

AGAINST WAGE-LABOUR

Communism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence.

(German Ideology)*

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Editorial

EVERY HUMAN WORKER MATTERS

Nancy LaPlante

Wherever we are in the world there are workers in countless industries working to earn a living. From every group of workers to each and every individual worker there is a story of a human being and their environment, their situation. The significance of working on people's lives is enormous. There is a song that I recall as a child titled "Birth, School, Work, Death". We are all born into the world of inequalities. Class inequality becomes our defining features. Many people self-identify according to their jobs. As living beings we need food and shelter and are social creatures. We must eat and therefore in order to have food we either grow it, or in most cases, buy it. To have or do, we must have money and to have money we must earn wages, which is to wage-slave. From this activity, we toil to earn a living. Our nature is to be free of the chains of working. This freedom is economic in nature, and dictated by politics. It is fundamental that this is an economic status first, therefore any political group or stance, which enters from above or outside of 'the working condition' is not sufficient to provide for workers.

Workers are the root of the solu-

tion. From workers comes a natural struggle to make more money, because it is the money, or wages, that permit us to have more freedoms within the capitalist monetary system. Any political aim coming from outside of workers with slogans such as those of 'freedom',



'democracy', or 'equality', cannot truly meet the profound needs of workers. This is one of the fundamental mistakes of The October Revolution and is described in great detail in this issue's article of Bolshevism and the October Revolution by Naser Paydar. This very significant historical revolution is important as a basis for learning both the mistakes and the successes, and as frequently mentioned in all issues of *Against the Wage labour*, is the requirement to have a main goal of a socialist council of

abolishing 'wage-slavery'. Bolshevism only changed the name of the governing body to 'Communism', with the goal of socialism being a 'utopia'. A large-scale presence of workers such as what was existing in Russia in the early 1900's for the establishment of socialism against the ruling tsars, should have been focusing on the goal of establishing councils. The socialism of working from outside of the workers, such as that upheld by 'professional revolutionaries' or 'left sectarians', i.e. what the Bolsheviks and Lenin supported, contrasts with socialism being an existing, living movement. This contrast is described and analyzed in Mohsen Hakimi's article – "Socialism as Movement Versus Socialism as Theory. While one concept of socialism sprouts from theory, the second germinates from the soil of worker's feet and hearts, praxis. The living struggle by workers and for workers is active in the world today. That is, socialism is alive and well in many frontiers around the world. Several articles within this issue, elucidate just some of the struggles, and their connections to each other. We as workers may not be able to relate to many other human beings' languages or cultures, or customs, however, we can all easily relate to another human who works to earn

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wages to survive and enjoy this brief life that we were born into.

Around the world there are numerous strikes and rallies by workers that are happening daily. Examples in this issue include Ford Australia firing workers and relying on the easily recruited contract, temporary workers. The beauty of this for the capitalists is that it creates a division, even a hierarchy, among workers. Workers may end up fighting each other to survive, after all, each and every one of us matters. Similarly, there is a leaflet that Belgium Volkswagen workers distributed at a rally, outlining the nature of capitalism and how it works – through lay-offs of workers, to the use of trade unions, which are key pawns in this nasty game of capitalism, where the labour of one individual worker can be replaced by another. The auto industry is a key industry that comes to the forefront of many smaller worker struggles as it has attained a level of importance in capitalism. Unfortunately, as capitalism is increasingly a global system with fewer and fewer state protections, workers from within and from outside of different states are pitted against each other. Capitalism is an ever-evolving system, growing, and ultimately always harming human beings who work for someone else.

There is always hope to end this abominable serious condition.

Worker-activists are struggling to mobilize workers and fight back against injustices such as menial wages, poor working conditions, insufficient housing and social assistance rates – some activists having the goal to ultimately end wage-slavery and build the society bit by bit through worker councils. In Iran, there are four activists facing jail time for the simple, yet important, act of celebrating Mayday, the international worker's day. These worker-activists are organizing workers and being severely punished from every human beings' right to organize. A petition is currently being signed on the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty's (OCAP) website www.ocap.ca to show international solidarity for these worker-activists. We do not appeal to the rich governments rather to draw attention to these struggles and demonstrate support from one worker on one side of our huge world to another worker on the other side of the earth. OCAP, a militant anti-poverty organization based out of Toronto, Canada is demonstrating the importance of solidarity and speaking out against the injustices of capitalism by hosting this petition – in response to this petition there is a note of thanks from the worker-activists. This is a basic activity of solidarity by OCAP and deeply appreciated and recognized by worker-activists with similar goals in Iran. OCAP,

as outlined in another article within this issue, takes direct action also in its own backyard. In this particular instance, OCAP uses direct action to take housing, squat an abandoned home. It is incredible that in such a wealthy society, homes sit empty, while thousands of people beg for decent, affordable housing. While we are forced to work and struggle within the capitalist system with reformist demands, we also do not care about capitalism in that we must often step outside of its own agenda and show that we know it is a severely-skewed system of favoritism based on economics. We don't care about this, and therefore will use direct action to take housing, to take food, to strike and rally as humans trying to live a dignified life.

Two other examples of individual workers reveal their attempts for a dignified full life. 'China Blue' is a documentary film review about a young worker in China wage-slaving in order to help her peasant family in rural China. For a western worker, the brutality of the working conditions is obvious, but what is also important to grasp is that we have this connection to each other. That when we provide our labour force for our boss, this can be straightforwardly replaced by another human being's labour force. As much as we have connections to each other, there are intra-class divisions. Workers in China

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work very long hours without benefits or job security, however, the workers in North America come a close second in terms of security as the bases of many companies move to states which permit cheaper labour costs and therefore higher profits. Similarly due to the economic disparities between states, millions of workers each year migrate to another state (with or without 'legal' documentation) for work. The issue of immigration is another force as it sets in opposition immigrants versus local workers. We must recognize our connection to each other. The article about Pedro, a hotel worker in Canada, originally from Nicaragua, is another example of a worker who migrates and continues to be under the thumb of a capitalist employer and the employer's negotiating friend, the Union. The unions, whether they are for auto-workers

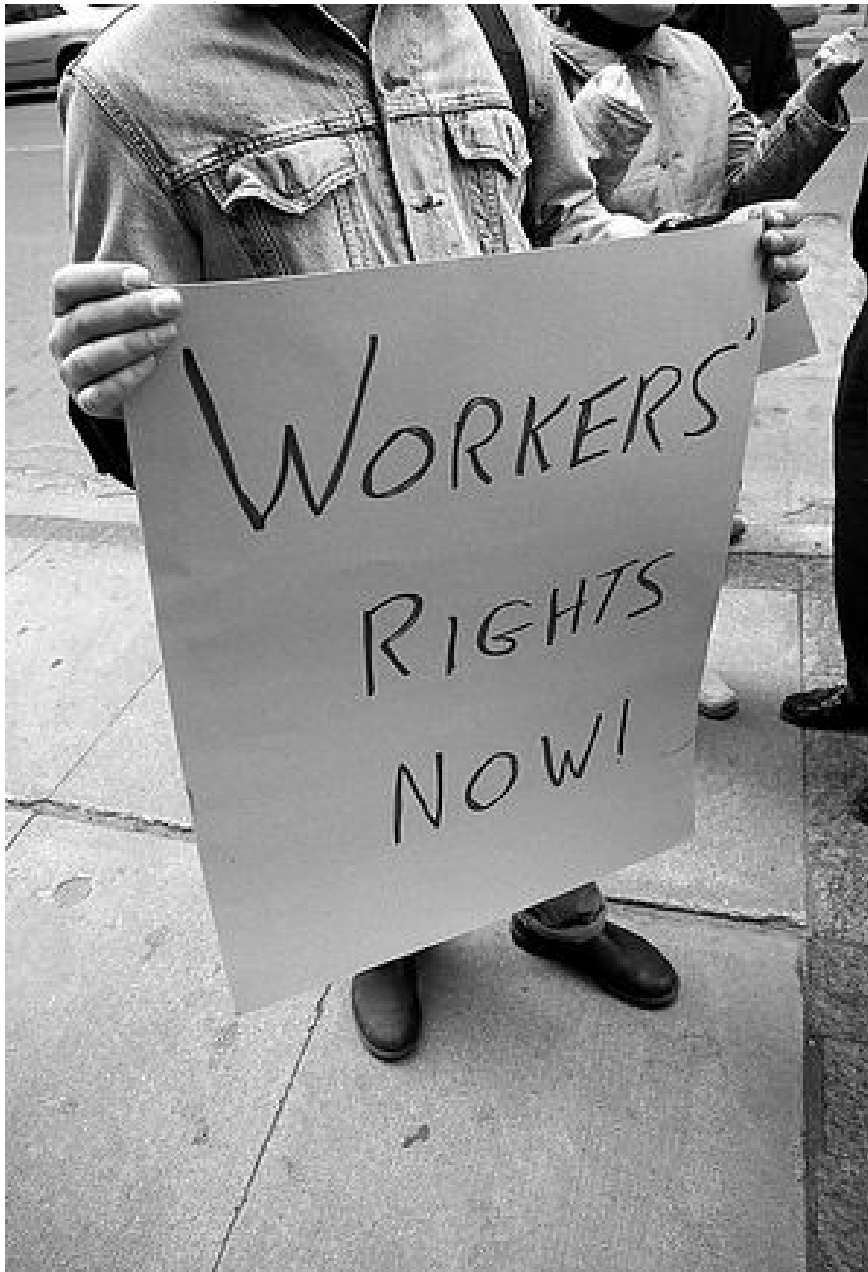


Photo courtesy of John Bonnar—<http://johnb.smugmug.com/gallery/496512>

or for hotel workers in Toronto, are a steadfast ally with employers as they are complicit in keeping wages low, workers compliant, and the profits rising. Currently, socialism is alive, as worker struggles in Iran, Australia,

in Belgium, Australia or wherever,

and their labour power and potential is what makes a movement. The key task now is to continue and support the movements that are alive now in history, and everywhere in the world.

