

RALLY, COMRADES!

THE VOICE OF THE LEAGUE OF REVOLUTIONARIES FOR A NEW AMERICA

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Revolutionary Work in 21st Century Elections

The United States and the entire world are in an epoch of social revolution. The worldwide transition from industrial production based on human labor to laborless production based on digital technology is already well advanced. This economic revolution has caused an irreconcilable antagonism between the new, automated means of production and the old, capitalist system of buying and selling labor power. Workers displaced from production now have no income with which to buy the necessities of life. These workers are forced to enter into social struggle simply to secure their most fundamental human needs. The antagonism in the economy becomes reflected as an antagonism in the social, political, and intellectual life of society.

The antagonism in the economy is the foundation of the revolutionary process. It makes revolution both possible and an absolute necessity. But revolution cannot proceed to its conclusion without the introduction of consciousness among its participants by conscious revolutionaries. And consciousness cannot be introduced by decree, or in a single burst of propaganda. Revolutionary history shows that consciousness develops in stages, according to the level of experience and organization of the revolutionary class.

The role of revolutionaries is to identify the stages of the revolutionary process and work within changing conditions to develop the consciousness of the revolutionary class during the ebb and flow of the spontaneous movement.

STAGES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The various stages through which class consciousness develops may very generally be defined as social awareness, social consciousness, and class consciousness. These stages should not be viewed categorically. They reflect the relationship between ideas, the economy and the social struggle. Ideas are constantly in motion, and these stages of development interpenetrate and influence each other.

In the stage of social consciousness, where workers understand that they are members of a working class, and that they are exploited by a ruling class that is alien to them and does not have their interests at heart. They understand that they need class solidarity and class organization to win their demands. This stage of consciousness is generally expressed politically in the formation of some kind of working class political party. For a host of economic and historical reasons, the American working class has never reached this stage of social consciousness. However, today a growing number within the class are moving toward a socially conscious position.

Class consciousness is where the workers grasp the necessity of a political revolu-



Protesters, part of the Poor People's Campaign, hold the government accountable at a march and rally at the state capitol in Lansing, Michigan. Photo: Daymonjhartley.com

tion that will take political power and use it to transfer the socially necessary means of production to public ownership, and distribute the social product according to need.

ROLE OF REVOLUTIONARIES IN ELECTIONS

The transition from one stage of consciousness to the next cannot happen through propaganda alone. It takes place when revolutionary propaganda is artfully interwoven and coordinated with the political experience of the masses themselves. It is the task of revolutionaries at each stage to connect with the workers at the level where they are at, and to use agitation and propaganda to make them aware of their situation and align their thinking with what is objectively possible.

Connecting with the workers where they are at means uniting with their demands for the necessities of life whenever, wherever, and however they fight. Serious revolutionaries participate in all forms of social activity. Given America's long history of electoral struggles, connecting with the workers necessarily includes connecting with them as they fight for their demands in the electoral arena. Revolutionaries understand that in a class society, the real issues of class power are not and cannot generally be resolved by elections. But they also understand that bourgeois elections offer one of the broadest available arenas for worker participation in political struggle. As such they offer a key opportunity for the propaganda necessary to help move the workers to the next stage.

The ruling class understands that elections are an indispensable battleground for ideas. Even though it will never allow itself to be simply voted out of power, it nevertheless invests tens of billions of dollars to

use the elections to propagandize the masses and to gauge their thinking. It tirelessly promotes its message of racism, division, class hatred and war in elections at every level of government. Revolutionaries need to concentrate intensely in the electoral arena with a propaganda of class unity, class political organization, and the vision of a peaceful and cooperative society.

SOCIAL AWARENESS

The social awareness that is growing today is different from that of previous eras. It is driven by the underlying economic and social antagonism that is polarizing and destroying society. The needs of the people cannot be met without social struggle. As their living conditions deteriorate and politicians repeatedly betray them, the workers are losing their faith in the government and beginning the process of separating from the political system. Tens of thousands of teachers have taken to the streets to fight for education. Millions of students have marched against gun violence. They are putting forward their own indepen-

dent programs for meeting people's needs, and they are demanding that the government carry them out. For the first time in the history of America, a section of the working class is being compelled to break free from the ideological grip of the capitalist class. They are beginning to think for themselves. This is an advanced stage of social awareness.

Social awareness is frequently reflected in the beginnings of independent political activity, either within one of the major parties or in one of the developing third parties. The Bernie Sanders campaign was probably the broadest and most far-reaching political expression of social awareness in recent years. Along with this motion among the workers, the economic revolution causes the polarization and destruction of the ruling class institutions and parties of the past period, including the Republican and Democrat parties. This convergence of an intensified social movement and the splitting of old parties causes the emergence of third parties, including those that already exist, but also new ones or combinations of new and old. Third parties are essentially efforts by the ruling class to maintain its hold of political power by politically reorganizing in an effort to control the growing social polarization.

However, the development of a third party, even one created by the ruling class is an indispensable stage in the revolutionary process for the development of the consciousness of the working class. On the one hand, it accelerates the political polarization in society by breaking apart the old alliances of workers with sections of the old ruling class parties. On the other hand, it's a vehicle to advance the process of pulling together the scattered economic struggles into united political struggles.

