

Internationalism

Publication of the International Communist Current in the USA
\$1/US \$1.25/Canada 50p/UK 50c/Europe

No 158 April 15 to June 15, 2011
www.internationalism.org

'Union Busting' in Wisconsin and Elsewhere Ideological Decay of the U.S. Bourgeoisie Deepens

At the time of writing, the situation in Wisconsin has calmed considerably from the turmoil we described at the end of February in *Wisconsin Public Employees: Defense of the Unions Leads to Defeat*¹. Although Republican/Tea Party Governor Scott Walker was able to use questionable parliamentary maneuvers to ram his "union busting" bill through the state legislature, there has been no general strike as the unions promised and protests at the state Capitol building have steadily dwindled. Although the national union apparatus treated us to a "day of action" in major cities across the country, the focus of events in Wisconsin has shifted to the shady world of bourgeois legalism, as the unions—along with their Democratic and "progressive"

allies—engage in a court room battle to prevent enforcement of the Republicans' multi-faceted bill to attack public employee unions. Meanwhile, Democratic political operatives have launched an electoral campaign to recall Republican legislators who voted for the bill.

The unions and the "progressive" left have attempted to seize upon the momentum of the Wisconsin protests to build a movement against other Tea Party/Republican governors' efforts to enact similar bills in their states. Protests have taken place in Indiana and Ohio, while a movement builds in Michigan to oppose even more draconian measures that would allow the state to take over entire town governments, appointing local officials at whim. The specter has been raised that state officials could even appoint corporations to run town governments as part of these "emergency fiscal measures"!

What is the working-class to make of the Wisconsin events?

Are the unions indeed the last best hope for working people to salvage some kind of standard of living in an age of a growing income gap and increasing plutocracy? If the unions are indeed weapons of the ruling class to hijack the class struggle—as the ICC claims—why have parts of the U.S. bourgeoisie acted so aggressively to destroy them? What is the nature of the "union busting" politics that has exploded in the U.S. since the November 2010 elections? What do the Wisconsin events tell us about the nature and depth of the U.S. bourgeoisie's political crisis?

From *Internationalism's* perspective, we believe that the orgy of union busting undertaken by Republican/Tea Party governors does not fit with the overall strategic plans of the main factions of the U.S. national bourgeoisie in a period of sharpening class confrontations. In our view, the union-busting aspect of the bill proposed by Governor Scott Walker in Wisconsin, and similar efforts in other states, is a potential mistake for the ruling class that—if enacted—could serve to deprive it of a vital tool in its efforts to derail the working-class' struggle, drown it in the false alternative of unionism and prevent the proletariat from engaging in direct confrontation with the bourgeois state.

It is therefore vitally important to distinguish between two key aspects of legislation proposed by Republican/Tea Party state governors since November 2010:

1. The efforts to enact austerity measures against the working class' living and working conditions, which is a central need for the U.S. bourgeoisie faced with the economic crisis.

2. An ideologically driven quest to smash the unions, "starve the state" and sell-off public functions to corporate cronies, which threatens to further destabilize American state capitalism.

In our view, the first aspect of enacting austerity is a clear necessity for the bourgeoisie faced with an economic and fiscal crisis of his-

toric proportions; however the second aspect of "union-busting" and the pursuit of other right-wing tropes are ideologically driven, short-sighted policies that risk going too far and negatively impacting the ability of the ruling class to manage the class struggle. For us, the vigorous attempts to enact these types of laws by certain sectors of the U.S. bourgeoisie reflect a growing tendency towards the decomposition of the U.S. political apparatus, complicating its ability to act in a strategic manner to address the economic crisis and manage the class struggle in the interests of the national capital as a whole. This decomposition is reflected in the increasing difficulty the U.S. bourgeoisie faces in controlling its electoral process; evident in the outcome of the 2010 mid-term elections, which brought Governor Walker and fellow-travelers to office.²

Role of the Unions in the Political Life of the U.S. Bourgeoisie

It was during the Franklin Roosevelt administration of the 1930s that the union bureaucracy became fully integrated into the American state apparatus and assumed the mantle of the bourgeoisie's trusted tool for ensuring labor peace, deflecting struggles and helping to manage the industrial economy. During the 1930s, this was accomplished by the direct encouragement that trade union leaders associated with the new Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) received from the American state to organize the unskilled mass proletariat.³

We should remark here that all factions of the American bourgeoisie did not accept the unionization of the unskilled mass proletariat at the time. On the contrary, FDR faced intense political challenge from some recalcitrant industrialists who felt the unions would put a crimp in their profits, and right-wing demagogues who viewed the Roosevelt administration's pro-union New Deal as an incipient form of "Bolshevism." Nevertheless, it is important

² For our analysis of the 2010 mid-term elections, see *Mid-Term Election Results Highlight Political Difficulties of U.S. Bourgeoisie in Internationalism #157*, <http://en.internationalism.org/inter/2011/157/mid-term-elections>.

³ See *Internationalism #12* also included in the *Internationalism* pamphlet *Text and Comments from the ICC Conference On Trade Unions and the Role of Revolutionaries* (Oct. 1980).

Continued on Page 6

Imperialist Mess in Libya

On March 17, 2011 the UN Security Council adopted a resolution which declared a no-fly zone over Libya and authorized the "international community" to take whatever additional measures necessary to "...protect the country's population" (UN Security Council Resolution 1973) short of sending ground troops. Ever since, the "international community" has displayed an utter inability to come to any agreement on the next steps to take. The divisions and hesitations on what approach to take to the chaos in Libya run deep even at home, among the US ruling class itself. Richard N. Haass of the US Council on Foreign Relations told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the future will require boots on the ground in an "enormous, multi-year effort to help Libya become a functioning country."¹ Meanwhile, US Defense Secretary Robert Gates has ruled out US ground forces, and Haass himself agrees that, "US interests in Libya simply do not warrant such an investment." At the time of writing, there doesn't seem to be an end in sight for the chaos that has engulfed Libya. Indeed, the divisions within factions of the US bourgeoisie and their hesitations vis-à-vis the situation in Libya point to a new development in the convulsions of a ruling class less and less capable of having any coherent strategy. We see this at the level of the economic crisis, and now, clearly so, also at the level of imperialist decision making. Why has the US decided to intervene in a conflict where it doesn't know who

the opposition are? What's at the root of the divisions and hesitancy as to what to do next? What are the perspectives ahead for this latest imperialist adventure? Above all, what does this all mean to the working class in Libya and elsewhere?

Imperialism is a necessity for the world bourgeoisie

Eight years of the Bush administration wreaked so much havoc to US international relations and tarnished its image as a 'fair', 'democratic' world leader so seriously that when Obama campaigned for the presidential election in 2008 he rejected outright the Bush administration's notions of unilateral military intervention. But intervene it must. The notion that the US should overthrow regimes it considers reprehensible even when they do not present an immediate threat to it, or that it should forcibly bring democracy to other nations not so... blessed, has given way to the rhetoric of "international cooperation". In the words of US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, "When the earth shakes or rivers overflow their banks, when pandemics rage or simmering tensions burst into violence, the world looks at us." This means that in spite of its rhetoric of "international cooperation" the US cannot renounce its position as world cop. Its reluctance or hesitance regarding the present intervention in Libya has nothing to do with the US slouching toward any degree of humility and everything to do with the im-

Continued on Page 6

¹ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jayshree-bajoria/the-perils-of-libyan-nati_b_846080.html

Inside this issue...

Page 2 Madison: Defense of Unions Prepares Workers' Defeat

Page 3 Bourgeois 'Recovery': Death and Misery

Page 4 Class struggle: Is the Road Open to the Mass Strike?

Page 5 What Method to Understand the Class Struggle?

Page 8 Canadian Attempts to Revive Democratic Mystification

In Madison and Elsewhere, Defense of the Unions Prepares the Workers' Defeat

After weeks of protests that drew national and even international attention, the streets of Madison are again empty. Scott Walker's state-budget repair bill has passed (pending a court appeal delay), and where cries of "general strike" once rang through crowds of thousands of demonstrators, the air is silent and workers are back at work. The

union leaders scramble to push through all the Governor's economic demands in exchange for the right to "collectively bargain" one last contract. Workers' action has been reduced to the signing of petitions to recall state senators. While some groups are trying to resuscitate the movement, it has mostly been defeated. The question is: why?

Throughout the United States, public sector workers are being targeted, and then attacked, in the name of state fiscal solvency. Most state governors expect hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of savings from new contracts with public employee unions, enough to cover their states' colossal budget shortfalls. The better to accomplish this goal, the bourgeoisie has unleashed a broad campaign to demonize unionized public sector workers as overcompensated and privileged at the expense of "the taxpayer". Ohio and Nebraska have passed legislation similar to Walker's, and many other states are considering similar bills. Meanwhile the unions have called for solidarity rallies throughout the country for the defense of collective bargaining "rights," presenting themselves as the last best hope workers have for the defense of "democracy" and "middle class jobs." To understand the defeat of the movement in Wisconsin and to prepare for further attacks to come, we must examine these ideological campaigns. We must understand how they contributed to derailing the movement in Wisconsin and how they can only deliver the working class up to the bourgeoisie.

The official media presents the wave of austerity attacks on the state level, and the mass movement in Wisconsin, as a showdown between newly elected, ideologically-driven Tea Party governors pushing a "union-busting" agenda, and the Democratic-aligned public employee unions. The unions and the Left peddle this narrative as well. They have zeroed in on the defense of "collective bargaining rights" in their solidarity rallies, letter-writing, and now the campaign to recall Republican state legislators in Wisconsin. This narrative obscures the reality of the situation to workers, and makes those workers who accept it more amenable to the "solutions" advanced by the bourgeoisie.

The Public Sector in the U.S.

While it's true that Governor Walker, Ohio Governor Kasich, and some of the other Tea Party-backed governors are ideologically motivated in their attempts to end collective bargaining and dismantle the unions, their states' fiscal problems, and their need to attack the living standards of public employees, are very real. They are common to states under the control of both parties. All but 6 US states face massive budget shortfalls for the 2012 fiscal year.¹ The combined deficits through 2013 total \$175 billion, on top of the \$230 billion in budget gaps already filled for the last three fiscal years.² Governors of both parties are preparing attacks on state workers' salaries and pensions, even pursuing the end of collective bargaining rights, to help close these budget gaps. The newly elected governor of Connecticut, Democrat Daniel Malloy, is demanding \$1 billion in savings from state employees for each of the next two years—the biggest cuts per capita of any state. Democrat Jerry Brown in California imposed a hiring freeze on February 15 while negotiating his budget, and Democrat Andrew Cuomo in New York announced a one-year salary freeze for state workers as part of an emergency financial plan, on top of \$450 million already conceded by public sector unions on behalf of the workers.

