes) finally overthrow the ruling class and create a society in their own image.

The new class includes the throw-away workers – temporary laborers with no benefits, the part-time workers, the newly unemployed as well as the permanently unemployed. This class is rapidly gaining an elementary consciousness of itself and the world. This consciousness is couched in the concepts of rich and poor. It is elementary and shallow, but it is a different conception than white and Black.

It is already clear to the more advanced thinkers that as this society is destroyed, a new one must be built. The class struggle is the fight between the old and new classes over how, and in whose interest, the new society will be organized.

Unity of the new class of workers being created by electronics is the most urgent political question we face today. In America, this means confronting the legacy of slavery, white supremacy and racism that developed along with the development of capitalism. Today electronics is not only destroying the economy, but it is tearing apart America's social fabric. New ideas are being brought into the process – there is the promise of a new world, in which humanity can be free at last – America will be!

capitalism and the structural, permanent joblessness created by robotics. They only saw a growing mass of African Americans outside the labor market. They eagerly embraced the term "underclass."

Those who coined the term "underclass" perhaps thought here again was a group unable to keep up, and once falling behind and supported by welfare, consciously accepted an existence outside the capitalist relations of worker and employer. It must have seemed that a subclass of Blacks, reliant on welfare, had lost the work ethic. Worse, that they were creating a subculture of immorality and criminality in the midst of a great national expansion of wealth and productivity.

A more concrete look will show something different. First, the new productive equipment has polarized wealth and poverty as never before. Absolute wealth in the form of 145 billionaires and absolute poverty in the form of some eight million homeless and absolutely destitute are new to our country. [Note: This figure has risen to 540 billionaires and millions still are homeless.] Secondly, the increase in production was accompanied by an increase in unemployment and joblessness.

NOT AN UNDERCLASS, BUT A NEW CLASS

The Black workers were hit first and hardest by both these aspects of the new economy. The Black bourgeoisie fled their traditional sections of the city as soon as the ink was dry on the laws allowing them to do so. A section of the African American work-

Abundance is Possible for All

Building Block

Human labor is being pushed out of the market by the more efficient, more productive, labor-less electronic means of production. Robots and computers make possible the production of abundance that can be enjoyed by everyone, but only if these new productive tools are publicly owned by society, with their product distributed to all based on need.

As the famous physicist Stephen Hawking put it, "If machines produce everything we need, the outcome will depend on how things are distributed. Everyone can enjoy a life of luxurious leisure, if the machine-produced wealth is shared, or most people can end up miserably poor if the machine-owners successfully lobby against wealth redistribution."

In other words, under capitalist private property relations, the machines lower the value of human labor power by lowering the cost of production of the necessities of life. At the same time these relations drive wages below the falling value of labor power, by constantly and permanently eliminating the job market. The demand for labor needed by the market constantly decreases while the supply of laborers in need of work increases.

An event in May of this year illustrated this, when workers from all over the country marched on McDonald's headquarters demanding \$15 an hour, because they found it impossible to survive on minimum wages, which for many of them is as low as \$7.25 per hour. In anticipation, FOX News interviewed a former McDonald's CEO on the previous night, who exhorted, "Well, I guarantee you if the \$15 dollar an hour minimum wage goes across the country, you're gonna' see a job loss like you can't believe. I was at the national restaurant show yesterday, and if you look at robotic devices that are coming into the restaurant industry, it's cheaper to buy a \$35,000 robotic arm than it is to hire an employee who's inefficient, making \$15 an hour bagging french fries."

Just how much more efficient are these robots? Momentum Machines, based in San Francisco, has a robot that serves 400 hamburgers per hour. The company's co-founder, Alexandros Vardakostas, stated, "Our device isn't meant to make employees more efficient, it is meant to completely obviate them." The competitive demands of the market require every capitalist to make not just a profit, but a maximum profit, or risk being purged from business by other capitalists. Therefore, more and more capital is being invested in robotics. Like all processes, this process has gone through stages of development. Human labor was made more productive and efficient by enhancing it with machines. Yesterday's labor enhancing devices were labor saving devices. Today, we have labor-replacing devices.