Revolutionaries today stand at this dangerous turning point. Social awareness does not yet fully grasp the concept of economic classes. Workers in the stage of social awareness do not yet understand the need for a

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Demands of the New Class at the Forefront of the Electoral Struggle

Inside Rally, Comrades!

In this, our July/August issue, we look to the growing movement that is sweeping the country. This movement is not simply opposing, defending, or standing against something. It is fighting for something, and it is the task of revolutionaries to show the meaning of the fight.

This is so, because the foundation of this movement is the economic revolution that has caused an irreconcilable antagonism between new automated means of production and the old capitalist system of buying and selling labor power. Regardless of what this movement may think now, or think it knows now, this movement has no choice but to overturn the existing order and replace it with a cooperative communist society.

"The Fight for Water is a Fight for a New Society" exposes the corporate takeover of one of the most basic of necessities – water – and the role of the government in facilitating this takeover. We can see what the question of the immorality and danger of this merger of the corporations and the government presents to the peoples of not only our country but the world. Fighting for making water a human right means fighting for the public ownership of water and other life-giving natural resources.

"Women Leading the Fight in the Interests of all Society" shows that women are leaders in today's most active motions for a new society. They are fighting for health care, housing,

water, the earth, better wages, quality public education, and against sexual violence and harassment, the firearms corporations, police murder of unarmed people, and the deportation and separation of families. All of these women are fighting for the entire working class, as they demand the government provide the basic necessities of life.

"Confronting the System in Silicon Valley," analyzes the significance and reasons behind the political power of the technology industry, with a focus on Silicon Valley. The struggle for a better life by workers who live there is held back by the economic and political power of the tech industry. The article also shows how Silicon Valley is microcosm of a world-wide process wrought by electronic revolution and the revolutionary transformation it engenders.

Our cover article, "Revolutionary Work in 21st Century Elections," examines the process of consciousness, how it develops through its various stages, and reflects a relationship between ideas, the economy, and the social struggle. The article examines how the electoral process offers one of the broadest available arenas for worker participation in the political struggle and for revolutionaries to influence the thinking of the workers. It shows how revolutionaries work within the electoral arena for class unity, class political organization, and the vision of a peaceful and cooperative society.

"Electoral Politics: Key Arena for Rising Movement" examines the ways in which the workers are being compelled to enter the electoral arena to fight for their basic needs. Regardless of party labels, they are unleashing a debate about whether we can have true

democracy when corporations dominate the economy and the government. They are demanding a different kind of society where the interests of the majority – the working class – take priority. Once it is grasped by millions, that we are a class with independent interests from the ruling class, the fight of the people for political power to create a new cooperative society will leap forward.

The electoral arena is a key battleground and is a means to educate millions of people to prepare for the battles that lie ahead. Class interests can be clarified, when the workers use the electoral process to help carry out their fight to force the government to guarantee that their basic needs are met.

Finally, "From the Editors: Reverend Pinkney is Free!" celebrates the victory of the entire movement in the freeing of one of its steadfast leaders, Reverend Edward Pinkney of Benton Harbor, Michigan. Benton Harbor and Reverend Pinkney are at the center of what can only be described as a fascist offensive, first taking over government and operating it in the interests of the corporations, and then moving to contain and crush the rising motion of especially those workers cut off from obtaining the necessities of life. He represents a new kind of leader, who is uncompromising and steadfast in the fight to meet the needs of the people.

In his own words: "Let us make this struggle a victory for all the people. Let us take control of this country, away from the corporations, and build a society where the people, not the corporations, make the decisions." Reverend Pinkney stands as a beacon for all revolutionaries who are engaged in this fight.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Rally: to bring back together and put in a state of order, as retreating troops [to return to attack]

Comrade: a person with whom one is allied in a struggle or cause

Rally, Comrades! is the political paper of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America. In this period of growing motion and developing polarization, *Rally, Comrades!* provides a strategic outlook for the revolutionaries by indicating and illuminating the line of march of the revolutionary process. It presents a pole of scientific clarity, examines and analyzes the real problems of the revolutionary movement, and draws political conclusions for the tasks of revolutionaries at each stage of development in order to prepare for future stages. It is a vehicle to reach out and communicate with revolutionaries both within the League and outside of the League, to engage them in debate and discussion, and to provide a forum for these discussions. Articles represent the position and policies of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America.

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League of Revolutionaries for a New America

Today, whether through words or deeds, vast numbers of socially conscious people declare themselves revolutionaries in opposition to the degenerating social and economic conditions. The League's mission is to unite the scattered revolutionaries on the basis of the demands of the new class, to educate and win them over to the cooperative, communist resolution of the problem.

The demands of this new impoverished class for food, housing, education, health care and an opportunity to contribute to society are summed up as the demand for a cooperative society. Such a society must be based on the public ownership of the socially necessary means of production and the distribution of the social product according to need.

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rallycomrades.lrna.org

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

Reverend Edward Pinkney is Free!

From the Editors

A major victory has been achieved in the protracted battle in Benton Harbor, Michigan, against corporate dictatorship and for a government and society that operates in the interests of the people. After spending two and one-half years in prison on a trumped-up charge of voter fraud, Reverend Pinkney has been exonerated of all charges by the Michigan Supreme Court.