Teachers at "underperforming" public schools are being blamed for low tests scores and graduation rates, and school boards and teachers unions are debating merit-based pay and job security ratings. Teachers are being pitted against each other, with younger teachers being told that merit-based pay will give them all the advantages associated with youth, while older teachers are told that accepting new tiers for pensions will protect their jobs in the case of layoffs. The bourgeoisie is attempting to head off a strong display of solidarity between the young and the old, between students and

workers. The working class has demonstrated this solidarity in many of its major mobilizations since transit workers in New York City struck against pension cuts that would primarily affect workers yet to be hired.

In all these cases, both parties have united in pursuing and passing draconian austerity measures against public sector workers. Contrary to the narrative of the media, the unions, and the left, the unions work with state governors, through collective bargaining negotiations, to decide how to implement the attacks. They push them on the workers with promises to wage a struggle or elect different governors in the better future they, along with the state governments, assure us is just around the corner so long as we accept "sacrifices" today. In New York State the unions have held countless "solidarity" rallies in support of the collective bargaining in Wisconsin, but have said nothing about the prospect of layoffs in education. They have even supported merit-based pay initiatives for teachers. Unions across the nation clamor about the need for solidarity rallies with already-defeated workers in Wisconsin - whose only struggle currently is a recall campaign in which only Wisconsin residents can participate - yet they accept all the layoffs and contribution increases being proposed for their own members. What role are the unions really playing?

The public sector unions, far from defending the workers they represent, do not question the need for workers to "make sacrifices". They have only mobilized to the extent they have in order to maintain their position as trusted partners with the state in implementing the cuts necessary for the health of US capitalism. From the beginning of the movement in Wisconsin, the state's two largest public sector unions, AFSCME and the WEAC teachers' union, offered to accept every economic demand, and help 'negotiate' the attacks, so long as their collective bargaining rights, and with them the closed shop and dues check-off system that funds them, were left unscathed. Indeed, since the passage of the bill, public sector unions across the state have rushed to push through contracts containing *all* the economic demands of Walker's bill, knowing that if their contract is ratified before the new bill becomes law, they won't have to hold another election next year to keep their dues money flowing in, as they will maintain the "closed shop" for the duration of that contract. This also explains the widespread opposition to ending collective bargaining rights from Democratic Party politicians, as the Democrats rely on public sector unions as their chief source of campaign contributions for local and state elections.

The Movement in Wisconsin

On Monday, February 14, the first weekday after Walker's announcement, over 100 students spontaneously walked out of class in Stoughton, Wisconsin. They were followed the next day by over 800 Madison students, who struck class and marched through the town to demonstrate in front of the government buildings. By Wednesday, Madison public schools had to close due to a sick-out action by teachers, many of whom joined their students in marching to the capitol building. As early as Thursday, the Wisconsin Educators Association Council (WEAC)'s president Mary Bell told reporters, "*This is not about protecting our pay and our benefits. It is about protecting our right to collectively bargain.*" In a statement released to the press the following day, Marty Beil of AFSCME Council 24 explained bluntly, "*We are prepared to implement the financial concessions proposed to help bring our state's budget into balance, but we will not be denied our God-given right to join a real union.*"³ Teachers and students continued their actions throughout the week, and public sector workers and supporters from the sur-

rounding region joined in the demonstrations. These grew and grew until the weekend, when the state capitol building was occupied. The WEAC ordered teachers to return to work on Monday, but Madison teachers voted to stay out sick an additional day in defiance of the union president's order.⁴

Leftist celebrities (including Michael Moore and Jesse Jackson, among others) poured into the city to praise the 14 Democratic state senators who had left the state to prevent the passage of the bill as labor heroes, and to help solidify the union rhetoric that the fight was entirely about collective bargaining rights. The presence of high-profile politicians and activist celebrities also helped to bolster all kinds of illusions in the Democratic Party and in mostly harmless actions as opposed to real class struggle. The unions had said from the beginning that they weren't interested in strikes. Meanwhile, the Madison IWW and others attempted to gain an endorsement from the South Central Wisconsin Labor Council of a state-wide general strike in the event of the bill's passage. A great deal of propaganda was carried out amongst the workers about what a general strike would mean, and in fact, the day before the bill passed, chants in favor of a general strike were among the loudest heard in the capitol building and on the streets.⁵ Despite all this, the day the bill was passed, the unions and the Democrats unveiled their new strategy: they would channel all the energy of the protests into a protracted campaign to recall 16 Republican state senators whose presumably Democratic replacements would eventually reverse the bill.

The 'General Strike' Slogan

The US has not witnessed a general strike in years, making the slogan's appearance in Wisconsin surprising at best and mystifying at worst. Despite the image of power the call for a general strike conjures, we must ask what a general strike would look like or accomplish if it allowed the unions, which had already agreed to carry out attacks on the working class' living conditions, any leadership role. In the past two years throughout Europe, the unions have called *national* general strikes against austerity measures presented as solutions to state debts, and have led them all to defeat. Just last fall in France, 14 general strikes led by the "radical" CGT and other unions, as well as oil blockades, were unable to block the passage of pension reform, and the only significant movements for self-organization and class-wide struggle were all conducted in direct opposition to even the most radical of the unions. The trouble is that the 'general strike,' as a planned, mass walkout of all the workers, is a tremendously ambiguous slogan. Who is to call the strike? Who will run it and decide how long to stay out, how to picket, and how to spread it? If weeks of strikes and demonstrations throughout a France far more heavily unionized than the US were unable to stop pension attacks last fall, what would come of one-day general strikes or 'Days of Action' by American unionized workers, who make up less than 12% of the American workforce in the first place?

In contrast to the "general strike" slogan, for the workers to defend themselves they need to develop a dynamic similar to what Rosa Luxemburg called the "mass strike"⁶—a wave of strikes which is not planned for a single day or period of time. In the mass strike, both unionized and nonunionized workers from various sectors enter the struggle for their own demands *and* the demands of their brothers and sisters in struggle. The dynamic of the mass strike always seeks to widen the extent of the movement and collectively develop its goals and demands. Such a movement, organized by the workers themselves, coordinated by committees which owe their mandate to, and can find it revoked by, assemblies of all the workers, would immediately threaten the state. It would not be in the hands of the state's trusted negotiating partners and could at least temporarily beat back some of the proposed austerity measures. Furthermore, such an experience would develop the combativeness, creativity, and confidence of the working class on

an unprecedented scale, making workers all the more ready to defend themselves in the future, eventually to the point of posing questions about how and in whose interest society is run.

The Union Obstacle

Last spring in New Jersey, very shortly after the University of California students had begun their struggle, high-school students staged walkouts all over the state against cuts to education spending and attacks on their teachers. The students often looked to these same teachers to advance the struggle. Despite the widespread admiration and appreciation felt by the majority of teachers for this show of solidarity, the teachers' union discouraged the students' mobilization and agreed with the administration that the students involved should be punished.⁷ A very similar story developed in Wisconsin. Students, who worried that this system holds no future for them, decided to take action both for their own demands and in solidarity with workers who had not yet even begun to struggle. Knowing that they could not win these demands alone, the students asked these workers to join the fight. It was the belief, still held still by many teachers and their students, that the unions exist to defend them, and will be fighting alongside them, that prevented this solidarity from growing.

Unions in today's decaying, moribund capitalist world do not even modestly defend the working class. The problem is not that they are ossified, their vision and strategy that of the post-war boom when they were at their peak. Unions, while built by the workers and able to be controlled by them in the 19th and early 20th Centuries, now exist as agents of the state. Their task is to police the struggles of the working class, to chain them to legalism, democratic illusions, and the interests of national capitalism. Through a thousand mechanisms of state recognition, legal structures, and structural mechanisms, the state has captured these organizations completely, and uses them to prevent, by diffusion and derailment, any dispute from developing into an actual struggle of class against class. The unions demonstrated this perfectly when they, despite being threatened with total emasculation by the new bill, preferred to channel the workers' anger into a fruitless recall campaign that could take over a year. The unions preferred being reduced to electoral pressure groups to further aggravating the class struggle with strike action, even strike action under their control. Madison AFSCME Local 60 exposed the unions' nature again when it rushed to sign a new contract which would crush workers' living standards down to the level Walker's hated bill had demanded by 2014. Madison's Mayor praised the union's cooperation. "We did it with collective bargaining," he said. The system worked exactly the way it was supposed to work.⁸

When teachers and public sector workers, legitimately threatened by legislation that directly attacks their salaries, healthcare, and pensions, fight for the defense of the unions rather than the defense of their own living standards and those of their class brothers and sisters, they move from fighting for their own class interests to being foot soldiers in a faction fight between different parts of the ruling class. Workers should not let their guard down against unions which implement cuts, negotiate layoffs, and silence any real struggles against these measures, just because certain ideological sections of the ruling class attack the unions while attempting to carry the cuts through. While many workers have illusions in the unions, revolutionaries should seek to help them break their illusions down. They must be clear that the unions are not just "the best we have," or simply conservative, ossified, and bureaucratic: they belong to the class enemy, and real class struggle will be waged against them just as it will be waged against the bosses and the state.

JJ, 4/10/11

Endnotes

1. Elizabeth McNichol, Phil Oliff and Nicholas Johnson. "States Continue to Feel Recession's Impact." *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*, 9 March 2011 <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=711>

Bourgeois 'Recovery': Death and Misery Lie in its Wake

The capitalist crisis continues to deepen despite increasingly desperate proclamations to the contrary. Nestled behind the claims of recovery, class conflict and internecine bourgeois rivalries threaten to tear the social landscape of capitalist society apart. For all of the grandstanding and optimistic rhetoric, there is a noticeable silence about even the possibility of rolling back of austerity measures. The bourgeoisie must continue its assault on the working class—its frustrated attempts to alleviate the crisis demand nothing less. The steady drumbeat of austerity demands further sacrifices on the part of the working class.

The latest round of attacks has caught public sector workers in its cross hairs. Wisconsin represents one battleground, and Walker and public sector workers two combatants in a global class struggle. Elsewhere in the United States, teachers are coming more and more under the knife. One of the bourgeoisie's most powerful propaganda tools is the unemployment rate. Currently, the official unemployment rate falls around 8.8%—a marked improvement over the employment rate in recent memory indeed! Revolutionaries must look between the lies propagated by the bourgeoisie's media apparatus and arrive at the truth behind the situation.