Argentina, Mexico, China, many of which are developing and using worker councils for true worker activity and control. The councils use consensus decision-making where collectively, each worker co-operates and has a voice to control production and distribution of their goods or services. What is crucial is maintaining a goal of ending wage-slavery. This goal must be explicit and clear. Socialist movements in each state must be tied together in spirit and form as OCAP and the worker-activists in Iran demonstrate. Capitalism with its unions and its responsibilities to profit does not care about each worker. Each worker cares about each worker. Together each worker

and their labour power and potential is what makes a movement. The key task now is to continue and support the movements that are alive now in history, and everywhere in the world.



Socialism as Movement *versus* Socialism as Theory

(Parts of a Polemic Currently in Progress within the Working Class Movement of Iran)

Mohsen Hakimi

...There is a significant difference between two approaches to socialism. One regards socialism as a theory and a guideline for action of "the working class party". This "party" is in charge of "guiding and leading the working class in a revolutionary struggle against capitalism, for the establishment of socialism"; whereas, to my understanding socialism *is* the working class movement which struggles against the miseries of today's human beings, aiming to go beyond a capitalist framework. The former approach views socialism, on one hand, as a mere theory that must guide the action of the "party", and on the other hand, something which should be set up or 'established' in the future. The latter approach views socialism as a practical-theoretical movement. In other words, in one view socialism is only a theory, and in the other socialism is the unity of practice and theory, that is, *Praxis*.

As both of these approaches to socialism claim themselves as the socialism of Marx (unless otherwise claimed), in order to find out the correctness or incorrectness of these approaches one must refer to Marx himself. Marx has a famous clause which plainly elucidates the

matter:

*Communism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence. (German Ideology)**

In the *German Ideology* as well as other works of Marx, one could bring more examples in which Marx defines socialism as a movement, and not a mere theory. Essentially, the socialism of Marx and generally his materialist conception of history were formed in contrast to the theoreticians and philosophers who sufficed to criticizing one idea with another. Marx did not establish his materialist conception of history as a pure idea against Hegel's, Feuerbach's and Young Hegelians'. He criticized socialists such as Saint-Simon, Fourier, Owen and their efforts for establishment of socialism as a theory, and knew their socialism as utopia. Marx considers that the upside-down and bourgeois theory is rooted in the upside-down world of capitalism, and in order to bring an end to such theory one must bring an end to this world:

It [the materialist conception of history] has not, like the idealistic view of history, in every period to

look for a category, but remains constantly on the real ground of history; it does not explain practice from the idea but explains the formation of ideas from material practice; and accordingly it comes to the conclusion that all forms and products of consciousness cannot be dissolved by mental criticism, by resolution into "self-consciousness" or transformation into "apparitions," "specters," "fancies," etc. but only by the practical overthrow of the actual social relations which gave rise to this idealistic humbug. (Ibid, p.189)

Therefore, contrary to the theoreticians and philosophers prior to him who were attempting to create only a correct consciousness; thus, only interpreting the world, Marx went beyond the realm of theory by claiming that the point is to change the world. He himself started the actual way of changing the world, namely, "the practical overthrow of the actual social relations". Marx's approach, contrary to the upside-down world reality, which consists of the practice and theory of capitalism, is not just a socialist theory. Rather, it is an actual and material movement in the name of socialism which will abolish that upside-down reality. Accordingly, Marx's point of departure for changing the world was not the socialist theory and attempting to establish it. Rather, it was organizing the workers, *i.e.*, the active and actual human be-

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ings. It is in this meaning that I refer to Marx: Marx as a theoretical-practical and a worker-activist of the working class movement, and not merely as a socialist theoretician. Otherwise, if I refer to Marx just as a theorist, I reduce socialism into a pure and abstract theory.

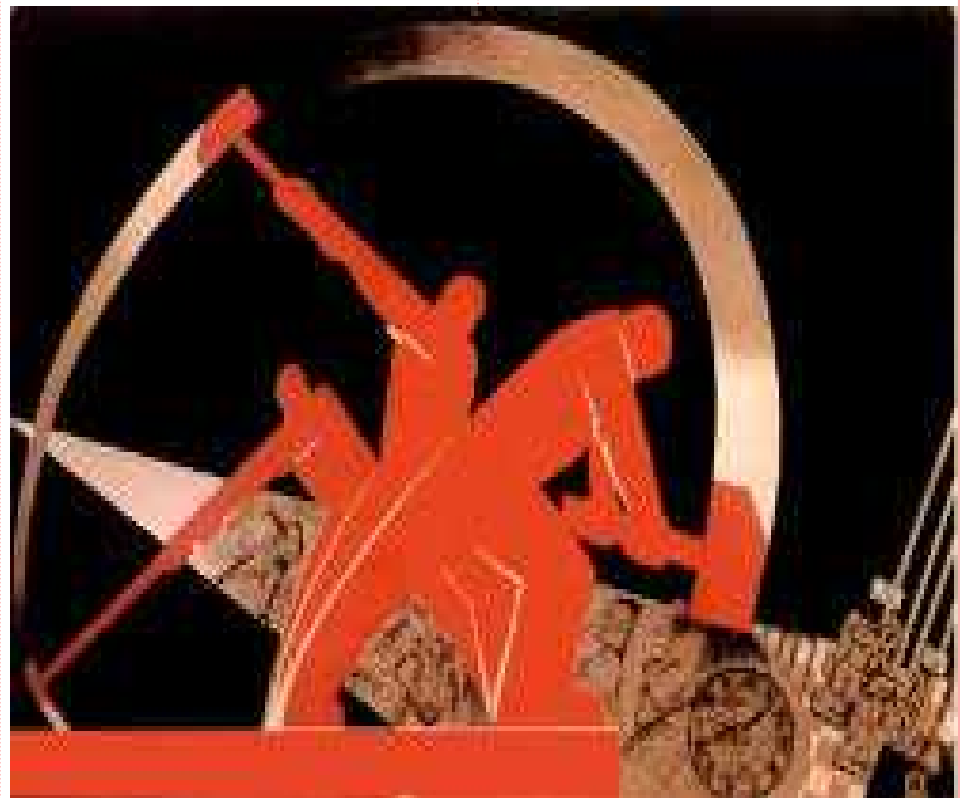
Based on this view of socialism, Marx did not consider that organizing the worker movement for changing the capitalist world is conditioned to changing the mentality of the worker masses. According to him, the change of the mentality of the worker masses under the rule of capital is essentially impossible, with the clear reason that until the worker masses are under the submission of capital, their mentalities too are under the submission of capital. He considers that altering the workers mentality on a mass scale is feasible only in a revolutionary process which takes place for changing the capitalist world:

Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a revolution; this revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in rid-

ding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew. (Ibid, p.195)

If the alteration of the workers mentality on a mass scale is possible only within revolution, thus, to the same degree that the workers are acting for revolution, they would also create the possibility of the alteration of their mentality. As, due to various reasons, the levels of activity for revolution among workers are different, the levels of

conscious workers merely know their actual immediate practice, whereas the conscious workers, based on the education that takes place on the ground of the class struggle, go beyond this level of knowledge and recognize their surrounding world and how to change it. Thus, although the alteration of the working class mentality on a mass scale is possible only in a revolution, the consciousness of the forerunner sector of this class that is ac-



change in workers mentality, that is, the levels of their socialist consciousness, also become different. These levels of consciousness form a spectrum that begins from the most conscious workers and ends with the most unconscious ones. In this spectrum, the uncon-

ting for revolution, can be altered from an in-itself state to a for-itself one. I emphasize that this alteration of in-itself mentality to for-itself would only be possible in the process of a revolutionary activity, *i.e.*, in the process of struggle against

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capitalism. The example of intellect in a human infant can help elucidate this issue. An infant has an intellect in-itself. In other words, an infant is potentially rational. He or she is actually a human being, but is only potentially rational. To become actually rational and to alter the intellect from the state that is not recognizable for the infant to the state that can be recognized for him/her, he/she is bound to grow and be matured in the process of years of living in the human society. In the same way, a worker has a socialist consciousness in-itself. But the alteration of this consciousness from in-itself to for-itself requires organized worker's activity to change the capitalist system as well as the education which has to take place simultaneously with this activity. As much as this activity/education is promoted, the possibility of changing the mentality of the worker increases. Such education which is capable of altering the workers' in-itself consciousness to a for-itself, is only possible and effective on the ground and during anti-capitalist activity.