This process has been going on for quite some time. Over the last forty years the electronic automation of the production assembly line in the auto industry has completely devastated autoworkers jobs. From there it has spread everywhere. Jobs like machinists, tool & die makers and pattern makers have been replaced by various versions of computer numerical control machines. The once ubiquitous telephone operator has been replaced by the computer-generated voice interface. Bank tellers have been replaced by ATMs. And now truck drivers, bus drivers, cab drivers, anyone driving for a living are at risk of losing their jobs to autonomous vehicle technology, which is being introduced this year.

Before they completely disappear, many full-time jobs are becoming part-time jobs. High paying jobs become low-paying jobs. Temporary jobs replace steady jobs. In order to survive, workers are being forced to find multiple jobs under conditions where the overall job market is rapidly shrinking. As a result all markets shrink as robotic production floods the market with an abundance of goods, while it simultaneously removes the workers as consumers, by permanently eliminating their wage-earning jobs.

In order to corner the contracting markets, every capitalist has to employ more robots to produce cheaper and cheaper goods at a faster and faster rate. The whole cycle rapidly

repeats itself as it grows exponentially. In an effort to move goods and unplug the markets, credit is being offered to almost anyone regardless of ability to pay it back. But this has only created an expanding debt bubble that is ready to burst at any time. We are clearly in the middle of the final, irresolvable economic crisis of capitalism.

Keep in mind that the robots and all that is being produced are the private property of the capitalist class. However, neither the robots nor the capitalists can consume all of the necessities of life being produced. Private property ownership by the capitalist class prohibits this abundance from being distributed among the population. We are witnessing the economic polarization of our society, with abundance on one side, and extreme want and need on the other. A growing number of workers are beginning to realize they suffer from extreme want in a land of extreme plenty.

Each new generation of robots is more productive than the last. While this is a market-driven process for maximum profit, it is at the same time antagonistic to markets, because it permanently removes workers as consumers. These constantly evolving machines are doing all the work of producing everything human beings need. This means not only the production of abundance, but also the possibility of transforming our society into an economic paradise. Our challenge is to transform the means of production, as forms of private property, into forms of public property, and distribute the social product (or distribute production) based on need instead of money.

Currently the ruling class has the political power to keep this from happening. We the people, the growing prisoners of want, need to take that political power to create a new world of economic paradise, finally made possible by the new, marvelous electronic means of production. We have a world to win.

This Building Block article is one of a series that explains a basic concept of the revolutionary process, challenging readers to explore its meaning for political work in today's environment.

Standing Rock and the Priority of Public Good

Across the United States a large movement is growing to protect water as our most basic, precious and needed natural resource. Water is essential to maintaining human life. The struggle being led by the Standing Rock Sioux has become the latest international banner to highlight the growing water struggles of the people against the powers of the corporate State. All of these water struggles express the growing will of the people to protect public property rights in the interests of the people. These struggles are directly confronting the power of the corporate State to seize public property and impose the private property interests of the ruling class.

Thousands from all over the country and the world have travelled to the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation encampments in Cannon Ball, North Dakota, to block further construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline under Ohae Lake, a Missouri River reservoir. These Water Protectors have engaged in mass civil disobedience. They have been attacked and arrested by the police. Hundreds of thousands more from all over the U.S. and the world are supporting this Native American-led resistance, with donations of money and much needed supplies. More than 300 Indigenous nations from across the Americas have planted their flags at Standing Rock.

On November 25, 2016 the Army Corps of Engineers sent a letter to the president of the Standing Rock Sioux, declaring that it planned to close down the federal property, that included the protesters' Oceti Sakowin Camp, on December 5. In response to this threat, during the first days of December, two

er, even though the Army Corps of Engineers has temporarily denied the easement for the 1,170 mile long pipeline to cross under the Missouri River. The protectors vow to stay until the pipeline issue is finally resolved. Energy Transfer Partners, the parent company owner of Dakota Access Pipeline,

States. Trump announced last month that he supports completion of the pipeline as part of his overall energy program to expand fossil fuel energy development. His nominee for Secretary of the Energy Department is former Texas governor Rick Perry. Perry sits on the board of directors of Energy Transfer Partners.

The battle lines are being drawn between the working class-based movements to protect the public domain for water rights and public access to clean water, and the ruling class State apparatus that is hell bent on seizing the public domain to expand corporate private property rights.