The global capitalist system is gripped by the most serious crisis in its history. The managers of this system, embodied in the national states, attempt to respond to the crisis in such a way that their imperialist faction may benefit over others—but this becomes increasingly difficult with each manipulation. The ruling class needs to hide the truth about the seriousness of the crisis, thus they fudge up statistics to 'prove' that their system is resilient and on the way to prosperity. The "official" unemployment rate exemplifies this statistical manipulation. Has unemployment really fallen, in any meaningful sense? A deeper look at the bizarre world of bourgeois pseudo-science exposes the lie behind the 8.8% rate. Workers who are not actively looking for jobs, including workers who have been forced back into school to gain new skills or who have given up looking for a job, are not included in the statistic. Furthermore, the bourgeoisie considers you unemployed only if you receive unemployment benefits. It should surprise no one then that when the bourgeoisie rescinded unemployment benefits, the stats suddenly improved! What the unemployment rate really represents is not, as is implied, the number of workers who do not have jobs. Instead, it represents the number of workers the state finds convenient to count as not having jobs! It is also worth underlining that the retail industries are responsible for most 're-absorption' of previously unemployed people. In most cases this means that workers moved from previously gainful employment to jobs that pay less and provide poorer benefits. It is also worth noting that after all the attacks, amounting to billions

and billions of dollars in savings, the reduction of the government deficit will amount to about 3%! It will go from something like 43% of the GNP to 40%. The bourgeoisie will have to resort to more and more severe austerity measures, accompanied by more layoffs, in the future. Indeed, even some bourgeois economists, urge caution as to the sustainability of the much-vaunted decrease in unemployment.

Clearly, bourgeois economics cannot be trusted. It provides only the most distorted picture of society, a picture designed to mystify and deceive. We must attempt to more accurately tally the actual effects of the crisis and the extent of the "recovery."

Intensification of work

For those workers who are lucky enough to still have jobs, the situation does not appear any less bleak. Capitalism's inability to address human needs manifests itself clearly in the intensified working conditions which threaten the physical and emotional livelihoods of everyone who has to endure them. Meanwhile, corporate heads are continually awarded exorbitant salaries for doing ever less work. Transocean, one of the companies responsible for the deaths of 11 workers and untold environmental damage to the Gulf of Mexico and surrounding communities, said that "despite the gulf tragedy, by its internal statistical measures, 'we recorded the best year in safety performance in our company's history.' Consequently, executives received most of the safety-related portion of their bonuses for the year."¹

The working class is bludgeoned into submission with the threat of unemployment and then forced to work in abysmal conditions. *Internationalism* analyzed the pernicious manipulation of bourgeois corruption in Los Angeles in its previous issue.² The public school system is being dismantled brick by brick through underfunding and charterization, exposing teachers to the conditions faced by their class brothers and sisters. Teachers in charter schools work harder and longer for less pay and fewer protections. Some schools in Los Angeles have even begun hiring long-term substitute teachers to skirt many of the labor regulations. The unions, complicit watch dogs for the ruling class, are seeking an arrangement with the state which would allow them to be grandfathered into the newly formed charter schools.

However, charterization is simply one facet of a broad campaign against teachers. The situation for teachers in non-chartered public schools is just as dismal. New York City has introduced a tiered retirement system where new teachers are forced to pay into the retirement fund for longer than older teachers. States and cities across the United States have repeated this direct attack on working conditions. Schools are being shut down, class sizes are growing and workload is multiplying. Detroit teachers are waiting to discover which of them will be laid off when 70 of the city's current 142 schools will be shut down. This will drive up the average classroom size to an astounding 60 pupils!

Supporting this material attack on teacher's conditions is a sustained, vicious ideological campaign. Teachers are decry by the right for their laziness, told by the left to work harder and justify their paychecks—meanwhile workloads are increased and wages are depressed! These and other travesties are all coded behind a sophisticated, layered system of mystification. This is the true character of bourgeois "recovery:" meaningless, optimistic statistics derived from the navel gazing of capitalist apologetics while the working class faces death at the hands of a truly decadent social system!

Absorption of youth into the workforce

When the bourgeoisie targets education they do not only target teachers. Capitalism's his-

toric crisis, and the bourgeoisie's frenetic and counterproductive attempts to circumvent its effects, impact on the prospective workforce, the youth, as well. The cost of primary, secondary, and higher education for working class families has risen to astronomical levels. As the public high school system unravels into a wilderness of chartered fiefdoms, public universities are also being dismantled. The University of California, once the model for how public university education could cost next to nothing (in the 1960s, tuition was less than a thousand dollars a year), is in a tailspin as its managers attempt to offset cuts coming from the state and their own deadly gambles with speculators. The tuition now costs nearly \$12,000 a year, with more increases coming down the pipeline!

The condition of students is deteriorating along with the rest of bourgeois society. Furthermore many students are also workers, paying for school usually through a combination of part-time jobs and the carefully laid trap of loans (maliciously labeled synonymously with grants and scholarships as "financial aid"). These loans are advertised to students and their parents during the application and matriculation process. The "very low" interest rates are advertised and applicants are overwhelmed by a flurry of loan categories that are difficult to navigate. The story is the same with all other forms of debt pushed onto the working class—whether they are from automobiles, homes or credit cards. The interest compounds, the loan takes on a life of itself and repayment of loans becomes a consuming drain on the debtor. The introduction of personal credit lines on a mass scale in the '50s only seemed to avert capitalist crisis—it appeared to cheat the law of value and allowed capitalism to continue expanding accumulation without physical expansion. The Bretton Woods restructuring of the international fiscal system was another similar attempt to sweep the crisis under the carpet—the credo of the ruling class appears to be "out of sight, out of mind." This game, however, can only be played for so long before the house of cards begins to topple. Cards are still cards, regardless of how many times you re-label them as stone.

In 2006, an astounding 60% of undergraduate students took out loans to pay for education. By the time they graduated they owed their creditors \$22,000. These supposedly privileged youth are already thrust into a race against the always ticking clock of interest rates. Many of them will not pay off their education for years to come. The accumulation of debt doesn't stop with undergraduates either: more than half of graduate students borrowed an average of \$40,000 for their education!

The global nature of the crisis means that these assaults on education are occurring throughout the world. Tuitions are increasing worldwide, and student protests are erupting across the globe in response. Much has been written about the outbreaks of student violence in the United States, Britain, Italy, Spain, France, the Philippines and elsewhere. It appears that the university, and schools in general, are in crisis. They can still play a pacifying ideological role, allowing students to think that if they attend school they will become successful. However, with the economy unable to absorb even its own unemployed labor force, youth today are offered a bleak future: through debt, you are tied to a sinking ship.

Tax the rich?

The solution most often proposed by the delusional left wing of capital is to raise taxes—especially targeted towards the rich. The latest revelation of General Electric's ability to somehow avoid paying any taxes to the US government helped to reinforce the salivating "progressive" left. "If only the rich," they clamor, "were made to pay more taxes things would be okay." Whether they argue this position with ignorance or deception in mind, they betray a complete disregard for the actual nature of the crisis today. In fact, only the pumping of ever more money into the financial behemoth has managed to stave off capitalism's

historic crisis for the past 40 years. The bourgeoisie have had to resort to increasingly abstract methods to keep their system afloat. However, capitalism's lifeblood is the realization of surplus-value extracted from the workers, and taxes do not represent surplus value. Increasing taxes will not restore the ability of capitalism to function because the crisis is not one of liquidity, but of insolvency. Capitalism is not ossified, but bleeding out.

Simply adding more money to the bloated system is not going to do the trick. The left wing of the bourgeoisie is spreading the ideology that capitalism can buy itself out of the crisis: this is impossible. Taxing the rich does not provide a solution for the crisis. Neither does it shield workers from attack, nor provide the youth with a future. Most importantly, the left wing of capital uses this ideology to line workers up behind a paternal state. The state is an instrument of capital, and cannot protect the working class' living conditions or advance their liberation. The idea that it can is a total mystification. As an instrument of class rule, the state works for the capitalists—for their interests and against ours. This relationship is structural as much as it is ideological.

Nothing for the working class in capitalist recovery

Capitalism is not recovering. The much touted recovery is nothing more than bourgeois pseudo-science. Taking a series of unrelated and trivial statistics, manipulating data and concocting an ideological scapegoat, the bourgeoisie are capable of weaving a fairytale of progress that does not correspond to the material reality of workers anywhere. The bourgeoisie repeats this process of mystification and propaganda, a process perfected through decades of ruthless Machiavellian governance, throughout the world. The working class is beginning to struggle and is attempting to break through the layers of deceit and reaching towards a truly revolutionary consciousness. However, there is no guarantee that this will happen. The return to combativeness and questioning of the future are positive developments, but revolutionaries should not indulge in overconfidence. The stakes are dire as the bourgeoisie responds to the crisis and to workers' struggles with increasingly brutal attacks. Nonetheless, despite all their efforts to contain the working class and to avert a complete breakdown of their system, the bourgeoisie cannot avert the crisis. Capitalism is a deadly social system which is spiraling out of control. The only possible future for humanity is communism and the working class is the only class that can avert the catastrophe towards which un-arrested capitalism will guide the world..

AS 4/9/11

ICC online

Earthquakes, tsunamis and nuclear accidents in Japan: capitalism is a horror show

Book review: a change of regime is not a revolution

In the Ivory Coast, a blood-thirsty imperialist conflict

10 shades of non-revolution

Anarchists and communists debate the Black Bloc

Struggles of Uttar Pradesh road transport workers, defeated by unions

Public Forum in New York on the revolts in the Arabic-speaking world

internationalism.org

Continued from Page 2

2. Fletcher, Michael A. "Governors from both parties plan painful cuts amid budget crises across the U.S." *Washington Post*, 7 February 2011 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/07/AR2011020703650.html?hpid=moreheadlines>

3. Jason Stein, Patrick Marley and Steve Schultze. "Assembly's abrupt adjournment caps chaotic day in Capitol." *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, 18 February 2011 <http://www.jsonline.com/news/statepolitics/116470423.html>

4. "Teachers debate returning to work after Wisconsin protests." *CNN.Com*, 20 February 2011 http://articles.cnn.com/2011-02-20/politics/wisconsin.protests_1_unions-protests-teaching-assistants-association?_s=PM%3APOLITICS
⁵ For a more detailed account of this, visit the libcom.org thread, "Wisconsin withdrawing collective bargaining rights from state workers. Governor threatens to use National Guard." at <http://libcom.org/forums/news/wisconsin-withdrawing-collective-bargaining-rights-state-workers-governor-threatens->

⁶ Luxemburg contrasts the mass strike dynamic to the planned general strike called by pre-existing organizations for a definite period of time in her book *The Mass Strike, the Political Parties, and the Trade Unions*.

5. Heyboer, Kelly. "N.J. students who left class to protest Gov. Chris Christie's budget cuts are given minor punishments." *Newark Star-Ledger*, 28 April 2010 http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2010/04/minor_punishments_given_to_stu.html

6. Mosiman, Dean. "Madison moves to extend contract with its biggest labor union." *Wisconsin State Journal*, 16 March 2011 http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/govt-and-politics/article_d04b3a58-4f39-11e0-9fc6-001cc4c002e0.html

¹ "2 Rig Firm Workers Decline To Appear at Oil Spill Inquiry," *New York Times*, 4/1/11
² "The Working Class Bears the Brunt of the Crisis," *Internationalism* 175, Jan-April 2011.