Therefore, in Marx's view, there is a real movement struggling to change the existing situation; within this movement all the workers are struggling for this change, the masses spontaneously and the forerunners self-consciously. What Marx calls communism is not only the pioneers but the whole of this mo-

vement, that is, both the worker masses who are struggling against capitalism spontaneously and the communist-activists who do the same thing self-consciously. Both the worker masses and communist-activists are the unity of practice and theory. However, among the worker masses this unity is in-itself and unconscious - that is, while they are struggling against capitalism, this system is not known to them in terms of theory - whereas in communist-activists the unity is for-itself and conscious. It is in this meaning that Marx, in *German Ideology*, defines communist as a practical materialist, and thereby emphasizes the self-conscious unity of theory (materialism) and practice in the communist human being.

Hence, socialist theory, as workers' class consciousness, whether in its unknown state in workers masses, or in its known form in communist-activists, is an inseparable part of the working class movement, and it is not something outside this movement :

"...a class which forms the majority of all members of society, and from which emanates the consciousness of the necessity of a fundamental revolution, the communist consciousness..." (Ibid, p.195)

Also:

"Consciousness can never be

anything else than conscious existence" (Ibid, p.180).

Therefore, communist consciousness can only exist within workers; this consciousness though unrecognized by the working masses, is recognized by some practical materialist.

This view of Marx about class consciousness shows the invalidity of Kautsky's (and consequently, Lenin's) view that socialist consciousness is something which comes into being from outside and injected inside the working class. Such theory, based on the sectarian lefties who are inspired by Lenin's approach write their 'program', and build their "party", would not be a socialist consciousness. Rather, it would be some abstractions separated from the context of the living class struggle that, because of its abstraction indeed, is incomprehensible and unintelligible for the workers. This consciousness is formed based on the division of mental and manual labour and it comes from sources other than manual labour. Without a doubt, the separation of mental labour from manual labour, because of creation of a field in the name of mental or theoretical labour which goes beyond human being's consciousness in its immediate practice, is a step forward. But, this progress takes place inevitably as a separation from manual labour,

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and it is exactly this that transforms theory into an abstraction which practice has to obey or, according to Marx, the reality must adapt itself to it. This conception that Marx's socialism is a theory which is formed outside the working class and must be taken into the working class - that is, must be implemented in practice or the practice of the working class must adjust itself to it - emanates from the separation between mental and manual labour, a separation against which Marx's socialism, that is, the theoretical-practical movement of the working class, came into being. Also, Marx's socialism contains the criticism of the view that separates the leaders of the working class into "theoretical leaders", and 'practical leaders', a view according to which few workers are only thinking and the majority of workers only implement their thoughts. In Marx's view, each leader of the working class is a theoretical-practical activist. As I mentioned, while this unity of thought and action is in-itself for worker masses, for communist-activists it is for-itself. It is obvious that, accordingly, the role of leading and leadership of the working class struggle is the responsibility of communist-activists. But how?

The answer to this important question, as a matter of fact, is the chief subject of this debate, and again it depends on the commu-

nist-activists' point of departure: movement or theory? If, like Marx, we depart from the actual living movement which is struggling against the existing situation to overthrow it, then as forerunners who at the same time are representing the interests of the whole movement and attempting to organize this struggle, and thereby educating the worker masses on the grounds of this organized struggle as well as struggle against other non-worker views or tendencies inside the working class, we would strengthen the self-conscious aspect of the struggle against capitalism and make the working class ready for the abolition of wage-labour by seizing the political power. Thus, by departing from the movement (not theory), what is organized is not merely the forerunners of the working class but the whole movement that Marx calls communism. In other words, the organization that communist-activists must struggle for its building is nothing but the organized form of the working class movement. Whatever we call this organization, one thing is certain: it is nothing but the anti-capitalist and all-embracing organization of the working class. It is in this meaning that I believe that the anti-capitalist and all-embracing organization of the working class is a container for the establishment of socialism. As I mentioned, in this organization as

the organized form of the worker movement, although the majority of workers are actually struggling against capitalism, they are potentially conscious of this struggle. Consequently, the organized worker masses in the anti-capitalist organization remain vulnerable to different kinds of non-worker views and tendencies. The responsibility of communist-activists is to show the essence of these views and tendencies to the worker masses, and attempt to organize the whole masses, and not just the communists, against these views and tendencies. Among other things, this is one thing by which Marx differentiates communists from other tendencies within the workers movement. He says, in *The Communist Manifesto*, that one thing which distinguishes communists from other workers' parties (tendencies) is that in every stage of the workers struggle they represent the movement as a whole. The condition for the communists to represent the entire movement is that they do not form an organization separate from the worker masses but, by playing the role of the forerunners within the organization of the worker masses and attempting to transform the in-itself consciousness of mass workers to the for-itself one, try to make their goal and political strategy to the goal and political strategy of the whole workers movement. Without a doubt, this is not simple

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and needs a difficult and long-term struggle full of blood and bullets. However, it would be possible only with the presence of communists and worker masses within one anti-capitalist organization, because they both have a common material goal: communism. Communists, by organizing themselves separate from the anti-capitalist organization (one that contains only communists has no meaning but a separation of communists from worker masses) with this pretext that this organization would be a 'mixture of different non-workers and bourgeois views and tendencies; on the one hand, transform themselves into a sect and, on the other hand, leave the worker masses in the hands of the same non-workers and bourgeois tendencies and views. Thus, concisely, if communist-activists depart from the workers movement and the active existing individuals of this movement, that is, worker masses, they would promote the direction and leading of the working class struggle for the change of the world by way of the organized manifestation and crystallization of this movement, that is, the anti-capitalist organization of the working class.

But, if we depart from theory, we would inevitably put the role of leading the working class in the hands of the manifestation and crystallization of this theory, namely the 'working class party', which is in-

deed nothing but an organization separated from the actual socialism, that is, the social movement of the working class. According to this approach, the realization of the political and strategic goal of the working class would be the responsibility of the 'working class party' and the trade union would only do the economical struggle and utmost a non-revolutionary political struggle. Lenin, whom the possessors of this idea are usually inspired by his approach to the workers movement, calls the first organization as 'professional revolutionary organization' and the second one as 'workers organization' (*what has to be done?*).

I am working on an article where I will show the contradiction and estrangement of Lenin's approach towards the worker's movement with Marx's approach. Here, I mention just an example of this contradiction and estrangement. One of the most famous and indicating sentences of *What has to be done?* which the sectarian left has always used as its motto is this: 'Without a revolutionary theory there would not be any revolutionary movement'. This sentence, which is a concise statement of Lenin's approach to the relation of movement and theory, is in exact opposition to the following sentence of Marx in *German Ideology*:

"The existence of revolutionary ideas in particular period presuppo-

ses the existence of a revolutionary class."

In other words, the existence of revolutionary ideas of the working class in the particular period of capitalism presupposes the existence of the revolutionary class of proletariat. Therefore, the materialist approach of Marx to the history brings a conclusion exactly opposite to Lenin's view: Without a revolutionary movement there would not be any revolutionary theory. If Lenin had read *German Ideology* and particularly this sentence, he would have called Marx a pure economist. In Lenin's view, the revolutionary nature of the working class is restricted to the existence of the conscious element, which will show itself in the "working class party". And this is why he does not regard the spontaneous movement, or self-activity, of the working class as revolutionary and considers it as trade unionist...

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*All quotes of Marx in this text are from the following work:

Marx, Karl, *Selected Writings*, edited by David McLellan, Oxford University Press, 2nd edition, 2000.



The Story of One Worker is a Story for all Workers

Introduction

The story below is a story of Pedro Vanegas, a worker, who is faced with the brutality of his employers. Like many workers, Pedro migrated away from his home in a country with much economic instability to a country such as Canada for a better life.