The battle being waged by the Water Protectors of Standing Rock raises two fundamental questions. Ultimately, will the people take over the private property of the corporations to serve the working class interests of society as a whole? Or will the corporations continue to take over the public property of society to serve the private property interests of the capitalist class?

Water is life! To secure the future of humankind demands that we protect our public welfare. This requires us to take over the private property of the corporations and make it public property, to be used to benefit human society as a whole.

"The struggle being led by the Standing Rock Sioux highlights the growing will of the people to protect public property rights in the interests of the people."

thousand U.S. Army war veterans descended on the camp to form a human shield to protect the Water Protectors. On December 4, the Army Corps of Engineers called off its planned property closure, when it simultaneously denied permission for the pipeline construction to continue.

Water Protectors remain camped out at Standing Rock despite subzero, arctic weath-

er, is appealing the easement denial, and has filed suit in federal court to force the Army Corps of Engineers to grant the easement. The pipeline corporation has announced its intention to move forward with construction as planned.

This battle is far from over. On January 20, Donald Trump will be inaugurated and become the 45th President of the United

The End of Money

Building Block

In a capitalist system, second only to the laws of nature, money drives the world around us. In our society, money is real world power, and a small capitalist class holds more of that power every day, while the working class has almost none.

When we look back over our history of plunder, slavery, and various other measures of unpaid labor, it is easy to see how capitalists have cheated workers, while offering back only crumbs of the wealth the workers created. Today's capitalism no longer even offers the hope of crumbs. With automation driving the value of labor toward zero, the objective basis for money's value has vanished. The consumer base is being destroyed by laborless production, and the system is left with no objective basis to function. In 2010, 388 people had more wealth than the bottom half of the world's population. In 2016, only 62 billionaires owned that percentage of the wealth. The middle is being destroyed. In order to understand what is giving this ruling class so much power, we have to understand the nature of money itself.

Nearly 4,000 years ago, money was created as agricultural communities developed a division of labor. Division of labor meant an exponential leap in the number of goods that could be made and the innovations that could yield even higher rates of production. With the surplus produced through this division of labor, these ancient communities needed ways to trade with others that were more practical than simple barter, which depended on one trader's needs precisely meeting another trader's demands. The first forms of money ranged from tally sticks to cowry shells. Eventually most communities settled on precious metals, which could be exchanged in sizes and numbers that were equivalent in value to whatever goods might be needed at any given time. The concentration of wealth in geographic areas that benefited from trade created city-states. City-states, such as Athens, began standardizing the value of these traded metals by minting metal into coins.

Economists have generally agreed that money needed to represent a certain amount of labor being exchanged in the marketplace. The amount of labor necessary to mine, mint and distribute coins needed to be roughly equivalent to some percentage of the labor necessary to grow a crop, or to raise a cow being purchased with some quantity of that coin. Though forms have changed (and the convenience of paper and plastic have largely replaced the physical value of precious metals), money has historically been the commodity we use to trade labor and the products of labor.

At the same time, the value of money has represented some level of power – in the city-state, the kingdom, or the republic – that minted it. That means that State power and the political standing of a government affects the value of its currency. This is why the Confederate dollar famously became worth-

less after the American Civil War. This is also why, in 1971, the United States as a superpower was able to break with the gold standard, that had been the basis of its economic relations with other nations after World War II. The United States had enough political power to do what it wanted, and the dollar reigned supreme as the world's currency.

Since the ruling class can no longer make the profit it used to make through production, capitalists keep the economy turning by keeping money in motion. More and more, money is being used for speculation. Capitalists gamble with money, in order to feed a hungry economic machine, with hopes of reaping new wealth out of a collapsing economy. This is the story behind the lending frenzy that led to the subprime mortgage crisis of 2007 and the recession of 2008.

This is also why the world stock market has seen twenty significant crashes since Black Monday 1987, while the markets only saw one such crash a decade in the sixty years before that event. Central banks (State banks) use methods like quantitative easing, printing more money, to make available at near zero interest rates to boost circulation and investment. Capitalists rack up debt and lower interest rates simply to keep money moving.