The Present Struggles of the Class: Is the Road Open Toward the Mass Strike?

We think that the recent mobilization in Wisconsin represent a further step forward in the development of the struggles that we saw starting around 2003. We think it is therefore necessary to develop a frame for understanding these recent developments. We will look at the struggles that started in 2003, paying

attention in particular to the NYC Transit strike of 2005, and ask the question about how or whether the events in Wisconsin are any different. We hope this will give a better idea of the period we have entered and the perspectives for the future struggles.

The issue that pushed the US workers to take the path of struggle again was not, as in many European countries, the attack on pensions starting around 2002-2003, but rather the attack on health benefits. As we wrote in *Internationalism 128*, "The era when large companies covered all or most of health care costs is over. In the last two years insurance premiums rose fastest in a decade, at the rate of 14% per year, more than 3 times the official government rate of inflation. In 2003, only 4% of large employers still pay 100% of insurance, down from 21% just 15 years ago in 1988. From 2000 to 2003, there has been a 50% increase in what workers must pay for their medical coverage. The situation in regard to prescription coverage is even worse. The amount that workers must pay for prescription drug coverage jumped 46 to 71% in the same period. A total of 43.6 million people in the richest, most powerful capitalist country in the world have no medical coverage - 15% of the population. All of this combined has meant a gross deterioration in the real wages and standard of living of the proletariat and has pushed workers inescapably towards the necessity of taking up the class struggle in defense of their class interests."

As a result, in 2003 General Electric, sanitation workers in Chicago, transit workers in Los Angeles, 30,000 grocery store workers in Missouri, Kentucky, Ohio, and West Virginia, and then 70,000 grocery store workers in California struck. The significance of these strikes was the resurgence in combativeness they showed in contrast to, most notoriously, the UPS strike in 1997, which was essentially a union maneuver to recredibilize the image of the unions and strengthen capitalism's shop floor presence—the unions—among the workers. It is important to show this contrast because it helps us understand the dynamic of the class struggle. Significantly, the struggles picked up in the context of the aggravation of the economic crisis and the myriads difficulties imposed by social decomposition. From 2003 to 2008, when the financial crisis shook world capitalism, increasingly the class came out struggling with a growing awareness of

the stakes. Compared to the 1960's, when the global economic crisis returned, and, with it, the class struggle, the struggles of the new millennium showed a loss of the illusions in the possibility for reforms that existed in the 60's. A growing sense of uncertainty about the future accompanied a deepening questioning of capitalism itself. During this period, workers went on strike at great danger and risk of losing their jobs to strikebreakers, to company bankruptcy, to permanent disappearance of jobs, and risked incurring heavy penalties. The highest point reached by the struggles of the class in this period was the NYC transit workers strike of December 2005. The willingness to return to the path of struggle meant that the class was on the way to regain its own self-identity, demonstrated time and again by the echo these strikes had within the proletariat. In the early 1980's, there was a tendency for workers to join the strikes of other workers, an essential step in the generalization and extension of the struggle, but the NYC transit strike left a legacy of a deeper, and more generalized, sense of solidarity in the class at large. This sense of solidarity was inspired by the courageous fight the transit workers waged against the establishment of a different tier for new hires, with much worse health and pension benefits. The transit workers' solidarity with the young generation left a profound mark on the rest of the class, who responded in kind with many expressions of support. In 2006, when the young generation in France took to the streets consciously seeking to link up with workers and other sectors of the population, the bourgeoisie worldwide once again took note of this new development. In the US the bourgeoisie has been very aware of it, as shown by its repeated attempts at dividing workers among 'older' and 'younger', most infamously with the presently heating campaign against teachers contracts' seniority clause, and in general by forcing contracts that increasingly reduce or extinguish the benefits for the new hires. This is both an expression of the crisis, but it is also a divisive tactic consciously pursued in an effort to divide the class among itself in the face of the efforts by the working class to forge its self-identity and strengthen its solidarity.

In 2008 the world financial crisis started to rock global capitalism. At first, the working class suffered a moment of panic and the bourgeoisie thought that the class' hesitations as to whether and how to struggle would allow it to impose its austerity attack with impunity. Instead, the scale and scope of the attacks have only confirmed for the working class that the only way to defend its living and working conditions is by fighting back. The struggles in Greece, France, Portugal, Italy, Great Britain, Egypt, the Philippines, India, Turkey... the list is long-- don't all have the same strength or development. What they do have in common though, is their roots in the present unprecedented depth of the economic crisis and the stubborn willingness to fight back. They also seem to pick up from where the struggles have been left in any particular country, only to pop up somewhere else even more massively and insistent. In the US too, the list of strikes and street demonstrations is long, with important mobilizations across the country, especially, but not only, among the public sector workers. On several occasions teachers have come out in the open even with walkouts. We have seen the mobilization of hospital nurses and factory workers at Mott, and the wildcat strike on the East Coast which briefly spread along the entire Eastern seaboard, to mention a few. More important than their numbers, though, is the quality of their nature. The most important in this sense has been the public sector workers mobilization in Wisconsin. It started at first totally in the class terrain of the defense of working and living conditions and against cuts to health and pension benefits, and it has gone beyond the point reached by the NYC Transit strike of 2005. The first important aspect to pay attention to about this mobilization is the fact that, contrary to the NYC Transit strike, it started as a walkout, outside of the union control, showing in this way the same characteristics we see in other recent struggles: there is an important tendency toward the spontaneity of the action that points in significant ways to the future possible development of the mass strike. These characteristics are focused on the issue of the re-appropriation of proletarian methods of struggle, as illustrated by:

- The extension of the struggle
- The spontaneity of the struggle
- The tendency not to be drawn into 'battles of attrition'
- The tendency toward walk outs and work stoppages

- The active search for solidarity: intergenerational, with unemployed, underemployed, immigrants, retirees, students, across 'professional' boundaries

- The reliance on 'the street' as the public place where General Assemblies take form and where wide discussions happen around how to organize, what to do, with numerous examples of elections of delegates sent to other workers. This is a development that was not as widespread as in some European countries or as in Egypt, and it is also important to underline that the movement in Wisconsin was very quickly co-opted by the unions.

Notwithstanding the weaknesses, it is the overall tendency and characteristics of the movement which point to a new phase in the development of the struggles in the US, a phase with the same characteristics that belong to the struggles of the working class world-wide, inscribing the US proletariat entirely in the international picture.

The bankruptcy of capitalism brought out in the open by the financial crisis has forged a mood of defiance and indignation in an undefeated class. The conditions under which the class struggles today are doubtlessly very difficult, but the path it has taken toward the struggle is instilling in it a greater confidence and a sense of class identity that the class needed to recover. Today the conditions exist for its hesitations, defeats, and failures to be so many opportunities to forge an even deeper confidence in its strength and its ability to lead humanity out of the infernal chaos capitalism has plunged it in, to understand that it is indeed the only force in society capable of this gargantuan task. Following the mobilization in Wisconsin, the self-identity of the class can be strengthened as it drops its illusions about the state as the guarantor of its protection and about the unions as its defender. A result of this can be a greater reliance on and experience with self-organization, and the beginning of a distancing of itself from the stranglehold of the unions. As the class develops its combativeness, it can also develop the awareness that what it is engaged in, this class struggle, is not merely a defensive struggle on the economic terrain, but a political struggle against oppression, for the wresting of power from the exploiters, and for the construction of a new world.

Ana. 3/26/11

The Canadian Bourgeoisie Attempts to Revive Its Democratic Mystification Once Again

Continued from Page 8

ing the Canadian economy is that fact that close to three-quarters of its exports must currently find a market in the United States. Continued economic troubles south of the border, coupled with a high Canadian dollar that is currently trading above par with the U.S. greenback, pose the threat that Canada's relative economic strength will be turned into weakness in short order. Although Canada has seen its share of plant closings over the past several decades (particularly in southern Ontario), it remains a largely resource extraction/industrial oriented economy vulnerable to rapid changes in international—and in particular U.S.—demand.

Moreover, Canada's provinces—outside of insurgent Alberta still basking in the glow of its oil boom—cannot claim the same level of comparative fiscal strength as the Federal government. By some estimates, Ontario's debt stands at a whopping \$250 billion, while Québec suffers from a 50 percent debt-to GDP ratio, making it one of the most heavily indebted jurisdictions in North America.⁴

⁴ Tamsin MacMahon. "The Federal Budget and 50 Years of Debt." *National Post*. March 22, 2011. Cited on Social Policy in Ontario webpage. <http://spon.ca/the-federal-budget-and-50-years-of-canadian-debt/2011/03/22/>

The Crisis of the Canadian Political Class

Although the Canadian bourgeoisie does not face the same immediate imperative as the other major powers to launch a frontal assault on the living and working conditions of the working class, the underlying fragility of its economic situation should have its political class concerned about developing a coherent strategy for implementing future austerity and responding to working class discontent. For now, however, the Canadian ruling class is finding it difficult to go beyond a basic struggle to legitimate its electoral and political apparatus in the eyes of a rather disengaged populace.

While the Canadian bourgeoisie may currently display a thinly-veiled sense of superiority towards their American neighbors regarding the latter's economic woes, they remain envious of the success the U.S. bourgeoisie had in 2008 in revitalizing the electoral mystification accomplished through the "historic" candidacy of Barack Obama. Voter turnout in Canadian elections has been dismally low for some time. The last federal election in 2008 marked the

lowest voter participation in Canadian history, with only 59 percent of registered voters casting a ballot.⁵ Participation among young voters was particularly appalling, as only 37 percent of voters aged 18 to 24 bothered to show up at the polls.⁶ Although the usual non-profit civic groups engage in media campaigns to preach the importance of participation to democracy and the candidates themselves attempt to reach out to the youth through YouTube and Facebook, the Canadian political class continues to find it next to impossible to get many in the younger generation to give a damn about Canadian elections. Watching Canadian television news for an evening, an outsider could be forgiven were they to conclude that Canadians would prefer Obama were a candidate in their elections, rather than Harper, Ignatieff, Layton or Duceppe.

Canadian politicians themselves have certainly not made it easy to revive faith in electoral democracy in their own country. Over the last five years, the Conservative Party in par-

⁵ Amber Hildebrandt. "Elections Missed Mark With Students." *CBC News*. April 5th, 2011. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canadavotes2011/story/2011/04/04/cv-election-youth-voter-turnout.html>

⁶ *ibid*. Keep in mind these numbers are of registered voters not eligible voters, which likely underestimates the extent of voter apathy.

ticular has willfully flouted parliament on numerous occasions, giving the impression that the political class itself could care less about the rules of the game. In late 2008, just months after winning his second minority government, Harper was forced to ask the Governor General to prorogue (suspend) parliament for three months in order to avoid being ousted from office by a Liberal/NDP coalition that would have governed with support from the *Bloc*. Citing the need for stable government and to save the nation from a coalition that included separatists, Harper decided to forgo parliamentary democracy altogether for a quarter of the year! If Harper would have ended there he may have gotten away with it, but in early 2010 he did it again—this time in order to avoid a parliamentary mandate to turn over documents regarding the Canadian military's treatment of detainees in Afghanistan. This time, Harper slyly told the public that parliamentary democracy must cease, so the nation could focus on the Olympics, then being held in Vancouver! Still, despite holding the majority of seats in parliament, the opposition parties remained so divided amongst themselves—so afraid of be-

Continued on Page 5

The Development of the Class Struggle: What Method to Understand It?