The reality of globalization within capitalism has made its painful mark on Pedro's life as it does with other workers. The anomalous story of a poor worker who migrates to a 'First World' country and who later becomes wealthy, is precisely such; odd and extremely uncommon. Capitalism

loves to flaunt these rare cases. Unfortunately the vast majority of workers find themselves impoverished in Western countries as well. They regularly confront isolation, discrimination, racism, deportation, poverty, and oppression among other abuses by a system that is so intricate and tightly woven, that it is almost impossible to navigate and understand. The resistance to the system both within its own framework and outside of it is a harrowing challenge for

the individual worker. Many workers however do resist and many more must be called to such tasks. Pedro is a motivating story of one worker who stands up for his rights and calls on his supposed representative body, the union, to help, to no avail, and to his employer,

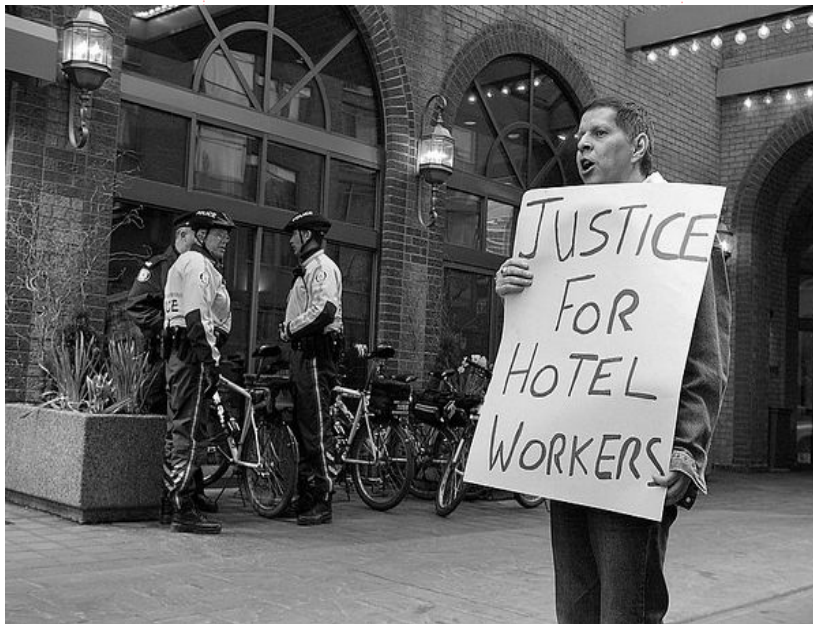


Photo courtesy of John Bonnar—<http://johnb.smugmug.com/gallery/496512>

not surprisingly to no avail. This story is not to motivate workers to stand alone and fight back within the system, not that this isn't encouraged (it certainly is!), but most importantly, that standing together as a powerful labour force, workers not only have voices, but have power to turn the capitalist system upside down little by little.

Pedro's Story

Pedro Vanegas, a professional

electrical engineer came to Toronto, Canada from Nicaragua via the United States approximately 14 years ago for a better life. When he first arrived, he studied English as a Second Language, and then completed his studies in Refrigeration and Air Conditioning at George

Brown but was unable to find work in this field. Following this, he studied hospitality at the YMCA and found a few positions as a waiter in some local Toronto hotels including the Metropolitan. In all of his positions he was a part-time worker. He was a steady permanent part-time member of the Hotel Employee and Restaurant Employee (HERE) Union Local 75. This was approximately 7 to

8 years ago. ¹

Sequence of events

1999 – Problems of harassment at work began and Pedro began seeing physicians at The Scarborough Hospital (TSH).

In approximately November 2001, Pedro went to the emergency for panic attacks with "hyperventilating with pressured speech". The reason he had this particular panic attack was he had to return to Nicaragua due to his mother's dete-

1. It is important to note that the physical/mental damages inflicted on Pedro due to his work has seriously affected his memory and for this reason dates provided by Pedro are only approximates.

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riorating health and because of this the company were threatening to fire him. Pedro was feeling the pressure to return to care for his mother, because he was the older son and his personal situation afforded him this possibility. Pedro had requested a leave of absence and in the past he was permitted to do this without any problem but this time the company made it clear that the company said regardless of the situation of his mother, if Pedro were to leave without their authorization, he would be fired upon his return. A co-worker warned Pedro not to go to Nicaragua because he had overheard a conversation between two assistant managers saying that Pedro would be fired if he went to visit his sick mother. At this point Pedro asked a lawyer if legally the company could fire someone for making an emergency trip to see their mother and he was advised that this was not the case and to go on the trip. The doctor's notes at this time indicated that both the Human Resources at the Metropolitan and the Union "don't care". The heartlessness of both – to hurt another human being to save money is what this boils down to.

In May 2002, the physician reported that there was harassment by the supervisor at the Metropolitan who did not allow him to choose his own hours to which he was entitled due to his seniority. Also workers

with less seniority were given more preferred scheduling and resulted in a loss of income for the workers



Photo courtesy of John Bonnar—<http://johnb.smugmug.com/gallery/496512>

with more seniority, and so Pedro complained. Also the Union was aware of this issue and refused to do anything about this as was their legal obligation as the only representative body for the workers, clearly they weren't. Pedro was labeled a troublemaker and the union did nothing. The physician wrote that "patient is being deflected between union and Human Resources". Pedro continued to fight for seniority as they were favoring some workers over others. Accord-

ding to his physician's report there were 2 stressful incidents which were the following: his supervisor got agitated in front of Pedro and Pedro told him to calm down, and after this, his co-worker tried to assault Pedro after work in a coffee shop." The individuals who were being favored were angry with Pedro for fighting for his rights and they blamed him for threatening the favors themselves that they were receiving by management. The Union knew that from the beginning there was the fight for seniority and that they were harassing him. Based on the collective agreement, they were supposed to fight on his behalf but they sided with management.

Pedro had a grievance for seniority but the union did nothing because then the company would owe millions of dollars in back-pay to all senior staff. Numerous grievances were being filed for unjust scheduling and seniority.

In June 2002 Pedro hurt his back and shoulder at work pushing a heavy trolley. He refused to push the trolley because normally it takes a few people to do this, and more importantly, it was not part of his job description. When he refu-

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sed, his job was threatened so he complied. Pedro pushed the trolley resulting in his ongoing back and shoulder injuries.

In June 2003, his physician wrote a letter to the HERE Union Local President to express concern over ongoing “harassment, ridicule, conflicting directions from management” which were presented to Human Resources department at the Metropolitan in 1999 and ongoing until 2002 with his health meanwhile deteriorating. Despite this letter, the union did nothing; he was ignored by the staff, by union management and by the Metropolitan management. With this letter, everything escalated and the harassment increased. For example, the Assistant Manager referred to Pedro as a “dummy” in front of everyone.

In September 2003 there were a series of more serious incidents. A security guard was hovering around him at work and asked him to go into the elevator. At the time there was a rumour going around that Pedro was a troublemaker, mentally ill and that he carried a knife with him. Once inside the elevator, the security guard began poking Pedro hard in the chest saying that he was going to hurt himself with the knife. Pedro had been carrying a tape recorder and the security guard confiscated it even though it was his private property. He was accused of taping

his co-workers. His boss listened to the tape recorder, a clear invasion of privacy. Pedro filed a police report for the assault by the security guard but because he did not file the same day, charges were not laid. Later in that month, Pedro was not feeling well but because he did not want to lose his job he went to work. On this particular day, he continued to feel very ill



and asked if he could go home but they refused stating that if he came to work he obviously feels well enough and now it was too late to go home. Then he started to feel increasing worse; he couldn't breathe, was sweating profusely, and blinking his eyes and his co-workers began to make fun of him. After this, Pedro was called for a meeting, was accused by co-workers for harassing them, and there were several witnesses at the meeting. Pedro told them that he felt that he was almost dying, but they wouldn't let him go, so he

stayed and did not know what was going to happen. Again he asked to leave. After the meeting he got worse and they still refused to let him leave. A few minutes later he collapsed, passed out, and he was sent to emergency.

The day before this Pedro was disciplined for speaking Spanish in the kitchen. It was also around this time his panic attacks were increasing and he had made 3 visits to the emergency for these attacks.

Meanwhile back at the Union – During the last union negotiation due to the complaining of the seniority issue by different departments, the union filed a grievance for the loss of income and promised that this issue would be reinforced by the collective agreement as well as the promise to monitor the issue more closely and that everyone would be paid the money that the company owed them when breaching the collective agreement. The collective agreement ended up being signed behind the workers' backs and without any feedback and so later the banquet department found out that the union had fooled them. When staff had begun asking for the lost income to be paid and questioned the union representati-

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ve, she answered that something had to be sacrificed in order for the collective agreement to be signed and now it was too late to do something. This demonstrates how the union helped the company save millions of dollars, dollars that belonged to the workers and therefore had not even requested input from the workers. The nature of the union existing within the legal framework of the capitalist system is a force of worker control, that is, the union controls the wages, the 'expenses', of the company, preventing a naturally and radical anti-capitalist discourse openly erupting on a large scale.

Pedro had all the while been approaching the

Union who did not act on his behalf either. When Pedro approached management and the union he was ignored by both. Due to his back and shoulder injuries Pedro was bed-ridden for two months. To sur-

vive financially he spent his life savings and became completely broke.

In response to Pedro's illness, he was told to go and receive Employ-



Photo courtesy of John Bonnar—<http://johnb.smugmug.com/gallery/496512>

ment Insurance and not receive benefits related to his disability. He received EI for a period of time until it ran out and ended up on welfare eventually.

When Pedro went to the union,

they were in the midst of a general meeting with the shop steward and so during break Pedro approached the union representative for help and she said that she can't do anything for him because they were in a meeting, so he should go home. Pedro showed the shop steward that he was wearing a brace for his back due to his injuries at work and told them he was going to the company to report the situation. When Pedro approached managers they told him they were too busy and deflected him to various other managers until he was told to go to the Human Resources manager. She also told Pedro she was too busy to do anything for him and said she would call him but in the end neither the union nor management followed up with Pedro about his complaints.

In November 2003 Pedro's case went to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board and the employer denied any injury even though it had been reported.

