

G20: In response to capitalism's crisis - **Put the class struggle first!**

The circumstances surrounding the forthcoming G20 meeting are historically unprecedented. Economic crisis wracks the globe, the bourgeoisie seems to be on the ropes. The massive injections of credit into the money markets, the equally massive budget deficits, and now the latest round of 'quantitative easing' have enabled the bourgeoisie to prevent a total implosion of the financial system in most of the central countries, but this hasn't resolved the underlying crisis.

Internationally the bourgeoisie has been forced to admit that the world is facing its most brutal downward plunge since the Depression of the 1930s. Countries such as Japan and Germany are suffering breath-taking collapses in exports and industrial production. Much of Eastern Europe is threatened with outright disaster on the scale of Iceland, and Greece, Ireland, Italy and Spain are not far behind. The 'emerging markets' are also beginning to show the strain – China's layoffs alone number in the tens of millions - as these economies are caught up in the same tsunami as the rest of the world economy. The OECD and the IMF now predict the world economy as a whole will contract this year – something not seen since World War Two.

40 years since the end of the post-war boom all the policies which the bourgeoisie have used to manage the crisis are on the brink of failure. Decades of state intervention (i.e. state capitalism) have left the bourgeoisie standing at a precipice. The main mechanism of maintaining demand in the face of massive over-production – ever-increasing amounts of credit – has now left the economy like a patient who has overused antibiotics: the effectiveness of the counter-measure has been reduced to virtually zero. Worse, credit has become part of the problem: the whole of the system is now, literally, bankrupt.

The result of this for the working class is already clear: a vicious assault on jobs, wages and living conditions that will make the last 40 years look like an oasis of prosperity.

Putting people first?

The impulse to come out onto the streets, to meet and discuss with other people who feel the same way about the state of society, to show our indignation with the way the world is being run, all this is healthy. **The problem with today's demonstration is that the alternative being offered by its organisers, 'Put People First', doesn't at all challenge the basics of the capitalist system and its state machine.**

They argue that putting pressure on the existing system of governments and states can bring about changes in the society.

- They demand "*a transparent and accountable process for reforming the international financial system*" as "*this will require the consultation of all governments, parliaments, trade unions and civil society, with the United Nations playing a key role*".

They claim that "*these recommendations provide an integrated package to help world leaders chart a path out of recession*", and can open the way to "*a new system that seeks to make the economy work for people and the planet*", with "*democratic governance of the economy*", "*decent jobs and public services for all*", a "*green economy*" etc. etc.

Spreading illusions in the state

What these campaigns fail to recognise is that neither capitalism or the state, which has always expressed the interests of those that rule us in opposition to those it exploits and oppresses, can be reformed. Bourgeois economists from the Left and Right have for the 80 years since the Depression been tinkering with the way the state intervenes in the capitalism system. This is the most obvious lesson from the current crisis: 40 years of state intervention have failed to solve the problems inherent in this system. War, mass unemployment, poverty and the destruction of the environment aren't the result of 'bad governments'. They are the direct products of a senile system, a social order that has outlived its usefulness to humanity.

Instead of falling for illusions that capitalism can be made a little more democratic, a little greener, thanks to the intervention of the state, we need to recognise that capitalist social relations are inhuman to the core. They are inseparable from the drive to accumulate profit and this drive will always put people last. This is why the existing relations of production – based on wage labour and production for the market - need to be totally uprooted and replaced with a genuinely new society – communism, a world-wide, stateless and moneyless community where all production is geared towards human need.

The global political apparatus of capitalist states, including the UN, is there to preserve and defend capitalist social relations. If present-day society is to change, that apparatus needs to be dismantled by revolution, in every country on the planet.

There is a real alternative – the class struggle

Revolution is not a utopia. It is contained as a possibility and a necessity in the existing class struggle. And while 'Put People First' wrestle with the niceties of bourgeois democracy, real class struggles are taking place all around us. Internationally since 2003 the working class has been returning to the stage. From New York to Nanjing workers have been rediscovering the bonds of solidarity that bridge the divisions of age, religion and nation, as they flex their collective muscles in defence of their interests. The demonstrations and assemblies of the students in France and Italy, the general revolt that swept through Greece, the mass strikes in Egypt and Bangladesh, the fight against unemployment by the oil refinery workers in Britain: even if only a minority recognises it as yet, these are all part of an international movement which shows the common interests of workers in all countries in the face of the capitalist crisis.

These are the struggles we should be putting 'first', as they are the only ones that have in them the perspective to really change society. To do this workers have to move these struggles beyond their immediate goals and build a movement which can begin to challenge capitalism. Campaigns like 'Put People First' are a barrier to this deepening of consciousness and workers will have to overcome the illusions they peddle if they are to build a real alternative to the barbarity of capitalism.

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