Benton Harbor is located in Berrien County, along the shores of Lake Michigan. The trans-global Whirlpool Corporation has long been the major employer for the workers of Benton Harbor. In the 1990s, Whirlpool began replacing its workforce with computers and robots. Large-scale unemployment and poverty began to set in. Whirlpool then shifted from manufacturing to building a \$500 million lakeside resort as a playground of the rich. The public property needed for the resort was privatized and turned over to Whirlpool.

Reverend Pinkney and the residents of Benton Harbor were outraged. A petition to recall the commissioner who operated as a stooge of Whirlpool was initiated in 2004. Pinkney was charged with voter fraud, and the recall election was overturned. Pinkney was indicted and then convicted by an all-white jury. Benton Harbor is 90 percent African American. Reverend Pinkney was placed under house arrest, but when he quoted the biblical admonition that God will punish those who act unjustly against others, the judge took it as a personal threat, and had Pinkney jailed. Even though the judgment was later overturned, Pinkney spent a year in prison.

In 2011, an emergency manager with dictatorial powers was appointed by the state to take over the city's finances, replace local officials, sell public assets and dismantle collective bargaining agreements. That same year, James Hightower, another Whirlpool puppet was elected mayor. Reverend Pinkney and the residents of Benton Harbor launched another recall effort to remove the mayor. On the eve of the scheduled recall election, Pinkney was charged with five counts of felony voter fraud. The recall election was cancelled. Reverend Pinkney was convicted and sentenced. He spent another two and a half years in prison. On May 1 of this year, the Michigan Supreme Court overturned the conviction of Reverend Pinkney.

Even as we celebrate this victory, we know that the war is far from over. Benton Harbor and Reverend Pinkney are at the center of what can only be described as a fascist offensive, first taking over government and operating it in the interests of the corporations, and then moving to contain and crush the rising motion of especially those workers cut off from obtaining the necessities of life. The Black-majority cities in Michigan were targeted first, but the dictatorial emergency managers have spread all across Michigan and are a harbinger of the future of America.

Reverend Pinkney stands as a beacon for all revolutionaries who are engaged in this fight. In his own words, "Let us make this struggle a victory for all the people. Let us take control of this country, away from the corporations and build a society where the people, not the corporations, make the decisions."

We stand with Reverend Edward Pinkney.

Women leading the fight in the interests of all society

Women are leaders in today's most active motions for a new society. They are fighting for health care, housing, water, the earth, better wages, quality public education, against sexual violence and harassment, assault weapons corporations, police murder of unarmed people and deportation and the separation of families. All of these women are fighting for the entire working class, as they demand the government provide the basic necessities of life.

This is what they must do because of their position in society. As digital technology and automation are introduced into more sectors of the economy, jobs are eliminated, and the result is increased unemployment, the proliferation of contingent, low-wage jobs, and the steady reduction of public services. Digital technology is eliminating the necessity for human labor and creating a new class, a new section of the working class, that is being pushed outside of private property relations. As corporations have merged with our government to secure profits, the government has withdrawn public services. Corporations will not provide services for workers they no longer need. Women of the new class face a battery of increasing deprivation along with the men of the new class.

A powerful social movement is arising to meet the attack on our class. Why are women leading this in many respects? For one thing, historically and culturally, women are central to the caregiving and stability of their families, fulfilling roles as mother, sister, and daughter. This puts women on the frontline in the struggle for basic needs, since they often take responsibility (by tradition or by choice) for their children's education, the nutrition and household needs of their family, and their children's and elder parents' health care and shelter. Women's position as workers is another reason for their visible leadership role. Today, women and men's workforce participation differ only by a few percentage points (47 percent for women; 53 percent for men in 2015). Yet women workers are still paid less on average than men. Over 70 percent of those below the poverty line are women and children. Women and families are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population.

GROWING CONSCIOUSNESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF UNITY

The huge women's marches around the country after the Trump inauguration and again this past January, represented women taking the lead in uniting all kinds of just demands on the government for basic human needs. Although the ruling class attempts to create disunity by narrowing the role of women to "women's issues," the signs and messages at the marches addressed a range of demands that are in the interests of all of society.

Young women are also taking the lead in the youth-led anti-gun violence movement. Despite ruling class efforts to divide the movement by playing up ethnic and economic differences between the more financially secure students in Parkland and the low-income Black and Latino youth in urban centers, this student movement is calling for unity and showing it in their activity. For example, the student organizers of the March for Our Lives in Washington, DC highlighted a diverse lineup of speakers, including African American and Latino youth who have lost siblings to gun violence. In her speech, Emma Gonzalez, a driving force in this movement, reflected the growing impulses within society to reject the ideas of the rulers, and put forward a vision of a different kind of society. "This isn't about Republicans v. Democrats," she wrote on Twitter, "Plenty of Republicans are openly with us and plenty of Democrats are openly against us. Any politicians being funded by the NRA and/or those voting against us every chance they get

— on these people, we call BS." The movement is broader than gun control. Speakers at the march demanded guns out of, and more resources into, our schools.