It is important to note that at this point, more co-workers became supportive as they were not scared after Pedro has continued a painful fight with management and union, therefore other workers are fighting

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back - Pedro has paved a path of resistance. Now Pedro has two cases in the Ontario Human Rights Commission one against the union and the other against the Metropolitan.

It is fundamental to stress that Pedro is one of many, many workers who has become disabled on the job, and who has been ignored by his representative body, the union, as well as the management of the company. This too is common however another commonality is Pedro's fight back.

Pedro is currently still listed officially as an employee at the Metropolitan but is without a return to work as ordered by the Labour Board. Pedro is in legal limbo and thus far, this appears to be indefinite.

Conclusion

Many workers around the world confront harassment, exploitation, and suffering in their workplaces. They are choosing between their livelihood or this exploitation and must always choose exploitation if they are to survive. Oftentimes they do not have the energy, drive, or means to fight back and are simply defeated by the system. The system, when challenged within its own framework, protects itself, keeps workers like Pedro, who do indeed want to return to work, but cannot due to the legal limbo they find themselves in. Workers like Pedro find themselves

deeper in poverty as they are forced to go on welfare or disability insurance with a very limited fixed income. Furthermore, the many unions who allegedly represent workers are only collaborators with management. The unions have a stake in capitalism. They make money from the workers and hire a bunch of bureaucrats to 'talk' with the bosses and arrive at 'compromises'. If the unions cease to act within the legality of the capitalist system, then they lose their privileged status of being the negotiators of the powerful labouring class. They do not want to lose this power and therefore continue to cooperate with employers. Compromises, concessions, for the workers, keep them as that, working class, poor people, in a monetarily wealthy society. Unions are not true worker organizations. Worker councils are what worker's need, such as those that currently exist in Argentina – this is an instance where workers control production and distribution of their labour. There are small situations around the world where workers labour co-operatively, and collectively deciding on their own fates. Unfortunately this is not common and most workers are subjugated by their employers, being given no choices but to report to work and slave so that the bosses and the bosses' bosses have prosperous lives. It is not a crime to demand

equality and justice for all and yet it is – in the capitalist system.

Support for Pedro is growing, as he has opened the door to more open complaints against the management. More hotel and restaurant workers have been inspired by Pedro's fight. The more we recognize our connections to each other as the wage-slavers in an unjust and hierarchical society, we become conscious of our power – we labour and toil for profits of others. When will this disgusting cycle end? How will it end? It begins with these connections, the organizing of workers, solidarity, and resistance to all means of oppression by all governments and all corporations, and can build a trail towards a future of mutual participation, co-operation and collectivization.



Bolshevism and the October Revolution

Naser Paydar

The October Revolution is not comparable to any other revolution with respect to its context and dimension of influence on human history. What happened between 1917 and 1919 in Russian society was magnificent and was an inevitable battle between 'history' and 'pre-history' in a real way. If the October Revolution had gained a victory, humankind would be at the beginning of the establishment of a world without class,



exploitation, State, and any social inequality. There is no revolution in any epoch with these qualities. The last expectation in all previous revolutions, for example, the great French Revolution, was to replace an old form of exploitation with a modern one. But the October Revolution had arisen with a flag to put an end to any kind of exploitation, deprivation, and separation of human beings from their labour products. For those people who

knew the October Revolution as such, the explanation of actual causes of the revolution's failure in Russia has an extraordinary place. In this realm, it is not an event that belongs to the past history of the worker movement. It is rather a living and existing event which by contemplating those experiences would be a light for every conscious worker for our daily struggle

in every corner of this world. The failure of the October Revolution namely is the continuation of captivity of human beings in the jail of exploitation, brutality and disfranchisement of capitalism. This also means the inevitable continuing battle of inferior human beings to break this chain. That is the compulsion of the working class and its conscious forerunners to grasp the roots of our defeat in October, and it is necessary to learn from this

event in order to pave the ground for proceeding with the worker movement against wage-slavery, and certainly as capitalism exists, referring to the October Revolution and its experiences, is absolutely necessary. The aim of this article is to provide this perspective about the October Revolution. And, therefore, in order to proceed with this goal, some issues must be researched

such as the particular problems the working class of Russia must solve between 1903 and 1917. Furthermore some particular political needs in the class power arrangement of the working class of Russian, could not adopt, and therefore, lead to defeat in the October Revolution. The working class of the world needs to learn from the October

Revolution in order to proceed with its struggle and gain victory in the next October Revolution.

How will the worker revolution gain victory?

The victory of the worker revolution is tied to the readiness of the worker masses as a class for the establishment of socialism. The answer to this question without a doubt is not an easy task. But, we cannot have any doubt about this issue

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that without having a powerful socialist council movement of workers



and without the working class aiming to put an end to wage-slavery and the establishment of an alternative to existing society – it becomes a subject matter of its own movement that has no chance of any victory. The calling for workers by a Party and following the dissenting workers from this call temporarily breaks up the State machine, but the political power seizure of this event would not be the mastery of the working class. The provisional worker state at the most minimum level or the beginning situation of the victory is a council organization based on a large scale presence of workers and preparation, and the rigid will of a council organization for the establishment of a socialist work organization in order to put an end to any wage-

slavery. The formula that ‘the proletariat first conquers the political

power, and then establishes socialism’ has no clear indication of any vital issues of the worker revolution. The political power can be seized by the party or the political group based on a large scale presence of workers dissenting or even all councils that would be formed during the class struggle between the bourgeois and the proletariat as a container of socialist struggle of class. Both of them are able to be under the flag of Communism and implement some programs. But with the first event, some idealistic human beings with many ideas, slogans, and utopia would conquer the power from above the workers. Nothing important would take place. What would happen is that only the name of the model of the government machine

would be changed. In the realm of economy, work, production, and the livelihood of human beings and possibly private and individual property would be replaced with State property of capitalism. In the second form, contrarily, the working class has a better chance to put an end to wage-slavery or the establishment of the work organization and a communist civilization of its own. The task of the working class in every step of their struggle against exploitation and all forms of capitalist dominance over their own lives is the socialist revolution. The readiness of the working class for breaking up all of the chains of wage-slavery is only achievable through this struggle with these characteristics. This is a struggle between two different social being’s perspective, and are deeply antagonistic which the proletariat from within this struggle continuously transforms its aims, expectations, demands to the material force against the other one. In this way this force becomes an immense class force with the potential of breaking up this existing system and to replace it with the different horizon. The working class without pursuing this struggle with these characteristics and contents is not ready for the socialist alteration of the old society. Even with the assumption of overthrowing the bourgeois State, they would not be able to conquer political power as a

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class.

Why did the October Revolution fail?

What has been mentioned above was only an introduction to answer this question. The October Revolution was defeated because the working class of Russia did not make itself ready for a triumphant worker revolution. The issues such as 'peasant texture of Russian society', and the attacking by either both imperialist blocs; 'axis', 'the allies' to Revolution, the civil war and resistance of the Russian bourgeois, starvation and famine, all these factors with all of its effectiveness could only act as catalysts of the failing of the worker movement of Russia. This fact, that the process of events following the October revolution is proven better than any theoretical reasoning. The Russian proletariat during those years with their own labour had established one of the biggest military and industrial giants of the world in the same society with backwardness and 'peasant' famines under the ongoing attacks from Imperialism. What had failed were the establishment of a work organization, socialist civilization, and the abolishment of wage-slavery. The current statements regarding the abolition of wage-slavery in Russian society was tied to the German revolution or other industrial countries of those days instead of relying on Marx's understanding of

capitalism and communist contemplation about the actual process of socialist economic changes, and it is a warning to the proletariat for a refusal of worker

believed in. The problem here is that they are summarizing the lack of readiness in the sets of directions and incorrect economic solutions of the Bolshevik Party from



revolution and a cessation of class struggle. The explanation of the defeat of the October Revolution cannot be explained by these factors or a combination of all of them - it was merely showing the impotence of the Russian worker movement for the establishment of work, existence, and communist civilization's structure. This is a fact that some current communists

1925 onward. And, this is a jump-off point from seemingly radical analyses, from the communist critique on mistakes, and shortcomings that was ruled on the defeat of the working class of Russia.

If we do not want to be a communist obedient to an ideology of some statement by Lenin, and if we want to be a practical communist of

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the worker movement of 2000 we have no choice but to research the backgrounds of the October Revolution's failure in view, direction, solution, and politics of Bolshevism from the years before 1905 till the dusk of the last lightings of the hope of victory of the worker movement from 1919-1920. Bolshevism during all those years was an active tendency within the worker movement, but was not the driving force of an organizer leading the socialistic movement of the working class. The Russian proletariat separated from the method of revolution step by step from Narodism, Mensheviks, social democracy due to instructions and directions of Bolshevism. But, beyond these policies and education, it was not able to find its way

to the socialist revolution. Socialism was mostly a utopia in the directions; the propagandas of Bolshevism rather than a current alternative that worker masses in their struggle with capitalism would plan against capitalism and the practical realization of it becomes the subject matter of their own daily struggles of themselves. The working class of Russia not only believed in slogans, the proclamation, and the manifesto of the Bolsheviks but also the possibility of their emancipation from the exploitation and deprivation, and that was exactly based on these beliefs that the working class supported the forerunner of the Bolsheviks. But the exercise of this power for the establishment of such a society was presumed to be a practical

realization of these expectations which was not in the agenda of their own current movement.