If we are to look back at money's history, and concede that it once served a purpose supporting division of labor and social development, today we must recognize it serves a very different purpose. In this artificially maintained economy, where money contains less and less value, the illusion of money's value falsely legitimizes a system that has rapidly evolved into fascism, as it fails to meet the basic needs of its people.

A 2016 *LA Times* story reported that since 2008, our government debt has doubled, reaching \$59 trillion. Our total debt is up 40%. Student debt is up 130%. Also in 2016, the Bloomberg Commodity Index notes that the industry and energy sector is \$3.6 trillion in debt. These are all signs of an economy in deep crisis.

But *The New York Times*'s Paul Krugman, representing the ruling class, argues that we actually need to incur more debt and spend more money to get out of the current crisis. Capitalist economists know that the only way the system stays operational is if it keeps moving. However, laborless production throws more and more workers out of the production process. This eliminates them as a market for the goods being produced.

Without workers being consumers with purchasing power, the capitalist system breaks down. Production without labor requires distribution and exchange without money. The electronic revolution has made a new society possible, a new cooperative, communist society where the social product is distributed to all according to need.

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What Time Is It...

(Continued from page 1)

do you do?" We identify ourselves in all sorts of ways, by gender, nationality, religion, color – but fundamentally we all are defined by our work, or how we relate to the whole process of how society produces what it needs. In a society based on capitalist relations you are either an owner of the means of production, of capitalist property, or you are a worker. You may be a factory worker or you may work in retail, or sell insurance, or maybe you are a teacher or a nurse, but we are all workers.

In this new epoch into which we are now entering, we are defined by our relation to the robot. It is a new relation, and it makes you a new person. You are still a worker, but now you are in the process of having your job permanently eliminated. You may be in transition from full-time work to being a contingent, part-time or seasonal worker, or you may have lost everything, with no work, no home, no family, having to scrap for the very necessities of life. All of us are headed in that direction.

But wait. We know that the night is darkest before the dawn. A new day is dawning. Remember, you are *new*: we, this new class of workers created by robotics, are in the position to move history forward. *We* are the solution. We have a great work to do. It is our task to complete the leap to a whole new epoch of human history, in which all of the long-held dreams of humankind may at last be achieved.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

During the elections there was a lot of talk about direction. Many thought the country was headed in the wrong direction and that a course change was necessary. All of history is really about direction. The trajectory of human history shows the development of society through its various stages, and our time is no exception. Like ascending an historical spiral staircase, we are now

poised to take the next step. Where are we going? Which way?

The elections themselves were a battleground over direction. Trump himself has promised to “knock the rust off the Rust Belt” and create jobs by ushering in a new industrial revolution. This simply cannot happen. Automated laborless production prevents it. What the ruling class is really about is protecting their riches and their private property, no matter that it means sacrificing democracy in the process. The question for them is how to contain us, whom the ruling class has deemed to no longer be of any value to them. In their eyes, they are the superior class; we are the “deplorable” ones, the wretched of the earth.

These are critical, dangerous times. In the depths of job loss, the loss of a secure livelihood, even the loss of what it takes just to live, one of the things that many workers have expressed is their sense of their loss of dignity. Sure, we want jobs, but tied up with that is the dignity of work, of contributing, of a sense that we are not worthless.

Our dignity lies in the understanding that *we* are that new quality, that new class that can alone move history forward. There is no higher dignity than that. There is a next step, there is a leap to the next stage, but it is by no means automatic. *We* have to take that step. *We* determine the direction we must go.

There was a saying during the end of the Civil War and the beginning of the reconstruction of the South: *Bottom rail on top*. You and our new class brothers and sisters are in the position to flip the scale of history and build a new future in terms that are in the interest of our class and all of humanity.

What is the solution to the crisis of our time? *We are*. This is *our* time. Seize it.

Make history.

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- THE BATTLE AGAINST HOMELESSNESS AND WHERE GO FROM HERE
- WOMEN EMERGE AS LEADERS IN THE FIGHT FOR BASIC DEMANDS
- THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF CLASS UNITY
- THE INDISPENSABLE ROLE OF REVOLUTIONARIES OF FAITH
- GLOBALIZATION AND INTERNATIONALISM
- THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION