

Across the USA and Beyond: One Class, One Struggle!

The protests by hundreds of thousands of workers and students across the US against the medicine of austerity are an inspiration. The past 18 months have also seen massive struggles against cutbacks, poverty and unemployment throughout Europe, Asia, and now the Middle East. The aftershocks unleashed by the financial crisis have hit the weakest countries hard, but even the strongest ones can't avoid them. The bankruptcy of states within the USA is just a caricature of the general and historical bankruptcy of this system of exploitation.

Who pays the price? Workers do! The attempt to end collective bargaining for state workers is just the latest in a long list of attacks and indignities we have suffered: pay cuts and freezes, rising unemployment, erosion of pensions, foreclosures, bankruptcy, rising costs of food and fuel. All these attacks, carried out simultaneously, show once again that the workers, whatever their nationality, are part of one and the same class which everywhere has the same interests and the same enemies.

Are we all in this together? Hell no! Those in power understand the explosive nature of the current situation. They have to force austerity down our throats, but they have to blackmail us to take the medicine: Blame the bankers! Blame the Democrats! Blame the Tea Party! Blame the 'middle class' public-sector workers! Anything else but blame capitalism! But this world of division is not ours. Capitalism forces the proletariat to endure the heavy chains of wage labor, but these same chains also link together the workers of all countries, across all frontiers. To accept sacrifices today in the name of 'defending the national or state economy' is just a way of preparing the ground for further and harder sacrifices tomorrow.

But how can workers best respond? Defend the unions? No! For decades now they've sold us out, forced us to swallow layoffs and pay cuts in the interests of the bosses and the check-off system, the source of blood that keeps these parasites alive. Defend the Democrats? No! Call a General Strike? What use are sterile 'Days of Action'? They've been tried in California and Europe and it's useless. No. The austerity plans now being announced are a frontal, generalized attack on our living conditions. The only possible response is therefore a massive movement from the workers. It's impossible to respond to these attacks by fighting in your own corner, in your own factory, school or office, isolated and alone. Fighting back on a massive scale is a necessity. It's the only alternative to being crushed separately and reduced to poverty.

We are being told by the media that this may be the last chance we have in America to save the unions. The Tea Party and Republicans are out for blood and they will stop at nothing to destroy them. That may be true. But as workers we must face the reality that defending the unions has never gotten us very far. The time is now to put forth our own demands to stop these austerity cuts, which the unions have only too been willing to agree to in the name of "shared sacrifice."

Following the trade unions always means following the road to division and defeat. Workers need to take the struggle into their own hands, by organizing in general assemblies and deciding on the demands and slogans to raise, by electing delegates who can be recalled at any moment and by sending massive delegations to discuss with other groups of workers, in the nearest factories, offices, schools and hospitals, with the aim of encouraging them to join the movement.

All this seems very difficult. It demands workers have confidence in the enormous power they hold in their hands, which is sorely lacking. But still the future belongs to the class struggle. Against the attacks, the only way forward is the development of increasingly massive movements. There's no other way out. Refusing to be treated like dogs and fighting back collectively means standing up for our dignity. It means realizing that solidarity does exist in this world of competition and exploitation and that the working class is really capable of bringing this priceless human feeling to life. And then the possibility of another world can start to appear, a world without exploitation, nations or frontiers, a world made for human beings and not for profit.

Capitalism is bankrupt, another world is possible: communism!

Internationalism, section in the USA of the ICC, 02/24/11

Write to: Internationalism, 320 7th Ave. #211, Brooklyn, NY 11215. Email: usa@internationalism.org

ICC Public Meeting in New York

Middle East: What Lessons and Perspectives for the Future Development of the Class Struggle World Wide?

Saturday March 19th, 12 noon to 3pm

TRS Suites, 11th floor, 44 East 32nd Street, NY 1001.

Nearest subway is the #6 train on the 33rd Street station.