Another example of the call for unity is reflected in the statement by Lane Murdock, a 16-year-old girl from Connecticut, who originated the idea of the April 20 walkout on the anniversary of the Columbine school shooting. "We have a lot of powerful people against us. And they're going to want infighting. They're going to want division. They're going to want us to look at our differences so they can take us down easier. And we're not going to let that happen. This is about people—gay, straight, black, white, religious, non-religious—coming together so their kids don't have to be afraid to go to school."

“ Women are fighting for the entire working class as they demand the government provide the basic necessities of life. ”

Like the anti-gun violence movement, the revolt of striking teachers in several states with the lowest education spending in the country is led by female and male teachers side by side. The strikes started in West Virginia and have thus far spread to Kentucky, Oklahoma, Arizona, Colorado and North Carolina, demanding health care, pensions, decent pay and more educational resources for their schools. This movement against austerity is strong because the teachers, the majority of whom are women, are united with parents, students and other workers around the basic needs of education for children, and decent wages and benefits for public workers.

The women-led #MeToo movement is also a struggle for both human rights and economic rights, since sexual harassment in the workplace is a way for employers to control women workers and suppress their equality; and as women's wages are kept down, so are men's. The media focuses on famous and wealthy victims, but women in low-wage jobs must decide between sexual harassment and the economic survival of their families. For all these women, their social and historical position is interfering with their ability to work and survive.

ACHIEVING ITS HISTORIC MISSION

Many fighters in the new class are awakening to the reality that the government and corporations stand in the way of our ability to survive and thrive. Women and men in the new class are beginning to go on the offensive to demand their needs be met by government. Their demands for food, housing, education, health care, and an opportunity to contribute to society are summed up as the demand for a cooperative society. The new class can only survive in a society based on the public ownership of the socially necessary means of production and the distribution of the social product according to need. The historic mission of the new class is to unite all those who can be united and lead society toward a new world. The ability to fulfill this mission will depend on it achieving consciousness of itself as a class.

Revolutionaries enter the struggles of the new class to line up their thinking with the reality of the laborless economy that is emerging. A world of cooperation that fulfills the needs of all humanity and protects the earth is attainable. The future is up to us.

Electoral Politics: Key Arena for Rising Movement

Millions of Americans are becoming politically active. As the economic crisis deepens, more and more families are unable to put food on their table and keep roofs over their heads. They are compelled to enter the electoral arena to fight for their needs. The moral revulsion to the kind of society Trump personifies has given an additional spur to this motion. People are storming the halls of Congress, taking over offices of legislators for denying healthcare, demanding government provide clean, affordable water, and fighting to save public education. They are joining mega-marches of women, scientists and youth, fighting for the rights of immigrants, for an end to police killings, and for their rights as workers. First time candidates, many of whom are women, are bringing these demands into the electoral arena. Tens of thousands of potential candidates are clamoring for information on how to run political campaigns. A record number of those running for office today are leaders in the fight to save their communities from poverty and corporate destruction.

They are running as Democrats, Republicans, Independents, Socialists, Greens, and with other parties. Some aim to force out corrupt politicians. Some seek to transform the Democratic Party. Some are joining third parties or running as independents, an expression of their deep dissatisfaction with both major parties – about half of Americans today describe themselves as independents. Others, particularly young people, are running as socialists. Regardless of party labels, many campaigns are unleashing a debate about the kind of society we are going to have, and whether there can be true democracy when corporations own the economy and government. The American people are beginning to ask, whom does government serve? It marks a step toward the understanding that workers are a class with independent interests from the ruling class.

NEW SOCIAL FORCES AND THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

These social upsurges are driven by the shift in the economy from production with human labor to production with advanced technologies that require little or no human labor.

“ Many campaigns are unleashing a debate about the kind of society we are going to have, and whether there can be true democracy when corporations own the economy and government. ”

The new labor-replacing technologies are creating an abundance of what people need to survive – food, housing, health care, and other necessities of life. At the same time an ever-growing section of society, a new class of workers, cannot survive in a system that says you must work to eat, when there is less and less work to do. A life or death battle is underway for people’s survival. It will require that workers fight as a class for a new society that provides for all, whether they have money or not. This fight will require the unity of millions.

Of great political significance is that workers who once had relatively good wages are now joining the ranks of this new class. These newly dispossessed workers are educated and used to organization. They are being forced to move against their deteriorating condition and they are arousing broad sections of society. During the recent wave of school strikes, teachers exposed how they must work two or three jobs to survive. They showed how children across America are educated in dilapidated buildings with few resources, while monies earmarked for public education are handed over to corporations. The growth of the new class and the role of the newly dispossessed are revolutionizing the political landscape, as seen in the new electoral campaigns sweeping the country.

For example, when a video of a candidate being dragged from the podium of the West Virginia House of Delegates for listing off names of politicians funded by the energy corporations went viral, people across the country were outraged. This deliberate attack on democracy by public officials in the service

of the corporations resulted in donations pouring into this candidate’s local campaign.