Bolshevism years before the 1905 Revolution was calling on the Russian workers for a democratic revolution. In this call, the Bolsheviks wanted the workers to unite with peasants and to condone the compromising bourgeois liberals

with the tsars, and take leadership of the revolution, and put an end to feudalism. Additionally, to pave the way for the European bourgeois and through this situation they make themselves ready for a socialist revolution. From 1903-1917 the presence of the Bolsheviks within the working class was tangible with all of these directions in which these would all end the democratic revolution - a revolution that the entire bourgeois would benefit from and take away the abstraction of a capitalist accumulation. At the same time, in this way the proletariat was to be the leaders of the revolution and guarantee the freedom, bread, and 8-hour work-day. In those days the Bolsheviks revealed themselves against the bourgeois because the bourgeois was willing to compromi-

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se with the tsars who were bargaining for a semi-Constitution. And the obtaining of the leadership of the movement was exceedingly the duty of the proletariat otherwise the democratic revolution would be a failure. The working class was invited to form an independent political party, because the existence of this party is a prerequisite for the victory of the democratic revolution. During those years, socialism was a Utopia for the future history in most of the literature of the Bolsheviks. There was no word that the working class in Russia must and was able to replace the Tsars with the council structure along with the presence of the workers across the country and all dispossessed people.

The lack of importance of the council formation of the working class and the organizing of the council movement in order to take the planning of the production into their own hands and the building of this working class power base for socialist organizing of the economy was absent. There was nowhere that the Bolsheviks were telling the workers that to put an end to capitalism we must put an end to the relation of buying and selling their labour power, and that this must be the immediate goal. Subsequently, to control the factories and production centres from the hands of the capitalists and managing those

with their own movement and contributing the goods among the citizens based on the interference of council power. Attacking the base and foundation of capitalism and the opening up of the existing



landscape, which is a communist civilization in the process of the revolution, did not exist in the directions and the propagandas of Bolshevism. Additionally, transferring the communist living critique of existing society to the working class consciousness and the developing of this consciousness into a material weapon for the worker masses struggle was not on the agenda of the Bolshevik activists.

Here, political freedoms and democracy will not be discounted, nor the negation of the importance of these freedoms in order for the development of the necessary conditions for organizing and the growth

of the communist movement of the working class. But, what is important here is that Bolshevism had not touched the relation of wage-slavery. Russian society in those days witnessed the actions of tens

of millions of the working class. In 1905, around 3 million workers had participated in the general strike against the miserable conditions of their work places or the deprivation of the social and political situation. Additionally, during 1905 the working class of Russia already showed the strong tendency to organize its own council formation. However, the working class at that time was not ready to abolish wage-slavery, but the proletariat socialist solution for organizing the council worker to run society and the production planning for abolishing feudalism property or any kind of private property on land,

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and inviting peasants to form collective farms, or the socialist direction abolishing any State above the workers and dispossessed people were absent from the Bolsheviks' efforts. Additionally the consciousness of the possibility of these directions must be a material weapon among workers and peasants. In this condition there is the overthrowing of the Tsar for democracy and political freedom on one hand, which could get all its importance in the process of class struggle and, on the other hand, all of these act as a basis for opening the communist front battle against all of capitalism.

It has been said that probably Bolshevism had sufficiently emphasized the relation between democracy and socialism. But this is not the issue. What is important is that to have a concrete socialist solution and the persuasion of all economic and political demands as a united front against capitalism. Bolshevism showed a completely different way in front of the working class of Russia. The democratic revolution was considered a phase of revolution which was securing the interest of both the proletariat and bourgeois at the same time. The proletariat played the major role in the revolution to prevent conciliation between the bourgeois liberals

with the Tsar and bringing the revolution to victory. It was believed that with Bolshevism, the working class had to pave the ground for the development of capitalism in society in order for Russian society to transform from a backward country to an advanced country. And, finally it would be ready for the working class to establish socialism. The democratic revolution becomes a subject matter in terms of the direction of the Bolsheviks being tied to a social democratic view. This kind of view that had drowned all the potentials, powers, horizons, expectations of the class struggle into a meta-class narrative about democracy-seeking and fighting with the government, the Tsar

ist regime .

The criticism of trade unionism was one of the indicators of the direction of the Bolsheviks. This criticism instead of opening the socialist struggle in front of the working class actually became a militant democracy and in this process - the importance of communist organizing within the realm of economy against the bourgeois was forgotten. Trade unionism was critiqued to some extent but the alternative of it which is worker councils was not paid attention to. The social democracy perception of socialism had swallowed all the revolutionary sets of policies, aims, and in this way had neglected the workers council organization and, subse-



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quently, the party as an organization had emerged above the working class leadership.

The working class of Russia during 1903-1917 had suffered from some fundamental weaknesses. And, subsequently, it stopped the transformation of those directions as a step for its own class struggle against capital. During those days, the working class could establish a boundary regarding the method of fulfillment the democratic revolution with the bourgeois liberals. Concerning the solving of the agrarian issue, the Bolsheviks had separated their way from the Mensheviks, and had a long debate with the right wing of social democracy about the standard of the apparatus of the political party. They condemned the compromising of the social democracy with the bourgeois on the imperialist war. However, with these attempts its own

socialist council movement could not be organized against capital. All of those attempts were not sufficient to position the proletariat for the socialist revolution. What could help the working class of Russia in that direction was to organize an anti-wage labour movement. Bolshevism could not play the magnificent role due to the pressure of the social democrat approach regarding socialism.

The working class of Russia had passed beyond the February revolution to the October Revolution on the grounds of its own self-activity of the council movement. And, they aimed to establish a society without wage-labour. However there was not any necessary readiness for this important job. Even its councils, instead of being a container for a large presence and a united class struggle for the establishment of a socialist civilization,

were used up as a level of executing the State affair over the working class heads. The statement of *all power to the workers council* was practically tied up only with political tactic in order to overthrow the Constituent Assembly of the bourgeois and conquer the political power. The October Revolution had smashed the governmental machine of capital temporarily, but even the political power actually was not transformed to the Russian workers council. Without a doubt, the working class was not able to build its own worker's council socialist organization over a night on war damage, starvation and famine and the backwardness of the society, where it was attacked brutally by two imperialist blocs. But if the revolution was supposed to gain victory it had no other choice in front on it. The formation of a regular army, replacing worker control with a single leader, the gradual elimination of the worker council, the transferring of the business production and the planning of the entire economy to the *Council of National Economy*, implementing *New Economic Policy*, praising wage-labouring and resorting to the Taylor system, and giving all the administration to the political bureau, none of them was the manifestation of the political power of workers councils rather, was the establishment of the governmental machine above the workers head

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and society under the direction of State capitalism. What was victimized during all of these policies and the implementation was the communist solution of the international working class to put an end to wage-slavery. Bolshevism was not able to play its communist role in one of the most sensitive periods of time. But this inability contrary to current analyses was not about either a lack of



an ambiguous theory of bolshevism around the abolishment of wage-slavery. This inability was not a new phenomenon for Bolshevism or for the working class of Russia. Those who think this way, they see metaphysically the relation of theory and social solution of one class with its own class movement. The fact is that Bolshevism was not the active agent for organizing the anti-wage-labour movement from its beginning until the October Revolution due to the impact of the social democrat perspective. Bolshevism did not mobilize the working class in the realm of the direct battle against the foundation of capitalism

which is wage-slavery. And, in this way was not able to organize a socialist council movement. The reali-

ty is that socialism for Bolshevism was nothing more than State capitalism.

People who put an end to the mode of capitalist production and the building of a society without State and wage-slavery were not the character of the Bolshevik movement. Therefore, it was not ready to organize itself for establishing a worker organization and a socialist civilization. The promise of Bolshevism to Russian workers was that within the socialist phase the exploitation and inequalities would be demolished. But how? And, the answer to this question remains a mystery for the future.

The working class of Russia with the October Revolution was looking at Bolshevism to do some magic and Bolshevism during the two decades confined its role to these demands. Bolshevism organized society into centralization, a State above the workers head but in the name of a worker state and what the working class of Russia gained was only a name.

In the history of the working class movement two magnificent events are more magnificent than others, the two largest events that shake human beings' lives and history; the Paris Common and the October Revolution. Both were defeated. In the first one the workers knew that they were defeated, but the second one, the workers did not realize for a long time. The defeat of the Common was a chain for learning to later attack the working class and the beginning of a continuous defeat. The international working class to be free of future clutches need to learn the weaknesses and the mistakes of the Russian working class from 1903 onwards.



“China Blue”



I have come from seeing a film at the Regent Park Film Festival. I am not a professional film reviewer, nor was I able to attend the post-film discussion however I wish to share my thoughts and observations about this movie.