The acceleration of capitalist decay has become a matter of everyday front page news. Not two months go by without this obsolete social system inflicting further violence on the environment and humanity: in the past ten months alone, we have been treated to the horrors of the Deep Water Horizon oil rig explosion, followed by the “red slush” from the Czech factory poisoning the Danube river and surrounding farmlands, and most recently by the hair-raising nuclear nightmare in Japan (see article in this issue of Internationalism). The total irrationality of this rotten system cannot go unnoticed when we juxtapose the pictures of human misery and pain suffered by the Japanese population to those of, on the one hand, Colonel Qaddafi’s bombing of the population in Libya and, on the other, that of the French, British, and American gangsters’. These events openly give the lie to any illusion in capitalism’s ability to offer anything other than a future filled with the most infernal social and environmental convulsions ever experienced in the history of humankind. Horrific and terror-inspiring as they are, these events can prompt a fruitful reflection in the heads of the masses of the oppressed and the exploited because they are taking place at a time of an important resurgence of class combativeness and consciousness worldwide. In the midst of this utter chaos, such reflection is further fueled by the deepest economic crisis in the history of capitalism relentlessly eating away at the working class’ very conditions of existence and leaving in its wake millions upon millions of suffering human beings. This is further proof of the bankruptcy of capitalism. It has become evident that the survival of capitalism is achieved only with the destruction of the environment and human life. Is there any force in society that can take humanity out of this spiraling inferno?

In the midst of this barbarity, it is the international class struggle that has emerged as the beacon for an alternative. Even though the death agony of capitalism presents it with incredibly daunting difficulties, the working class world-wide has not been a passive by-stander. Its challenge to the capitalist order and its refusal to keep silent and submit to the attacks raining on it are an inspiration for millions of people world-wide, and for the future struggles to come. They are irrefutable proof that, notwithstanding the ebbs and flows of its struggle and the tortuous way in which it develops its class consciousness, it is the working class that is the historic subject of the communist revolution, only alternative to capitalism.

Continued from Page 4

ing associated with the *Bloc*—that they could not at the time find the stones to bring down the Conservative government.

Over the last year, the Conservatives have shown no sign of attempting to repair their image. In March of this year, Minister of International Cooperation Bev Oda was found by the Speaker to have misled Parliament by essentially lying on the floor of the House of Commons regarding documents her office appeared to have forged, overriding career civil servants to deny funding to an international development agency alleged to have anti-Israeli views. This scandal was followed by revelations that Brian Kenney—Minister of Immigration—used his ministerial office to campaign on behalf of the Conservative Party among “ethnic voters.” Further allegations that the Conservatives misrepresented the costs of an ambitious anti-crime bill and grossly and intentionally understated the costs of their plan to acquire sixty-five F-35 fighter jets were the final straws that broke the camel’s back. For the sake of the image of the Canadian state, the opposition parties had to bring the government down.

With such utter contempt for the trappings of parliamentary democracy on the part of the Conservatives, coupled with such utter lack of will on behalf of the opposition parties to de-

The Importance of a Historical Method

It is impossible to understand the potentiality the working class has to overthrow capitalism without taking a wider, more historical view of the development of its struggles. It seems unquestionable that the working class today is in a very different period than it was in the 1930’s. Then, the defeat of the Russian Revolution ushered in a deep and prolonged reflux in the consciousness of the class which created the conditions for the bourgeoisies of the most powerful nations to tie the class behind the ideology of the defense of the nation when the paroxysm of the global economic crisis—called “the Great Depression” in the US—pushed it to unleash the second imperialist slaughter—WWII. Even though the class waged important struggles in the 1930’s and into the 1940’s, the balance of forces left by the defeat of the Russian Revolution left the ruling class enormously powerful and the consciousness of the working class severely impaired. In addition, only a small minority of revolutionaries survived the repression of the counterrevolution, and the class all but lost its historic links with its own political organizations. Those struggles did not overcome the ideological stranglehold of nationalist ideology and the class was drawn in the deluge of imperialist barbarism.

1968: The Return of the Class on the Historic Scene

It is not until 1968 that the class was able to recover from the oblivion of the counterrevolutionary years. 1968 saw the massive return of the class to the historic scene and the terrain of the struggle globally as the global economic crisis returned with a vengeance after a relative stability following the years of post-War reconstruction. A new generation of largely young workers who had not suffered a historic and ideological defeat entered the stage of class confrontations. These developed at different paces in different countries, yet with similar characteristics, and similar weaknesses, right up until the late 1980’s. From the late 1960’s to the early 1980’s, the struggles were massive and, in the beginning, took the bourgeoisie by surprise, but they did not challenge the unions’ stranglehold, were marked by corporatism and latent illusions in democracy—characterized by the idea that reforms and betterment were still possible, or the idea that revolution was a possibility, yet not a necessity. In the mid-1980’s the struggles heated up and we saw a qualitative development in the search for extension and unity and the simultaneity of

fight it for over two years, its no wonder most Canadians are completely turned off to the electoral process in their country. Nevertheless, given the structure of the Canadian state and the balance of power between the parties, it is very likely that the Conservatives will win the most votes in the May election. The only question that remains uncertain is whether they will win enough to form a majority government. Thus, the difficulty facing the Canadian ruling class is that there appears to be no immediate way to give the government a new face without endorsing a Liberal/NDP coalition government that would be quickly painted by the Conservatives as a Liberal/NDP/*Bloc* coalition, depriving it of legitimacy in the eyes of many Anglophone Canadians from the start.

The Canadian political class finds itself in a tough political quandary. If the Conservatives win a majority government without winning a majority of the vote, it will prove difficult to legitimate it in the eyes of the majority of voters who supported the opposition parties. If the Conservatives form another minority government, more political instability will surely follow. Still more, a Liberal/NDP coalition might prove even less legitimate as it would surely be tinged by the defeated Conservatives with the stench of separatist support, inflammatory

struggle in different industries and countries. In the US, it was the Greyhound strike of 1986 that marked this phase of the class struggle. As Internationalism said in its report on the class struggle in the US in 1987, “*This phase quickly manifested itself in the US in the strike at Greyhound, in which workers fought back against threatened wage cuts. When management attempted to emulate the example of the Reagan administration in the air traffic controllers’ strike of 1981 by hiring scabs to replace strikers, militant workers from other industries rushed to show their solidarity. These demonstrations, called by the central union councils in city after city, often posed the possibility of breaking free from union control... The Greyhound strike was a qualitative step forward, as for the first time workers outside the specific contract dispute sought to participate directly in the struggle.*” In addition to the quest for active solidarity, the struggles of this period were characterized by:

- Violent confrontations in pitched battles with police
- Unofficial wildcat strikes which on a number of occasions spread widely, as in the General Electric wildcat strike which spread to four factories in Massachusetts, the strike by Maine railroad workers, which spread across New England as other rail workers displayed an active solidarity, and the municipal workers’ strikes in Philadelphia and Detroit in July and August 1986
- Steps toward self-organization, as in the Watsonville cannery strike, where a mass workers’ assembly elected a strike committee
- Mass picketing
- The refusal to let the unions use jurisdictional divisions and the defiance against court injunctions

In face of the upsurge in class struggle, the ruling class switched to a campaign of dispersed attacks, picking workers off one company, one factory, one sector at a time. In order to undermine solidarity and extension, the unions took pre-emptive action before waiting for pressure to build for solidarity demonstration and marches, announcing instead plans for such actions by the unions, effectively short-circuiting spontaneous action and dragging the class struggle in long ‘battles of attrition’—the long strike. As the ruling class was developing these tactics of dispersal of the struggles and putting in place of base unionism to pre-empt spontaneous class action, the onset of a new global recession increasingly put the bourgeoisie under pressure to switch to a frontal attack on the entire working class.

rhetoric that would certainly alienate many in Québec.⁷

The Canadian bourgeoisie is currently hampered by the structure of its state that at the present time seems incapable of producing a government that commands much legitimacy. While the somewhat exceptional nature of the Canadian economic situation grants the Canadian bourgeoisie some flexibility to solve this problem, the constant threat of a renewed economic downturn in a fragile international environment increases the urgency of this task.

The working-class in Canada must not be fooled by the attempts of the bourgeoisie to revitalize its electoral/democratic apparatus, nor should it allow itself to be drawn into the campaigns around the legitimacy of particular governments. For the working-class, all capitalist governments are equally illegitimate, as they will all eventually have to carry out the same mandate to attack the proletariat’s living and working conditions.

Henk 4/7/11.

⁷ Despite the *Bloc*’s official stance in favor of sovereignty for Québec, the prospect for bringing that to fruition is currently remote. In fact, perhaps the greatest threat to the territorial integrity of Canada today comes from Conservative rhetoric itself, which in a quest to demonize its opponents has threatened to revive the separatist boogeyman.

The Collapse of the Stalinist Bloc and Its Impact on the Working Class

The struggles from the mid-80’s until the collapse of the Stalinist Bloc occurred in successive waves, each of which showed greater radicalization and politicization. So much so that the ICC developed the analysis of the waves of struggles, perhaps falling once again prey to the 1968’s illusion that revolution was around the corner, and not so difficult to accomplish. Certainly, it became clear with the collapse of the Eastern bloc and the subsequent retreat in class combativeness and consciousness that the class struggle never develops in a linear way, without even serious lags and setbacks.

In the midst of this barbarity, it is the international class struggle that has emerged as the beacon for an alternative... Its challenge to the capitalist order and its refusal to keep silent and submit to the attacks raining on it are an inspiration ... millions of people world-wide, and for the future struggles to come.

The fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 allowed the bourgeoisie to temporarily unleash a tremendous ideological campaign about the ‘end of communism and the class struggle’, which left the class temporarily, yet deeply, disoriented and unable to put forth a counteroffensive. The consequent reflux in class consciousness and combativeness was significant and relatively long, and it was furthered by the unleashing of the Gulf War in 1991. The disappearance of the Eastern bloc wracked havoc in the long-standing alliances of the Western bloc itself, ultimately unraveling the entire Cold War—era world order. No longer could the bourgeoisie rally its respective working classes behind an all-out imperialist massacre. However, the serious reflux in consciousness following this unprecedented historic event made the working class itself incapable of imposing its historic revolutionary task. This stalemate between the two major social classes is at the root of the phase of social decomposition, under which we are presently living (see the many articles we have written on this topic in the *International Review*.) The class was significantly disoriented, but not historically defeated. In addition, and very importantly, the class continued to undergo a process of reflection and subterranean development of class consciousness, surfacing here and there with the emergence of revolutionary minorities in search of a political orientation, who created reading and discussion groups, came in contact with existing revolutionary organizations, and actively searched for ways to connect themselves to the historic movement of the class. The existence of this minority up to today is a sign of the vitality and resilience of the class foretelling that the lull in the broader and open combativeness and consciousness was bound to be dispelled. And dispelled it was, starting around 2003, with the massive demonstrations in France and Austria against the renewed attacks on the working class which the ruling class was compelled to unleash as the economy took yet another dip.

In another article (on page 4) we present an analysis of the recent developments of the class struggle. Those developments too, need to be placed in the larger, historic motion of ebbs and flows as the class struggles to conquer its own class identity and class consciousness. The benefit of this approach is that it allows us to understand the dynamic of the class struggle. This, in turn, helps us forge a long-term perspective and a materially based confidence in the class and in its potential and ability to carry out its historic revolutionary task.

Ana, 4/7/11.

Ideological Decay of the U.S. Bourgeoisie

Continued from Page 1

to emphasize that at this time the American state was able to impose the unionization of the mass of unskilled workers through the CIO over the objections of recalcitrant bourgeois factions. The American state recognized that it was in the overall interests of the national capital to ensure the smooth running of industry in its drive to develop a permanent war economy in the preparation for the brewing military confrontation with Germany and Japan. The unions would play a critical role in this process.

The role of both the AFL and CIO in mobilizing the American working-class for the imperialist slaughter of the Second World War—including the vigorous enforcement of the unconditional no-strike pledge—proved the perspicacity of the American state's unionization policies under the Roosevelt administration.

During the period of the post-war boom, the American unions became a more or less accepted facet of economic and social life; an almost equal partner with industry in ensuring the growth and strength of the American economy within the system of military Keynesianism. On foreign policy matters, once the Stalinists were largely eliminated from the unions, the AFL-CIO (merged in 1955) would play an important role in supporting the American state's cold war strategy, in particular in advocating for "free trade unions" in Stalinist countries.

However, in the 1970s the place of the union bureaucracy within the American ruling class and the role of unions in the economy and society in general was called into serious question for the first time since the formation of the CIO four decades before. Economists talked about a "wage squeeze" causing runaway inflation to endanger the economy. Austerity was in the offing.

Broad economic and social forces corresponding to the return of the capitalist crisis moved against the American union bureaucracy in the 1970s and 1980s. Insurgent bourgeois factions—rallying around the presidency of Ronald Reagan—began to question whether the union apparatus was just too costly in an era marked by economic crisis.

Nevertheless, despite declining membership, the unions have remained an important force in the political life of the American bourgeoisie, as well as an important bulwark in diffusing the class struggle—above all, among public sector workers who are today among the most combative sectors of the working class.

We can see from this brief history that the unions—despite their recent troubles—remain an important component of the American state apparatus and a key faction of the American bourgeoisie. In addition to their special role as the shop floor police of the working class, the unions constitute a key link in the reproduction of the Democratic Party at all levels and therefore an important mechanism in the maintenance of a credible two-party electoral mystification.

Why then have certain factions of the bourgeoisie turned so violently against the unions in a way that not even Reagan himself contemplated?

Political Decomposition, "Union Busting" and the Strategy of the Bourgeoisie

The preferred political strategy of the main factions of the bourgeoisie at this time would most likely be to maneuver the Republican party into power, so that it can begin to enact the needed austerity measures against the working-class, while the Democratic Party and the unions play the card of the "left in opposition." However, the forces of decomposition have already impacted the political life of the bourgeoisie to such an extent as to significantly complicate the implementation of this strategy. The increasingly ideological nature of the Republican Party—spurred on by the Tea Party insurgency—makes it more and more difficult for the GOP to function as a credible party of bourgeois government. This

analysis seems to be born out on the state level by the incredibly shortsighted and clumsy actions of Governor Walker and his ilk.

We think we must see the union busting laws pursued by Republican governors since the mid-term elections in this light. One of the most important outcomes of the election was the victory of Republican/Tea Party governors across the industrial Mid-West, generally accompanied by Republican majorities in the state legislatures. True to their campaign words, most of these governors have wasted no time in attempting to implement extreme right-wing programs including the draconian union busting laws. These governors have shown little political flexibility, embarking on a sweeping program of right-wing initiatives that have even left many of the people who voted for them stunned.

For us, this conflict is more than a mere stepping up the faction fighting between Democrats and Republicans. It represents a concerted effort on the part of an insurgent right-wing faction within the Republican party to destroy politics as usual as they implement the most extreme elements of a right-wing program that until recently had been largely limited to the margins of the Republican Party, or at the very least kept in check by the main factions of the bourgeoisie. In fact, far from a mere acceleration of partisan jockeying, the efforts of the new crop of Republican governors reflects an intensification of the ideological breakdown of the American bourgeois political apparatus itself, which threatens not only the unions and their Democratic allies, but the main national

factions of the Republican party as well. As many bourgeois commentators have noted, the actions of the Republican governors go so far as to threaten the continuity of the two-party system, which essentially threatens the continuity of the state apparatus itself.

The attempts by the Republican governors to destroy the unions would appear to fly in the face of the strategy of the main factions of the national bourgeoisie who have actually been trying for the last decade and a half to revitalize their struggling unions. From the replacement of Lane Kirkland as head of the AFL-CIO with the insurgent John Sweeny from SEIU in 1995 to the attempt to amend labor law to make it easier to organize workers with the proposal of the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) in 2007, important factions of the national bourgeoisie have been making a concerted effort to bolster its flailing union apparatus in anticipation of the class confrontations to come.⁴ The failure to fully implement these efforts—in particular the collapse of EFCA in the early months of the Obama Presidency—reflects the extent to which the political decomposition of the bourgeois political apparatus has prevented the ruling class from implementing a whole series of policies designed to prepare the national capital for the coming period of class struggle in the face of the crisis.

Thus, it is not surprising that more far-sighted factions of the U.S. national bourgeoisie have

4 See our articles Revitalization of the Trade Unions: A Key Element in Capitalist Strategy (Internationalism #113) http://en.internationalism.org/inter/113_unions.htm; and "Employee Free Choice Act": A Weapon to Derail the Class Struggle (Internationalism #152) <http://en.internationalism.org/inter/152/efca>; for our analysis of these events.

seized upon Governor Walkers' actions in order to attempt to launch a new campaign to revitalize the unions. The talk emanating from certain circles on the left of a new "people's movement" that will supposedly re-channel the populist anger currently manipulated by the Tea Party seems like more than idle chatter, but a very real attempt to both revitalize the unions as a buffer between the proletariat and the state and steer the working-class' anger over the crisis in a political avenue more amenable to stable bourgeois politics. Whether or not these efforts will come to fruition, we cannot at this time say.

For the working class, the lessons of this conflict are clear. The unions are on the terrain of the bourgeoisie. Far from the last best chance we have to make the economy work for ordinary people, the unions are really the bourgeoisie's best hope to derail our struggle for another world. The fact that certain factions of the bourgeoisie have developed a cannibalistic instinct towards the unions should serve as a clear symbol to us workers about the depths that the crisis of capitalist society has reached today.

Henk, 4/3/11.

A longer version of this article is available online, in particular with a section that takes up the question of whether there is an economic rationale to union-busting as put forward by the International Communist Tendency.

Imperialist Mess in Libya

Continued from Page 1

perative of struggling to defend its position of hegemony in the world. This is why from dragging its feet regarding the possibility of intervention in Libya, the US resolved in its favor almost overnight when France decided to move in support of the rebels. It is clear that the strongest stimulus toward intervention has been the fact that France first, followed immediately by Great Britain—who even sent an incognito diplomatic envoy to discuss policies with the anti-Qaddafi forces—rushed to scene, proclaiming their full support for the 'revolt'. This is the single most powerful reason for the US to intervene. Of course the outcry of disapproval for the 'madman' Qaddafi is complete hypocrisy, all the major imperialist powers, including the US went along with his 42-year long dictatorship and terror against his population. Qaddafi has been a force capable of imposing some kind of order in an area where "jihadist" extremism threatens to rip apart the already fragile and volatile balance of imperialisms. The can of worms opened by the destabilizing effect of the civil war in Libya may not grant the necessity for intervention but there are other considerations.

Why the US bourgeoisie's divisions and hesitancy?

The world imperialist situation since the collapse of the Eastern bloc has been characterized by a volatility and precariousness in the alliances between the imperialist gangsters. The predictability and relative stability of the Cold War years have been replaced by a tendency toward 'each for themselves'. The economic crisis can only aggravate this already explosive situation. This situation of fragility at the international level is what best explains the divisions and hesitations of the US bourgeoisie. In Libya, these centrifugal tendencies are, and have been, at work both at the level of this country's internal stability and cohesion, and that of the impact the present civil war is having on the western imperialist powers which have historically played a role in the area. Libya is essentially made up of two provinces, one in the north-west, where Tripoli is located, and the other in the east, where Benghazi is located. These two provinces are divided by long-standing tensions.

Qaddafi has historically neglected the eastern province because he judged the tribes there to be potentially disloyal. At the same time, Qaddafi exacerbated the divisions between the two provinces by playing each off the other in order to stay in power and gain the approval and tacit support of the "international community". The situation of utter dejection, lack of a future, unemployment, and repression opened the door to the influence of jihadist forces and Al-Qaida-influenced groups in the eastern part of the country. The weapons that flowed through Libya's porous border during the anti-Qaddafi campaign have left the region's tribes more powerful and emboldened by Western intervention on their behalf. As the US is pondering whether to intervene on the ground or not, it is making calculations as to whether it really wants to get involved in a situation that risks bogging it down in yet another drawn out conflict in which the perspective is one of all-out intertribal and interprovincial warfare. This is because although there is as yet no other opposition group, none among the council representatives of the Interim Libyan National Council—the provisional government officially recognized by France and Italy, among others—can command allegiance in all provinces and across all tribes. Neither does it have the ability to bring the different sides together in a post-conflict situation. In addition, displacing Qaddafi would give a number of groups, including Al-Qaida, the opportunity to use the current chaos in Libya to extend their influence. On the other hand, leaving Qaddafi in control would leave the country unstable. The alternative of a divided Libya would not resolve this situation. In the context of this utter chaos, the US may conclude that Libya is not important enough, nor Qaddafi dangerous enough, to command a long-drawn intervention with troops on the ground. Indeed, it may even be better, after all, to leave Qaddafi in power or find other, less 'radical' solutions, such as a cease fire followed by some kind of sanctions. These calculations, however, rather than reflecting a coherent strategy, are an expression of the chaotic nature of the current period, and why instead the imperialist powers increasingly have to react to the events of the day.