Another West Virginia campaign took up the fight against corrupt corporate politicians who protect coal companies that are destroying the environment, the water and air, creating untold deaths from cancer and other illnesses. This candidate’s campaign theme was, “We want clean and safe jobs, a livable wage, we want clean water, we want clean air and opportunities for our children, and we want healthcare. It doesn’t matter what walk of life you’re from – everybody is saying we want the same things. We don’t want these corporate politicians.” Such campaigns are bringing a new inclusive morality to society that says: we are all in this fight for our survival together and government must meet the demands of the people. These ideas and a movement around them are a threat to the class that rules us.

THE RULING CLASS AND THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

From the rulers’ standpoint, elections are a means to gauge the thinking of the people to develop the tactics to divide and contain the rising movement for a just society. Both the Democratic and Republican parties, though in different ways, are utilizing the elections to build a fascist movement that supports, among other things, the government’s program to privatize for the corporations what little remains of the public resources – schools, water, public housing and more. Both parties are forced to develop new tactics to accomplish these goals.

In the past the Democratic Party hand-picked its candidates. Today, because of the groundswell of candidates demanding that government provide for people’s needs, the Democratic Party is squeezing out independent-minded candidates. Politicians who are corporate shills for the defense and energy industry are running smear campaigns against some candidates. On the fourth anniversary of the poisoning of Flint, and testament to people’s anger at both parties, groups posted eviction notices on the offices of Democratic Party and Republican Party state legislators for failing to resolve the problem that the state government created. Flint residents were met with vicious attacks by leaders of the Democratic Party, who claimed they were doing everything to help Flint.

Reforms that once benefited workers, like unions or social programs, served to unify the workers with the capitalists and guaran-

tee corporate profits. Today, the corporations will not provide anything to workers whose labor they no longer need, as they try to prevent mass opposition to their program to protect their private property rights.

As the true nature of the corporate parties becomes more exposed, they will be forced to unleash the wrath of corporate power on the movement. However, the movement the rulers are confronting today is qualitatively different than in the past – it cannot and will not stop fighting for clean water, housing, education or healthcare – giving elections a new significance as a battleground where the independent class interests of the workers can be illuminated. As an Oklahoma teacher said, “Republicans have been working to destroy our public education system for decades. There is a reason the majority of states that are striking are primarily red states. But to be fair, seeing as how they are beholden to the same corporate masters, the Democrats have done nothing to stop this from happening.”

A VISION FOR VICTORY

The electoral arena is a key battleground and is a means to educate millions of people to prepare for the huge battles that lie ahead. Although strikes, protests, elections and the fight for new parties that represent the workers are all a necessary part of the struggle for a new society, none can change a system based on an economy that rests on private property. Ultimately, the ruling class will not allow us to vote them out of power. Today, a fascist State – the naked rule of corporate power – is arising to oppose the motion of the people for their survival.

Without a vision a people will perish

In the fight for a new society, revolutionaries participate in every battle for people’s needs, while sharing a vision of the kind of new society that can provide for all. This vision is of a cooperative society based on the public ownership of the now privately owned means of producing what society needs. In such a new society, poverty can be replaced with abundance for all. This vision necessitates that society take over the corporations as the only alternative to the fascist program put forth by the ruling class and their parties.

To reorganize society in the people’s interests is a protracted fight. It requires the building of a large organization of revolutionaries that is composed of a whole corps of active, fighting thinkers. How do revolutionaries help workers see that they are members of a class with independent interests from the rulers? What is the next strategic step in unifying our forces? An organization of revolutionaries discusses such questions in the context of the overall battle of the participants. Once it is grasped by millions that we are a class with independent interests from the ruling class, the fight of the people for political power to create a new cooperative society will leap forward.

Revolutionaries seize this moment to build an organization that gets out the ideas that can make history. We are in a war for the existence of humanity and we can win.

Fight for the Children

Across the country, the American people have expressed their revulsion at the barbaric practice of tearing children from their parents’ at the border, and sending the children to “baby jails” or shipped to faraway cities. Even though the order has been rescinded these families face the uncertainty of whether they will ever see one another again. The zero-tolerance policy still exists and now children are jailed with their parents.

This separation of children from their families at the border is part of deeper and more widespread moral crisis faced by the American people. Our class is being forced to contend with questions that strike at the very heart of our common human experience.

Family and the raising and protection of children are the center of human existence. The tearing apart of families at the border has shown the American people that the depravity and cruelty of this ruling class knows no bounds. The children of the world, within and outside of our borders, are our children. Protecting our children is the fight for humanity.

Confronting the System in Silicon Valley

As the social struggles of Silicon Valley workers (and others) are arising, they are increasingly held back by the economic and political power of the tech industry, both locally and nationally. Tech industry CEOs and financiers are playing a prominent role in especially the Democratic Party, increasingly influencing the policies of the Clintons, Obamas, and other party leaders who repeatedly return to the Bay Area to raise campaign cash.

The tech industry wields its enormous power not just because of its wealth, but because it plays such an important role in the worldwide electronics revolution. Technological advances are driving the polarization of the world's wealth and radically destabilizing the entirety of human society – and in fact destabilizing the earth itself. Chips, computers, smart phones, software, 3D printing, machine learning, artificial intelligence, and social media together constitute the cutting edge of the automation that is transforming society as we know it.

TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION

This technological revolution creates the possibility of economic fulfillment for all – although not in our current capitalist economic system. Even though it replaces human labor, automation easily allows us to produce the abundance necessary to meet the needs of every person on earth. For example, technology writer and engineering researcher at Carnegie Mellon and Duke Universities, Vivek Wadhwa, has projected that the geometric reduction in solar and renewable energy costs could provide all the power needed to supply all human needs for water, food, housing, heat, and transportation, virtually for free, within about twenty years.

The revolutionary impact of electronic technology today clearly shows the visionary possibilities of a new world. At one time, steam-powered technology in industrial production made possible and necessary the elimination of slavery and serfdom. Today, electronic technology makes it possible, and therefore necessary, to end wage slavery, poverty, and environmental destruction.

However, the possibilities created by this potential abundance are blocked by the private property system. For example, a major section of the ruling class is moving to prevent further development of renewable energy, in order to protect its enormous investment in the fossil fuel industry that is becoming economically obsolete. By definition, the private property system can only distribute society's wealth according to the ability to pay, not according to the needs of human beings.

Automation within the private property system replaces workers in production, leaving them with no income with which to buy the necessities of life. This contributes to a permanent systemic crisis. Instead of "pastures of plenty," there is spreading unemployment and government austerity. Social resources are slashed for those most in need.

For many in Silicon Valley, this takes the form of skyrocketing rents and declining or disappearing incomes. Tens of thousands of low-income service workers are forced to move out of the area and become "super-

commuters," spending hours on the freeways, driving back and forth from work. Others simply move into RVs, cars, vans, or tents, causing Silicon Valley to have one of the highest numbers of unsheltered homeless people in the entire nation.

TECHNOLOGY AND THE GROWTH OF POVERTY

The electronics revolution does not proceed in a linear fashion, but in an exponential one. Once any electronic technology is introduced, its productivity increases faster and at an ever-accelerating rate. Most people have heard of Moore's Law, the projection that the number of transistors in an integrated circuit tends to double every two years. This process is at the heart of the technological revolution. But fewer people have heard of its eco-

“ The tech industry cultivates an image of environmentalism and social enlightenment. The misery of those who have lost everything, that live in its shadow, gives the lie to these claims. ”

nomical corollary, which is known as Mead's Law, named after Caltech professor Carver Mead. Mead's Law points out that not only does computer power double, but its cost simultaneously goes down by half.

Mead's Law applies not only to computer processing power, but also to digital storage and digital bandwidth. This increase in overall computing capacity has led to a vast expansion of the "cloud," a huge online storehouse of information that lives in server farms scattered across the country and around the globe. The cloud in turn unleashes "cloud robotics," whereby robotic production is networked, centralized, and enhanced by machine learning.

The technological revolution under the private property system drives more and more workers permanently out of production through robotization and other forms of automation. Vast areas of the country such as the Rust Belt, Appalachia, and the rural South and West – as well as countries across the globe – have become economic deserts where a living wage job is a thing of the past. Where jobs continue to exist, competition with machines drives wages down to the point where those employed are forced to live in poverty.

Another effect has been the emergence of the so-called "gig economy." An estimated 55 million U.S. workers – 35 percent of the entire workforce – now work as freelance contractors. Although some workers may prefer to be independent contractors, about 30 percent are forced into the gig economy by the lack of traditional jobs, especially those at the lower end of the pay scale like Uber drivers. This

sector is expected to grow rapidly as the technology develops, and employers increasingly seek low-cost part-time workers, without having to pay for benefits such as vacation time, healthcare insurance, or pensions.

The unemployed, the part-time, and the gig workers make up a growing section of a new class of workers that has been permanently separated from the formal economy. The system cannot help but exponentially increase the use of technology in production. The growth of technology in a private property economy will continue to rapidly create and expand this new class. The ruling class has no use for this class. The ruling class reduces and eliminates the safety net programs necessary for people to survive. There are no reforms left in the system to meet the growing needs and demands of this class.

TECH INDUSTRY MYTHOLOGY

The tech industry has masterfully parlayed its reputation as "the smartest people in the world," into a mythology that gives it powerful political influence both locally and nationally, especially in the Democratic Party. It has carefully cultivated an image of environmental consciousness, social progressivism, and enlightenment that makes it "exceptional" to the exploitative smokestack industries of the past era. The misery of those who have lost everything, that live in its shadow, gives the lie to these claims.

Contrary to the statements of its ideologists, the tech industry actually creates relatively little value compared to its profits. Value is created by human labor. Instagram, for example, had only 13 employees when it was sold to Facebook in 2012 for \$1 billion. The tech industry uses its monopoly of certain brands, products, and platforms to drain enormous amounts of money out of other economic sectors, the same way nineteenth century railroad monopolists extorted farmers by overcharging them for moving their crops to market.

In general, tech profits depend entirely on stringent intellectual property laws, excessive durations of patents and copyrights, platform monopolies that violate antitrust laws, and coercive contracts. Google, for example, collects virtually all its revenue not from building products, but from selling ads on the internet, based on its stranglehold over search engine results. A huge portion of technology corporations' profits actually come from selling the private information of their customers to

other corporations.