“China Blue” is a movie about a young 14-year-old girl, Jasmine, who has migrated from the Chinese countryside to work in a city jeans factory. This film shows how the opening of the Chinese market, with its extremely cheap labour force, boasts a growing and prosper-

ous economy that deals directly with Western suppliers. In a system based on the production, the labour force, China and many other Eastern countries, can compete aggressively due to their strength in human numbers. The workers in this movie are paid pennies per day while the factory owner makes approximately \$40,000 per month and then the multinationals would make many times this amount in U.S. dollars. Jasmine, and her friends are merely trying to make money to send to their families,

who are peasants in the country. These young girls sleep in the work dormitories; often work around the clock with an average of 3 to 4 hours of sleep per day in order to meet shipping deadlines. If these deadlines are not met, the factories are at risk of closing down as there are dozens of factories competing for export. The workers are fined for sleeping on the job, for not clocking in at the same time and for anything that affects the production.

Meanwhile back in the office of the

“China Blue”

factory owner, who in this movie is a former police chief, is meeting with management. He talks about ‘educating’ the workers so that they are productive – the factory walls are painted with slogans such as “If you are hardly working today, tomorrow you will be working hard to find a job”. Every worker is dispensable. At home, the wife of the owner prays each morning for a successful workday. The movie also shows resistance by the workers when they begin to strike because they had not been paid in months, and when they are assured they will get pay, they return to their posts. The movie openly demonstrated the inequalities between



classes and the severe injustices. However the movie did not make any mention of the workers who injure themselves on the job. It is suffice to state that most presumably there would commonly be many work-related injuries – the workers were working unimaginable hours without breaks or nutrition – additionally it is also probably safe to state that as many of the workers are young females or males for that matter, that sexual exploitation is taking place in many forms.

This movie exemplifies the disgusting global capitalist system, which at any cost, must make a profit. It enslaves children by stealing their lives, their futures. We here in Canada benefit from this exaggerated slavery in China. Our governments meet with wide smiles to promote trade with China.

Here as workers in Canada, we must recognize our connection to other workers around the world and vice versa. The movement in Canada has brought workers some benefits, such as lunch breaks, a limited hour workweek, sick time etcetera, but it does not suffice to shrug and say “boy are we lucky in this country”. While that may have some truth in it, there is more at stake here. As capital grows - as it is with the opening up of economies that hold the vast wealth of cheap labour or in other words, de-

speration of humans - workers in First World countries are being replaced by companies moving their bases to countries with a cheaper labour force. If one worker cannot supply their labour power for any reason, they can be replaced, no matter where we are in the world. Therefore the only way for workers, employed or unemployed, living in Western Europe or Africa, to fight back with both short-term and long-term demands, is to use our strength in numbers. We must understand our connection to the next worker and how the machine of capitalism is intricate and confusing. It is forever dividing workers;

therefore it is imperative to recognize our power. Without workers, the machine must stop. Or similarly the machine stops when an economy falls to pieces such as in Argentina, and workers fight to control their own fates by controlling production and distribution.

China Blue is a clear example of one worker and her world, a world limited by bourgeois interests and growing class divisions.



OUR ONLY POWER: SOLIDARITY!

Leaflet distributed in Belgium at a mass rally for VW Forest workers

Layoffs, increases in productivity, flexibility, contracts that do not guarantee work ... All that is presented to us as if it was fated, as the result of competition with workers at another factory site, or from a country where wages are lower, or with underpaid immigrants.

But this "fate" is that of the logic of capitalism which seeks profits at any price. And these profits are wrung from the exploitation of the workers: workers that it threatens, squeezed like lemons to be thrown out when they are dry. Competition between workers has only two objectives: to hide the real cause of exploitation and layoffs and to break the solidarity which links the exploited.

The cause of the massive dismissals is in the functioning of the system where the search for profits causes massive overproduction, alongside an impoverishment just as massive.

Today, the VW Forest factory is attacked full force and perfectly reflects this double movement of overproduction/ layoffs/ impoverishment of workers. And tomorrow, whose turn will it be? As usual, the ruling class tightens the belts to contain any overflow and to hurl the workers into discouragement. Police officers placed around the Forest factory site; employers who, as if by miracle, pro-

pose 30 jobs here, 400 there; models of re-conversion, already created by the authorities, though no official decision is on record; promises of new production in... 2009: all to install a *cordon sanitaire* to prevent revolt.

A central pawn in this smothering of any worker's reaction is the tra-



de-unions. As usual, they are presented in the form of specialists in running a strike, and deprive the workers of their capacity to decide on their own actions and on their future, whereas the only possibility of reaction by the workers is the organization of general assemblies to discuss together their actions and the modalities of their struggle. To send the workers home means preventing them from organizing together; to organize pseudo contacts with other companies means preventing any real spontaneous extension; to ratify and negotiate

the layoffs means allowing capital to carry out its projects: here is the well known role, repeated a 1000 times, of those organs for the containment of the working class that are the trade unions.

The capitalist system is a machine to crush humans. Only profit counts and humans are only one commodity among others, a useful tool, for a time, in production. No perspectives are possible in a system which always creates more overproduction and unemployment, more violence, famines, wars, ecological destruction. Our only power to oppose this logic is our class solidarity: the workers of the whole world, unemployed or employed, have the power to reject the existence to which the capitalist system condemns them.

Another world is possible: the capacity to produce what is necessary for the life of all exists. Together, we can create the bases for a society which restores to the human being his/her right to a human existence, a society in the service of the satisfaction of human needs.

From the *Internationalist Perspective*

December 2, 2006



Pushing back with OCAP

Omid Zareian

On November 9, 2006 hundreds of people came to the streets to not ask for housing but to take it because we are sick and tired of a system which promotes hunger, homelessness, and worker exploitation.

We met at a local Parkdale drop-in centre in Toronto, Canada, to enjoy a feast of lamb stew, pasta, salad, juice and bread. There were discussions and speeches about the constant reality of homelessness, poverty and hunger and how we must fight back by taking this housing for ourselves. We marched to the Pope Squat home, boarded onto buses and went to the affluent High Park neighborhood. There we took over some abandoned homes. The cops were in full force to try to 'serve and protect' these large empty homes. "HOUSING NOW!" was shouted, screamed by hundreds of people in the streets as we marched into the traffic, into the empty homes. If the government and wealthy developers will not provide housing it does not matter anymore. If they won't give it we will 'take' it and tell them to get lost because we are the society, we are the worker masses. The simple slogan "housing now" is challenging the system – if the capitalist system and its government cannot provide decent housing for everyone then we must take it. The working class are working people and sometimes when not

working, receiving social assistance and working to pay whatever we can afford for shelter, food, transportation. We are the majority who produce profits for others and this is what the system is based on.

Therefore, if they won't give us food we will take it. If they won't give us housing we will take it. The capitalist system exploits in every corner of the world. By 'taking' housing we are acting outside of the legal framework of capitalism. We are not negotiating, we are not unions that collaborate with bosses, we are not accepting grossly insufficient band-aid short term fixes. We demand alternatives to the current system. Alternative action is direct action where we take a leap outside of the capitalist framework; take control, through our power as worker masses. Squatting empty housing is an example of this.

The Ontario Coalition Against Poverty organized another squat action to remember the Pope Squat and more importantly to take housing. The demand for decent affordable housing continues to echo by poor people. However, the most important reality is that we 'act' to show our power. Actions to mobilize such as communities that fight without compromise for a decent life, not one that was imposed on us – these actions are part of a larger movement. Furthermore, as we the people, the poor, the workers, are mobilizing, our deep 'anti-

capitalistic' natures, our own self-activity is brewing. Through our activities with direct actions we are bolstering the anti-capitalistic character of the working class. What is the 'bottom line' for us workers, employed or unemployed? We are the producers who labour to make profits for a select few. As this class in a capitalist society, it is inherent that we will suffer, whether from the inability to feed ourselves and our families, to house ourselves in a decent manner or to even merely enjoy a quality of life. We demand for essentials but we also want quality of life. Not merely to survive but also thrive. The demands are the beginning, actions tie it all together and our consciousness of the entire system based on our wage-labour is the thread that holds us together as an active working class. Our practical actions allow us to understand the deeper systemic crises and why they do not budge.

This action with OCAP shows the power of 'pushing back' against the system which from moment to moment pushes workers down, so it is always right to 'push back' and go beyond the pushing to the 'taking'. We must knock the door of capitalism down and burn its house and from there we understand better the prison of capitalism and it is this understanding which further intensifies our activity, our consciousness and thus really evolves into a true movement of the wor-

Pushing back with OCAP

king class. This movement is alive globally: for example, such as the Oaxaca teachers and all the poor who have built a strong 'fight back' against the Mexican government, against the businesses who profit from lost tourism'; such as the Israeli Electric workers taking direct action to prevent management from communicating, and making money; and such as the Zenon workers in Argentina who have taken over the ceramic tile factory, and implemented non-hierarchical worker councils to control production; these and many others demonstrate our nature to take our lives back. This movement needs

to grow, rely on its own power rather than relying on bureaucratic unions, left-wing political parties, that we recognize who we are, workers producing profits for others and not benefiting in any way from our own 'labour', recognize that we, as workers, poor people in Ontario are no different than workers in Mexico, Kazakhstan, China, or Nigeria. The Ontario Coalition Against Poverty is one of many agents around the world with whom and through whom we can meet, communicate and do direct actions for change. The important crux of the matter is that we are conscious about who we are and in what di-

rection we are heading, that we want to poke holes in a brutal system based on labouring for nothing, for wages that define us – we want to poke holes by attacking the core of the issue, wages, property, everything that makes who we are not. Rather, we are the workers fighting not only for wages, but to also undo the knot of wage-slavery, to dismantle piece by piece the mechanisms within the system, squatting, occupying, taking what we need in order for a world where we all count, where we all decide our own fates.