What perspectives ahead?

The UN Security Council Resolution 1973—"to protect the country's population"—is shown up for what it is: the usual hypocritical rubbish spouted by a bourgeoisie utterly uninterested in the well-being and safety of any population and mired in the contradictions wrought by the decay of its system. As the unrest spiked in Libya, all the imperialist gangsters engaged in a furious race as they each tried to beat the other to the scene, attentive to how the mess was disrupting their interests in the region or whether there were any possibilities for new alliances, new trade agreements that could give them an advantage over their opponents. Their own divisions, their fight for 'the survival of the fittest' makes them incapable of having a coherent, unified strategy capable of bringing lasting peace to any conflict. Instead, it is their self-interest in the context of a dying system that causes them to become the motor force of the spreading of further chaos, hurling humanity as a whole in a maddening spiral of violence. Thousands upon thousands of people have fled the area, in many cases either by giving themselves to the desert or drowning in the Mediterranean Sea. Those who survive are directed to 'welcoming centers' or refugee shelters, veritable jails with sub-human living conditions. Those left behind, among whom teenagers, often fall prey to jihadist ideology and embrace violence. This is the future that capitalism has to offer. This is the 'protection' humanity can hope to gain from it. Indeed, the situation in Libya opens up a real perspective for utter chaos in the Middle East and North Africa. In Libya, a weak and inexperienced working class could not impose its will on the historic scene and sustain the struggle it had timidly started. However, it is the working class worldwide that is the only force in society capable of giving society a different direction and offer a real solution to the problems facing humanity. The timid, weak, clumsy struggles that the working class in Libya first waged at the beginning of the 'anti-Qaddafi movement' can find again their initial élan when they are inscribed in the larger historical struggles of the world proletariat.

Ana, 4/12/11.

International Review 145

(out soon)

Social revolts in North Africa and the Middle East, nuclear catastrophe in Japan, war in Libya:

Only the proletarian revolution can save humanity from the disaster of capitalism

What's happening in the Middle east?

What are the workers councils? (V)

1917-21: the Soviets and the question of the state

Decadence of capitalism

The Comintern and the virus of 'Luxemburgism' in 1924

The Communist left in Russia

The Manifesto of the Workers' Group of the Russian Communist party (IV)

Bookshops selling the ICC's press

San Francisco, CA: Modern Times, 888 Valencia, St.

La Jolla, CA: Groundwork Bookstore 0323 UCSD Student Center

San Francisco CA: City Lights 261 Columbus Ave.

Madison, WI: Rainbow Bookstore 426 W. Gilman, St.

Philadelphia, PA.: Wooden Shoe Books, 704 South, St

New York: St. Marks Book Shop, 31 Third Ave, Manhattan.

Minneapolis, MN: Mayday Books. 301 Cedar Ave. S

Seattle, WA: Left Bank Bookstore 92 Pike S

Boulder, Co: Left Hand Books 1200 Pearl St. #10

New Orleans, LA: Iron Rail Bookstore, 511 Marigny

Chapel Hill, NC: Internationalist Books & Community Center, 405 W Franklin

Austin, TX: Monkey Wrench Books, 110 E. North Loop.

Baltimore, MD: Red Emma's, 800 St Paul St

Pittsburgh, PA: Thomas Merton Peace Justice Center, 5125 Penn Ave

Write to the ICC

Debate is vital to the revolutionary movement. One of the most important elements of our activity, defined in our Basic Positions, is the "Political and theoretical clarification of the goals and methods of the proletarian struggle, of its historic and its immediate conditions". This, we are convinced, is only possible through the confrontation and discussion of differing views and positions within the revolutionary camp.

For this reason, we urge our readers to write to us with their comments, opinions and disagreements on the positions and analyses that we defend in our written press, including our web site.

We will do our best to reply to all serious correspondence as quickly as possible, although given our limited resources we may not always be able to do so immediately. Should the subject matter be of general interest, then we may publish both correspondence and our reply in our press.

While debate amongst revolutionaries is vital, it is equally necessary not to fall into the trap of thinking that our activity is something anodyne and acceptable to the bourgeois dictatorship disguised under the trappings of the democratic state. We will not under any circumstances publish our correspondents' real names, nor their home or e-mail addresses.

Please write without mentioning the section's name in the address.

Accion Proletaria

Apartado de Correos 258, 46080 Valencia, Spain

Internacionalismo, Venezuela

Write to AP address or to:

venezuela@internationalism.org

Internationalism

320 7th Ave. #211, Brooklyn, NY 11215

USA, usa@internationalism.org

Internationalisme

BP 94, B-2600 Berchem, Belgium

Révolution Internationale

RI Mail Boxes 153, 105 rue Damrémont, France

Rivoluzione Internazionale

CP 469, 80100 Napoli, Italy

Weltrevolution (Germany)

Postfach 410308, 50863 Köln, Germany

Weltrevolution (Switzerland)

Postfach 2216, CH-8026 Zürich, Switzerland

Wereldrevolutie

P O Box 339, 2800 AH Gouda, Netherlands

World Revolution

BM Box 869, London WC1N 3XX,

Great Britain, uk@internationalism.org

Revolucion Mundial

Apartado Postal 15-024, C.P. C.P 02600, Mexico Distrito Federal, Mexico

Communist Internationalist

POB 25, NIT, Faridabad, 121001, Haryana, India. india@internationalism.org

Internationell Revolution

Box 21 106, 100 31 Stockholm, Sweden

REVOLUÇÃO INTERNACIONAL, BRAZIL

Write to: brasil@internationalism.org

Internasyonalismo, Philippines

Write to the address in India or to:

philippines@internationalism.org

DÜNYA DEVRIMI, TURKEY

Write to the address in Switzerland or to:

turkiye@internationalism.org

From the rest of the world use

international@internationalism.org

Subscriptions

Payments to New York should be made by money orders in **Dollars** left blank and sent to our New York address. Payments to London may be made by checks, drawn on a UK bank, or by international money order (Giro) in **Sterling** made out to *International Review* and sent to our London address

Subscriptions	USA & Canada	Britain	Europe	Other
Internationalism	\$8.50	\$11.25	\$11.25	\$11.50
World Revolution	\$18.00	\$10.00	\$18.00	\$18.00
International Review	\$22.50	£12.00	\$17.50	\$22.50
WR airmail supplement	\$8.00	n/a	n/a	\$8.00
Inter. & Int. Review	\$31.50	£17.50	\$33.50	\$33.50
WR & Int. Review	\$40.50	£22.00	\$33.50	\$33.50
Inter, WR & Int. Review	\$49.00	£27.50	\$46.75	\$51.75

ICC Books & Pamphlets

Please write to us for costs of postage for multiple items or shipping outside of the US

Title	Price	Postage US
The Italian Communist Left	\$9.00	\$3.00
The Dutch and German Communist Left	\$21.00	\$10.00
The Russian Communist Left	\$10.00	\$3.00
The British Communist Left	\$9.00	\$3.00
Communism: Not a 'Nice Idea', but a material necessity	\$14.00	\$3.00
Unions Against the Working Class	\$2.00	\$0.75
Nation or Class?	\$2.00	\$0.75
Platform of the ICC	\$2.00	\$0.75
The Decadence of Capitalism	\$4.50	\$1.25
Russia 1917: Start of the World Revolution	\$1.50	\$1.00
Communist Organizations and Class Consciousness	\$2.50	\$1.00
The Period of Transition from Capitalism to Socialism	\$3.25	\$1.00

Donations

Unlike the bourgeois press, revolutionary publications have no advertising revenue, no chains of news agents and no millionaire backers. We rely on the support of our sympathisers, and those who, while they might not agree with all aspects of our politics, see the importance of the intervention of a communist press

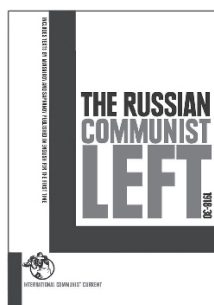
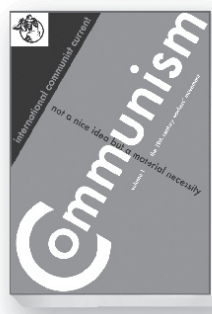
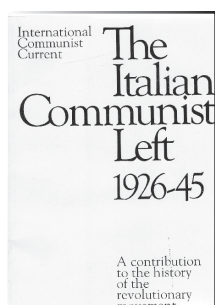
Public Meetings

See our website for the date and subject of our next Public Meeting

ICC online

Public Forum in New York on the revolts in the Arabic-speaking world

"...By the end of the discussion, the comrades present were connecting the dominance of democratic ideology with the lack of the confidence the class has internationally. Many workers feel that the revolution is necessary but are not sure if it is even possible. The organization of production has changed dramatically since the last major class battles and large industrial centers have been broken up ... not to mention the campaigns around the "death of communism" in the 1990s. Much was said about the weight of the decomposition of the capitalist ... Despite all these difficulties, it was agreed that the revolts, at least in Egypt and Tunisia, are a part of the slow and difficult process of the working class internationally struggling to return to the path of class struggle..."



Visit the ICC Website
<http://www.internationalism.org>

The Canadian Bourgeoisie Attempts to Revive Its Democratic Mystification Once Again

On March 25th, Stephen Harper's minority Conservative government fell, losing a Liberal Party confidence motion in the House of Commons, after having been found in contempt of Parliament by the speaker just days prior. The stage is now set for federal elections to take place on May 2nd, marking the third time in five years Canadians have been called to the polls. Already the media machine is in full swing reminding Canadians of the importance of voting to the health of their nation's "democracy."

The battle lines for the campaign are by now pretty well set. The Liberal Party, under former Harvard history professor Michael Ignatieff, will try to make this a campaign about the Harper government's gross disregard for democracy, its abuse of Parliament, and irresponsible corporate tax cuts, while Harper and the Conservatives will run on their reputation as the best managers of the economy, citing Canada's relatively strong economic condition compared to other western nations. Meanwhile, the New Democratic Party (NDP)—Canada's Social Democrats—will urge working-class Canadians to support them as the only party really looking out for the "middle class," and fighting to protect Canada's socialized medical system; while the officially separatist *Bloc Québécois* will call on the voters of Canada's only majority francophone province to support them in their quest to win more sovereignty for *la belle province*.

When we last wrote about the Canadian political situation at the time of the 2006 federal elections,¹ we pointed out the vital need at that time for the Canadian bourgeoisie to attempt to revive its electoral mystification after 13 years of corruption laden Liberal party rule that had finally run its course. Burdened by numerous corruption scandals, most notably the Quebec sponsorship scandal, confidence in the Canadian state was nearing an all time low. It had become essential for the Canadian bourgeoisie to dump the Liberal government, even if there was no need for a drastic change of course in international or domestic policy.