The working class in Silicon Valley and elsewhere cannot confront the power of the tech corporations without discrediting the lie that tech owners deserve their inordinate wealth, and their lie about the way to save the American economy is to further reduce their taxes and regulations. A recent bus tour of the Rust Belt by tech venture capitalists sought to persuade local officials that tech start-ups were all they needed to make their economies thrive again. The misery of low-income workers in Silicon Valley serves as a dire warning to any local officials considering such enterprises.

ROLE OF REVOLUTIONARIES

Humans using digital technology have the potential to create an enormous abundance of necessities for life on earth and the products necessary for restoring the environment as well. However, our ability to create wealth for humanity and the planet is blocked by the systemic barriers that force us to submit to the demands of private capital for ever-expanding profits. The private property system makes it impossible to apply modern electronic technology to address the human needs that are right in front of our face: homes for the homeless, protection from displacement and evictions, protection of families from deportations, food, safe water, clothing, education, and health care.

The more advanced the electronic means of production become, the more obvious is the system's reliance on a foundation of poverty and exploitation to power it. The solution is to dismantle the private property system, and build a cooperative society that distributes its wealth on the basis of need instead of profit. Technology develops in antagonism with private property relations and it creates the new class in antagonism with the ruling corporate class. But the solution cannot be brought about without a conscious, scientific understanding of the problem and how to address it. The role of revolutionaries is to introduce that consciousness to educate and guide the new class around its historic task of abolishing private property and creating a cooperative society based on the distribution according to need.

Members of this new class of workers, those forced into temporary employment, the gig economy, or unemployment and destitution, are forced to enter into social and political struggle simply to secure their most fundamental human needs. As the remaining jobs are increasingly stripped of benefits and living wages, more and more workers will no longer survive without battling the government for food, water, health care, housing, and education. As one gig worker expressed it, how do you fight when your boss is an algorithm? They are finding the new ways to fight. Revolutionaries are called on to participate in these struggles, and use social media as well as every other available propaganda form to point out the need to wrestle the tech means of production away from their private owners and turn them over to the public for the benefit of humanity.

The Fight for Water is a Fight for a New Society

Ignoring clear evidence that the crisis is continuing, Governor Rick Snyder announced on April 6, 2018, that Michigan would close the four remaining centers where Flint residents had been picking up life-sustaining bottled water. Because of the poisoning of Flint's water supply, the only way that Flint residents have been able to ensure their health and safety – and even their lives – has been to use bottled water.

Just days earlier – on April 2 – the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality approved a controversial permit for Nestlé Water North America. The permit allows Nestlé to increase the amount of water it withdraws from the state's groundwater table, for its Ice Mountain brand of bottled water, from 250 gallons a minute to 400 gallons a minute. Nestlé pays only \$200 a year to the state of Michigan to pump more than 130 million gallons of water each year.

The class contrast could not be more stark. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality issued a finding that the water in the working-class city of Flint was safe with a filter – a contradiction in terms. The MDEQ allowed Nestlé, a global food conglomerate, to profit, despite the potential damage to Michigan's lakes, rivers and streams.

This disparity between who gets water and who doesn't is particularly sharp in Michigan. Flint residents are charged some of the highest water rates in the country. Many residents there have had their water shut off because they refuse to pay for water they cannot use. In Detroit, thousands of people have had their water cut off, because of inability to pay. However, while the fight for water is especially intense in Michigan, it is raging throughout the United States. For instance, people in Martin County, Kentucky, frequently wake up without any water at all, or with extremely low pressure, or boiled-water advisories. Many residents drink and cook with bottled water, because of concerns about the safety of their tap water.

There's a cruel irony in the fact that Flint and Martin County, Kentucky are experiencing similar crises. Flint was the scene of the iconic Great Sit-Down Strike of auto workers in the 1930s. Martin County was the place where President Lyndon Johnson announced his "War on Poverty" in the mid-1960s – from a local resident's front porch. Today Martin

County, Kentucky is still one of the poorest counties in America. The bitter experience of these two historic places should serve as a wake-up call to everyone involved in the fight for safe, clean water. Our goal cannot be to go back in time to Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal or Lyndon Johnson's Great Society. Today's fight for safe, clean water is being fought out under very different conditions than the battles of the 1930s and 1960s.

The world has changed profoundly since the Flint sit-down strike, Johnson's War on Poverty, and even since the Clean Water Act was passed in 1972, or the Safe Drinking Water Act, which became law in 1974. In the years since, we have seen qualitative changes in the economy. The introduction of electronics into production has led to the destruction of the old factory system – the system personified by Flint in its heyday – with dramatic results. At the height of the industrial era, the government was willing to grant limited reforms – including some health and safety laws and environmental legislation – in order to guarantee social peace. Today, the government is working in collusion with corporate interests to privatize public resources. We are seeing the merger of the State apparatus with the corporations.

All over the country corporate interests are driving the systematic effort now underway to privatize water, seize water resources, and deprive people access to safe, clean water. In 1977, the federal government spent \$76.27 per person (in 2014 dollars) on water services. By the year 2014, that support had fallen to \$13.68 per person. Today, we see increased poisoning, fracking, commercializing, and privatizing of the life-sustaining substance – water – by giant corporations.