Workers Speak Out Against Sackings At Ford Australia

The World Socialist Website

Ford Australia announced plans in early November to axe 640 permanent jobs at its Broadmeadows and Geelong plants in Victoria before the end of the year. Both the unions and the state Labor government are collaborating with Ford to ensure there is no resistance to the layoffs.

Rather than campaign to defend jobs, the unions are doing everything to help management to push workers to accept "voluntary" redundancies. The Bracks government has endorsed the cuts, saying Ford had no choice because of falling sales and profits.

The World Socialist Web Site spoke to workers at Ford and in the Broadmeadows area—where unemployment officially stands at

13.4 percent—about the impending job losses. All were deeply concerned and angry about the impact on working families and especially the youth. One worker who has been at Ford for 18 years said: "They say the redundancies are voluntary but they are offering packages to the men on light duties because of injury. The management is saying to them there is no job for you here, so you have to take the package. The unions do nothing to stop this.

"Some workers over 50 or 60 years old don't mind leaving, but it is going to be hard for some of the younger ones. Also, it means that there are no jobs for young people in the community who are unemployed."

"They may put men back on when

they launch a new model, but the number overall will be less. This happens all the time. When the people learn the job, they are cut back. So if you have a job that has three men, they give it to just two. It also makes for a pool of casuals that can be brought on when the company needs them."

"Many jobs have been lost over the time I have worked here. There were well over 7,000 but now there are around 5,000. In 1995, they worked two shifts at the old paint shop with a total of 1,000. Since then they have built a new paint shop and there is only a total of around 200 for both shifts.

"If you ask any worker at Ford they will all tell you they do not trust the union. They have all had experiences with the union and know it is

Workers Speak Out Against Sackings At Ford Australia

close to the company. When workers complain to the company about having to take on an extra workload or anything, the management says you have to accept it because there are thousands of other people waiting for your job. They say you are lucky to have a job and you should be grateful. When you complain to the union, the union tells you the same thing.

“Ford does not care about the workers they employ. They are in business to make profits and that’s all that counts for them. They say they have to lay off because of reducing profits, but if you add up what profit they made last year, and the years before, they are still ahead.

“Ford worker Leon said: “I feel there is no real security in the car industry anymore. It seems to be like the Titanic—it is sailing on troubled waters and it’s going down fast. First we had the sackings at Ford and now 200 at GMH [General Motors Holden]. And then there will be jobs going in the car parts manufacturers.”

“I am not sure what the future holds anymore. Of course, Ford has said it has committed to a new model in around a year and half. This makes a lot of workers at Ford think their jobs are secure until then and perhaps beyond. But this does not guarantee anything really. Markets change and maybe they will not be able to sell the new model.”

“There are some real terrible things going on in the car industry. At Ford they have casuals who they call in when they want them. They

put them on for three months or so, and then when they don’t want them they just get rid of them. It is really awful. They don’t even give them a real time framework. These are just nonsense jobs. There is no security for these workers. Because they are casual they can’t even apply for a housing loan or even a loan for a car.”

“Moetu Orangi, a worker from New Zealand who now lives in Broadmeadows, said she was “upset and disgusted” about the Ford sackings. “They come right on Christmas and it is very sad for those families. The union should have done something about this and not just tell workers to accept it. Many of these workers will not get full-time jobs again and will end up like me, working as a casual.”

“I have been in Australia for almost three years. I had a permanent job. I worked at a car parts place but I got laid off when they sent the work elsewhere. Both permanents and casual were let go. Now I can’t find permanent work. It is not easy being a casual, especially when you have a family to support like me.”

“Now you are not even hired by the companies directly and you have to go through labour-hire agencies. You see an advert in the newspaper and ring up and it turns out to be an agency. They send you wherever they like. If you don’t take what they give you, no matter what, then they will not give you anything in the future.” “To get any sort of employment you have to constantly chase it and you have to know how

to work the agencies. It is enormously stressful trying to find jobs this way and also work under the conditions that exist in the companies where you are sent.”

“Also, it is stressful because the permanent workers think you are trying to take their jobs and they are frightened. Employers hold it over them. It is a terrible atmosphere to work in.” “You can be at a company for three months and be getting settled in. Then they just tell you to go because after that time they have to make you permanent. You can’t do anything about it because you are casual and the unions will do nothing for you. They don’t do much for the full-time workers either. When they come out of a union meeting, you hear them say things like, ‘that was a waste of time’ or ‘that was a lot of rubbish’.”

“Moetu said she was concerned about the Howard government’s new industrial relations laws that abolish long-standing working conditions, unfair dismissal laws and other basic rights. “These IR laws will make things worse. I don’t think the unions are going to do anything about it. They will have protests but they don’t actually do anything else.”

www.futureoftheunion.com



Sign this Petition

PLEASE HELP STOP THE IRANIAN GOVERNMENT FROM JAILING FOUR COURAGEOUS ACTIVISTS



Download the petition in [Farsi](#), [Swedish](#), and [Spanish](#).

Read support letters from [Norway](#), [Iran](#).

The Iranian Regime wants to jail Mahmoud Salehi for four years and has handed out sentences of two years to Jalal Hosseini, Borhan Divargar and Mohsen Hakimi. The deplorable conditions in Iran's jails make such sentences a threat to the lives of these men. They are currently appealing the decision to deprive them of their liberty.

They were charged, under Iranian security laws, after they were involved in efforts to organize a May Day celebration in 2004 that was never allowed to take place. The location of the event, in the town of Saqez, was taken over by security forces and those who attempted to attend it were attacked and arrested.

The repressive Iranian Regime wants to silence four men whose only 'crime' is to organize workers into a movement that can challenge exploitation and fight for a better life. The celebration of International Workers Day is no crime and only a brutal and morally bankrupt state power would act as if it was.

When, after June 15, 2000, three members of OCAP were facing jail time over bogus allegations of 'participating in a riot', one of these workers, Mohsen Hakimi, signed an online petition calling for the charges to be dropped against our members. That is an additional reason why OCAP issues this call in defence of the four. The main reason, however, is that the right to organize for workers' rights in Iran is a precious one that needs defending. Their struggle is our struggle and it's a duty to support them.

We are not crafting an appeal to the Iranian Government but simply asking supporters to put their names below this statement. Let the authorities in Iran know that you and others like you are aware of their ugly attempt to stamp out opposition. Let those who have the courage to stand up in Iran and demand rights for workers know that people across the world stand in solidarity with them.

Whether you share the vision of the four convicted men of a world free of capitalist exploitation or whether you simply respect the right of people to dissent and workers to organize freely, please add your name below as a mark of support and solidarity.

To add your signature, please go to <http://ocap.ca/iranpetition>



AGAINST WAGE-LABOUR

To: Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP)



We appreciate deeply and sincerely your recent call to action against the verdicts of four activists (Mahmoud Salehi, Jalal Hosseini, Borhan Divargar and Mohsen Hakimi) of the anti-capitalist movement of the working class of Iran. Your action without a doubt is a manifestation of the international solidarity of workers around the world against the inhumanity of capitalism. There is a substantial difference between your camp and actions, and other organizations such as the ILO or ICFTU. What these organizations

are doing in the name of supporting these activists of the workers movement is nothing but playing a role within the framework of the dispute among different sectors of global capitalism. And it is within capitalism where some sectors of the bourgeoisie have provided this role to such organizations. The OCAP campaign is entirely the opposite of the others. It is calling for numbers of workers around the world to cry out against the crime of the bourgeoisie. OCAP is asking for support from the worker masses for their common class members in the working class of Iran to put their hands together. We anti-wage-labour activists defend this campaign with all our power and at the same time we are calling other workers to cooperate with this class campaign based on our capabilities. We wish that;

1. This campaign will not be restricted to only one petition. We united; try to organize other forms of protest against these verdicts, and to bring our international class force to free these activists unconditionally. Direct action, walk outs from workplaces around the world could be subjects based on our power that can be followed for its realization.

This campaign should also be a field for **further** strengthening and deepening of the support and communication among anti-capitalist activists around the world. This campaign should help us bring a closer and deeper friendship between us where we can share our experiences together, and to work on our common daily anti-capitalist demands. Additionally we wish to find better directions towards international unity in order to use it within our daily struggle and the spread of this international solidarity to the entire class struggle for abolishing capitalism. We strongly shake your hands,

Anti-Wage-Labour Collective Activists



If you would like to receive hard copies of Against Wage-Labour publication, please e-mail us and we will endeavor to provide you with copies of the publication.

Anti-Wage-Labour Collective Activists

WWW.AGAINSTWAGE.COM