To that end, the Canadian bourgeoisie pulled off an immediate success, by bringing to power a new Conservative Party minority government, which could give the Canadian government a fresh face and revive illusions

¹ See our *Canadian Elections: The Electoral Circus Northern Style* in *Internationalism* #138; http://en.internationalism.org/inter/138_canada_elections.htm

among the populace in the power of electoral democracy to enact change. At the same time their minority government status would serve to keep the Conservative's more ideologically aggressive domestic policy desires from coming to fruition.

Nevertheless, despite the initial success in pulling off this transition in 2006, after five years of Conservative minority government, we can definitively say that the Canadian bourgeoisie has roundly failed to revive confidence in the nation's political system and its democratic and electoral mystifications remain fragile. The last five years have been far from a model of stable government, as the Harper regime itself has been plagued by scandal, displaying a contemptuous and cavalier attitude towards "representative democracy" reminiscent of the George W. Bush years in the United States.

The time has come once again for the Canadian bourgeoisie to attempt to give its state a new gloss of legitimacy through another election campaign. However, the challenges facing the Canadian ruling class this time around would appear to make the tasks it faced in 2006 look mild. While there again seems to be little need for a drastic change in course in domestic or international policies, the damage done to the legitimacy of the political system in the last 5 years has been tremendous and, what's more, it appears that there is no clear consensus among the Canadian bourgeoisie about how to repair the damage.

Should it give the Harper Conservatives a majority government on the grounds of creating the conditions for a stable government skilled at shepherding the still buoyant Canadian economy through the shoals of a perilous international economic environment? Should it keep the Conservatives in a minority government, a possibility that looks less and less viable everyday, or should it try to give the government an entirely new face once again, most likely through the mechanism of a Liberal/NDP coalition?

None of the choices facing the Canadian bourgeoisie at the moment are without their risks, and as a result it is not surprising that its main factions are having a hard time settling on a concerted policy. While we can not say for certain what will happen in May, polling trends currently suggest the Conservatives are toying with winning a majority govern-

ment without winning a majority of the vote, a prospect that likely frightens all those worried about the health of the Canadian democratic mystification.

In this article, we will attempt to analyze the trajectory of the Canadian national situation, showing that behind all the talk of its buoyancy in the face of international economic chaos, the Canadian economy remains quite fragile, even if its condition does not pose the same level of urgency to launch drastic austerity measures against the working class immediately, in the same way posed in other western nations. While this economic "breathing space" allows the Canadian bourgeoisie to be more flexible in its approach to national politics, it is finding it difficult to exercise this flexibility in the face of a serious political crisis resulting in a dangerous erosion in the populace's confidence in the electoral process and the "democratic" state.

Behind the Canadian "Miracle": Economic Fragility

For the last several years now, the Canadian bourgeoisie has roundly patted itself on the back for the swell job it has done mitigating the nation's exposure to the "Great Recession." In many aspects, the Canadian ruling class has some justification for its bragging. While the U.S. economy suffers a dramatic economic calamity as a result of the implosion of the real estate bubble in 2007 and Europe continues to face the specter of further sovereign debt crises, the Canadian economy has shown certain signs of resiliency. Canada boasts the lowest debt to GDP ratio in the G7, its banks remain solvent as they were largely unscathed by the sub-prime mortgage and associated collateral debt obligation crises, the domestic real estate market continues to expand and the Alberta oil sands are booming.

On the surface, among the major powers, the Canadian political class appears to have been among the most skilled managers of its national economy over the last decade. By keeping the most destructive impulses of the banking industry in check and eschewing the Anglo-American model of cheap and easy mortgage credit, while quietly streamlining government operations, the Canadian state has managed to avoid the outright economic disaster that has rocked its competitors, in particular its neighbor to the south. It is easy to detect the growing sense of smugness in the Canadian media

as they begin to look at the United States with a sense of cold pity after many decades of displaying a profound inferiority complex to the world's number one power.

Nevertheless, despite the comparative advantages over its competitors, the Canadian economy is not exactly standing on solid foundations. Although the state was largely able to prevent the banking industry from indulging in the most excessive financial games of the last decade, the worldwide recession has not spared Canada completely. Officially going into recession at the end of 2008, the nation suffered its first budget deficit in 13 years that same year. Canada's federal budget deficit now stands at about \$40 billion—small potatoes compared to the woes of the United States, but of enough concern to make reducing the deficit a central focus of economic policy debates in the country.

The official unemployment rate in Canada continues to stand at around 8 percent, only slightly lower than the U.S. The average household debt load in Canada is now at an all time high, further indication of the shallowness of effective demand in the consumer economy. In 2009, the average Canadian family was burdened by \$91,000 in debt.² In an all too familiar replay of the U.S. real estate farce, many Canadian families are now burdened by high mortgage debt in a real estate market that continues to spiral upward. Although Canada largely lacks the dangerous phenomenon of "liar loans" that was the impetus for the collapse of the U.S. housing market, many young families are stretching their incomes, taking on high ratio mortgages at variable interest rates in order to afford homes. Earlier this year, the Bank of Montreal stated its concern over a potential housing bubble in the nation—prompting the Federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty to announce tighter rules for mortgages.³ In many ways, although lacking some of the more outrageous abuses that characterized the U.S. bubble, the Canadian consumer economy has been kept afloat by the same smoke and mirrors of increasing consumer debt spurred by unsustainably low interest rates.

² However, perhaps the biggest challenge facing Canada is the high household debt. ² John Spears. "Canadian Household Debt Hits A Record High." *Toronto Star*. February 16, 2010.

³ *The Canadian Press*. "Housing Overvalued, BMO warns." Cited on *CBC News*. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/story/2011/03/03/bmo-housing.html>

Continued on Page 4

Political positions of the ICC

Internationalism is the section in the USA of the **International Communist Current** which defends the following political positions:

* Since the first world war, capitalism has been a decadent social system. It has twice plunged humanity into a barbaric cycle of crisis, world war, reconstruction and new crisis. In the 1980s, it entered into the final phase of this decadence, the phase of decomposition. There is only one alternative offered by this irreversible historical decline: socialism or barbarism, world communist revolution or the destruction of humanity.

* The Paris Commune of 1871 was the first attempt by the proletariat to carry out this revolution, in a period when the conditions for it were not yet ripe. Once these conditions had been provided by the onset of capitalist decadence, the October revolution of 1917 in Russia was the first step towards an authentic world communist revolution in an international revolutionary wave which put an end to the imperialist war and went on for several years after that. The failure of this revolutionary wave, particularly in Germany in 1919-23, condemned the revolution in Russia to isolation and to a rapid degeneration. Stalinism was not the product of the Russian revolution, but its gravedigger.

* The stratified regimes which arose in the USSR, eastern Europe, China, Cuba etc and were called 'socialist' or 'communist' were just a particularly brutal form of the universal tendency towards state capitalism, itself a major characteristic of the period of decadence.

* Since the beginning of the 20th century, all wars are imperialist wars, part of the deadly struggle between states large and small to conquer or retain a place in the international arena. These wars bring nothing to humanity but death and destruction on an

ever-increasing scale. The working class can only respond to them through its international solidarity and by struggling against the bourgeoisie in all countries.

* All the nationalist ideologies - 'national independence', 'the right of nations to self-determination' etc - whatever their pretext, ethnic, historical or religious, are a real poison for the workers. By calling on them to take the side of one or another faction of the bourgeoisie, they divide workers and lead them to massacre each other in the interests and wars of their exploiters.

* In decadent capitalism, parliament and elections are nothing but a masquerade. Any call to participate in the parliamentary circus can only reinforce the lie that presents these elections as a real choice for the exploited. 'Democracy', a particularly hypocritical form of the domination of the bourgeoisie, does not differ at root from other forms of capitalist dictatorship, such as Stalinism and fascism.

* All factions of the bourgeoisie are equally reactionary. All the so-called 'workers', 'Socialist' and 'Communist' parties (now ex-'Communists'), the leftist organisations (Trotskyists, Maoists and ex-Maoists, official anarchists) constitute the left of capitalism's political apparatus. All the tactics of 'popular fronts', 'anti-fascist fronts' and 'united fronts', which mix up the interests of the proletariat with those of a faction of the bourgeoisie, serve only to smother and derail the struggle of the proletariat.

* With the decadence of capitalism, the unions everywhere have been transformed into organs of capitalist order within the proletariat. The various forms of union organisation, whether 'official' or 'rank and file', serve only to discipline the working class and sabotage its struggles.

* In order to advance its combat, the working class

has to unify its struggles, taking charge of their extension and organisation through sovereign general assemblies and committees of delegates elected and revocable at any time by these assemblies.

* Terrorism is in no way a method of struggle for the working class. The expression of social strata with no historic future and of the decomposition of the petty bourgeoisie, when it's not the direct expression of the permanent war between capitalist states, terrorism has always been a fertile soil for manipulation by the bourgeoisie. Advocating secret action by small minorities, it is in complete opposition to class violence, which derives from conscious and organised mass action by the proletariat. * The working class is the only class which can carry out the communist revolution. Its revolutionary struggle will inevitably lead the working class towards a confrontation with the capitalist state. In order to destroy capitalism, the working class will have to overthrow all existing states and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale: the international power of the workers' councils, regrouping the entire proletariat.

* The communist transformation of society by the workers' councils does not mean 'self-management' or the nationalisation of the economy. Communism requires the conscious abolition by the working class of capitalist social relations: wage labour, commodity production, national frontiers. It means the creation of a world community in which all activity is oriented towards the full satisfaction of human needs.

* The revolutionary political organisation constitutes the vanguard of the working class and is an active factor in the generalisation of class consciousness within the proletariat. Its role is neither to 'organise the working class' nor to 'take power' in its name, but to participate actively in the move-

ment towards the unification of struggles, towards workers taking control of them for themselves, and at the same time to draw out the revolutionary political goals of the proletariat's combat.

OUR ACTIVITY

Political and theoretical clarification of the goals and methods of the proletarian struggle, of its historic and its immediate conditions. Organised intervention, united and centralised on an international scale, in order to contribute to the process which leads to the revolutionary action of the proletariat.

The regroupment of revolutionaries with the aim of constituting a real world communist party, which is indispensable to the working class for the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a communist society.

OUR ORIGINS

The positions and activity of revolutionary organisations are the product of the past experiences of the working class and of the lessons that its political organisations have drawn throughout its history. The ICC thus traces its origins to the successive contributions of the *Communist League* of Marx and Engels (1847-52), the three Internationals (the *International Workingmen's Association*, 1864-72, the *Socialist International*, 1884-1914, the *Communist International*, 1919-28), the left fractions which detached themselves from the degenerating Third International in the years 1920-30, in particular the *German, Dutch and Italian Lefts*.