Take the Veolia corporation, for example. Veolia Water North America is the largest private operator of municipal water systems and sewer systems in the United States, serving an estimated 10.5 million people in 32 states. Veolia Water North America is a fully owned subsidiary of Veolia Environment, part of a French-based multi-national. Founded in the nineteenth century during the reign of Napoleon III, the corporation is the largest privatizer of water in the world.

Corporations like Veolia seek to profit off managing local systems that provide drinking water and sewage services. Wall Street in-

vestors work with these water privatizers to take advantage of cash-strapped local governments and entice them into selling or leasing off their water assets. This is happening at a time when many water systems are advancing in age, with some more than 100 years old. The advocates of water privatization love to promise savings to the public after a public water system is privatized, but the reality is very different. Privately delivered water costs 59 percent more than publicly delivered water. These hikes benefit the bondholders of the private corporation, often major corporate entities themselves, such as J.P. Morgan Chase and Wells Fargo. For the water privatizers, paying the bondholders is the top priority, and the need to pay them drives the process of cuts in services and safety.

All this has led to a truly massive water crisis in the United States. Lower income communities in both urban and rural areas are suffering disproportionately from unsafe and unaffordable water service. Access to affordable drinking water is becoming more problematic, and as many as 36 percent of U.S. households may be unable to afford water within five years, according to a 2017 study by Michigan State University scholar Elizabeth Mack.

An important element of the current water crisis is the political struggle over water safety and privatization. We are seeing systematic efforts to use the government as an instrument on behalf of the corporations in their campaign for water privatization.

For instance, the National Association of Water Companies (NAWC), which represents the U.S. private water industry, intensively and perennially lobbies the U.S. Congress and the Environmental Protection Agency to refrain from adopting higher water quality standards. The NAWC also persistently requests that all federal regulations be based on sound cost-benefit analysis, which means that public health is compromised for the sake of higher profits.

While corporations move to profit from water, the government is utterly failing to protect this vital resource. The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) is the federal law that protects public drinking water supplies throughout the nation. Under the SDWA, the EPA sets standards for drinking water quality and is supposed to implement programs to ensure

drinking water safety. The *New York Times* ran an article in in 2009 with the headline, "Clean Water Laws Are Neglected, at a Cost in Suffering." The situation has only gotten worse since then. In reality, the EPA regulations are lax, are not being enforced, and have not been updated for years. Under the current administration, some may soon be revoked.

As the corporations, bondholders, and financiers are moving to seize once-public resources, they are assisted by a capitalist State apparatus, whose purpose is to promote and enforce the interests of the corporations at the expense of the public. The unfolding struggle for universal access to clean, safe water is placing a basic question before society: Who rules – the corporations or the public?

In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 64/292, declaring that access to clean water and sanitation is an essential human right. Today, defending this fundamental principle means challenging the corporations and bondholders, who are determined to take away the right to water and to compromise people's health and environmental safety. To uphold the idea of water as a human right, we have to fight for universal access to clean, safe water – regardless of ability to pay. We all have to speak out against anti-democratic measures – like the emergency manager laws in Michigan and similar measures in other states and in Puerto Rico – laws that paved the way for privatization. Fighting for the recognition of water as a human right means fighting for the public ownership of water and other natural resources. It means fighting for the nationalization of water in the interests of the public.

This is a battle against an immoral system based on private ownership of the natural resources that are essential to life itself. The systematic campaign to privatize water systems and destroy environmental standards is not solely the work of cruel zealots fanatically devoted to the free market. We are not just fighting bad individuals. We are fighting a bad system. This fight is inevitably a fight to abolish private property and create a cooperative society based on the distribution according to need.

Today, the fight for water is a fight for a new society.

Revolutionary Work in 21st Century Elections *Continued from page 1*

worker's political party. Many can be diverted into populist or even fascist political movements. It is imperative for revolutionaries to work within every current of the social motion to plant the seeds of social consciousness, class awareness and class unity.

The workers movement today is based on the fundamental demands of the new class for housing, food, health care, and necessities of life. This is the driving force of the broad social motion that is generating the movement toward a third party. It is the objective foundation for people to unite. It is undermining all the old ideologies that have been used to

divide the class. It is also the foundation for revolutionary propaganda that points out the need for a class party – a workers party.

The movement for a third party is a necessary and inevitable step in the development of social consciousness that a workers party represents. Their participation and experience in third party motion is one of the ways that workers develop social consciousness, as they learn to distinguish the different class interests of the various tendencies in social and political movements. Class interests are clarified, when the workers use the electoral process to help carry out their fight to force the govern-

ment to guarantee their basic needs are met.

Social consciousness itself is also a necessary stage where revolutionaries can teach the workers to rid themselves of old ideas and move forward to class consciousness. With social consciousness, the workers come to understand that they are members of a class, not just members of one or another social group, and that they need solidarity as a class. They become aware of the ruling class and that it has class interests contrary to their own. The role of revolutionaries in this process is to continue to introduce new ideas, including a strategy and ideology that reflects the content

of the times in which we live.

Through their experience in the electoral arena, the workers can come to see that the corporate government refuses to meet their demands, even when the workers win elections. Armed with a deeper understanding of the class content of the struggle they face, the workers at this stage can move to a class conscious position. Here they understand that they will only experience true democracy when they gain the political power necessary to build a cooperative society, where the social product is distributed according to need.