

THE FIGHT FOR BASIC NEEDS THROUGH CLASS UNITY. WHY IS POLITICAL POWER A CLASS POWER?

Sponsored by the League of Revolutionaries for a New America
Originally given in sections: Oakland, Ca, March and April of 2019
cleo.lrnaoakland@gmail.com

Class Agenda:

Section I:

11:00 - 11:15 Intro of class and participants
11:15 - 11:20 Opening Statement
11:20 - 12:10 discussion (50 mins)

Viewing of Videos

Oakland Teachers have gone on strike (3 minutes)

<https://youtu.be/zj0pt3jAsj4>

Read Rally Article(s)/excerpts out loud:

Article:

Revolutionary Work in 21st Century Elections

<http://rallycomrades.lrna.org/2018/07/revolutionary-work-in-21st-century-elections/>

The Rising Movement Today

<http://rallycomrades.lrna.org/2018/11/the-rising-movement-today/>

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 revolution 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 independent 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 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 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 government 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.

Discussion Question #1: What clues did the Oakland teachers strike tell us about the stage/level of consciousness of the forces in that struggle? Did it highlight increased class disunity, or did it serve to move the class struggle forward?

Do Round Robin

.....

Section II

12:15 - 1:00 video & discussion

Viewing of video

Teen Climate Activist Confront Senator Dianne Feinstein
https://www.democracynow.org/2019/3/1/teen_climate_activist_to_sen_dianne

The Rising Movement Today

The leap in the economy, from industrial production to electronic production, is forcing millions of workers out of jobs, destroying the standard of living they thought was guaranteed to them. The capitalist system is untenable. America's workers are abandoned and are pushed into struggles to obtain adequate housing, healthcare, education, water, and every other human necessity, hoping to get back what they once had. But these refugees from the dying capitalist system actually belong to a new class developing outside the old relations of production. As the robot destroys the economic order, the new class will destroy the social order. Its historic role will be to pull the various aspects of the overall struggle into a class

movement, to liberate society from the ruling class and its private ownership of the necessities of life.

Leaders of the ruling class understand that the social effects of the destruction of capitalism will spur huge mass struggles. Their operatives in both political parties are implementing new forms of fascist control, to protect private ownership of the economy at all costs. That's what was behind the arming of police with military weapons, as seen in Ferguson, Missouri and elsewhere. Fascist restructuring is also behind the new network of privately-owned prisons for immigrants, a threat to the freedom of anyone who the ruling class sees as dangerous to themselves.

Democrat and Republican leaders may argue publicly over how to best redesign the presidency, the FBI, or the police, but their basic unity to impose fascism has been revealed more starkly over recent years. The new class has nothing to gain in the debate between Donald Trump versus Robert Mueller. That will not provide solutions to the growing poverty, violence and ecological destruction.

Struggle for Necessities Revolutionary

The struggle for necessities must resist being pulled under the control of one or another section of the ruling class, as they continue to mobilize ever-escalating pressure on the government to provide for the people. Private ownership of today's means of production prevents the government from meeting this responsibility. Therefore, in the electronic era the struggles for necessities are revolutionary. The new property-less class cannot stop fighting for what it needs, but it cannot win the fight within the confines of the current economic system. The struggle of the new class is objectively moving toward creating a new type of communist system, one able to utilize technology for the good of society.

The multiplying demands for health care, for decent housing, and for clean water and air are all part of this overall historic struggle, which is against the ruling class continuing its private ownership of the society's means of production, and for the distribution of what people need. Protests and mobilizations play an important role in bringing masses into the struggle on their own behalf. But people's consciousness still lags behind the objective changes and the new possibilities wrought by the electronic revolution. Without new revolutionary ideas, many of the combatants will be vulnerable to the ruling class new revolutionary ideas, many of the combatants will be vulnerable to the ruling class idea, that their progress can only be guaranteed at the expense of other workers.

For example, in recent years the struggle of immigrant workers, to feed their families without a constant threat of ICE raids at their jobs and homes, has expanded to include the fight against their children being stolen by the government and tossed into "baby prisons," or across the border. Millions of citizens have declared their opposition to this atrocity carried out in their name, including many who identify as "conservatives." But, even among those opposing this form of fascism, many still think that jobs should go to citizens instead of immigrants; they are at risk of being won over to other aspects of the fascist agenda. They are in desperate need of new, revolutionary ideas, showing the possibility of pulling the struggles of both native-born and immigrant workers into a united fight against the ruling class.

Discussion question #2: How does knowing what political power is -that is class power, allow us to break with older forms of disunity and the “buying off” of leaders?

Section III: 1:00 - 1:40 discussion

Bring Vision of a New Society

The rising movement faces both new opportunities and new dangers. The opportunity is that a formerly secure sector of the industrial working class and a section of the intelligentsia, whose influence has always been used to bind the masses to the capitalist class, is increasingly being torn loose from their jobs, homes, and living standards.

The destruction of this middle sector is important because it destroys the idea that the workers and capitalists have the same interests. This sector has some history of organizing to fight for particular demands within the system. If that history of organization can be united with a sense that they belong to a class that can only move forward on the basis of breaking free of the confines of the past, a new unity based on real class interests can be fought for.

But that’s also where the danger lies. Revolutionaries may refuse to interact with those, whose thinking includes scrambled bits of ruling class ideology such as anti-communism and ignorance about race and class, to name only two. But then this middle sector will become easy prey for political operatives of the ruling class, eager to win them into the mass base for fascism, using propaganda blaming other sections of the new class for their worsening conditions.

This sector is not politically cohesive, having a long history of being pitted against one another along color, ethnic, gender and religious lines. Their previous economic security led many of them to accept socially and economically conservative ideas. Unless they are reached with revolutionary ideas explaining their plight, that history can push them toward the fascist mass base that is now playing a divisive and increasingly violent role in America.

Therefore, for both the revolutionaries and the fascists, the “center of gravity” of the rising class movement is this newly dispossessed section of the new class. If the ruling class can keep them locked into obsolete ideas, their influence can be used to keep social struggles uselessly trying to recreate the past. Some may follow leaders who claim their outdated policies will “make America great again.” Others may follow leaders who claim to support each stream of spontaneous struggle, but only to steer it away from progressing towards unity with the struggle of the whole class. Either way, this key sector would then be diverted from influencing others towards a real solution to the problems they face.

If the fighters grasp a vision of the society of abundance made possible by electronic production and digital tools, they can begin to fight in the direction of their own class interest. That direction and its program is the elimination of private ownership of the economy by the capitalist class. As they become clear and conscious about the crisis society now faces, members of the dispossessed middle

will use their political experience and connections to help the emerging leaders of the new class focus their struggle in that direction. Today, the program of all revolutionaries must be to fight for this program of the new class, and their point of concentration must become the newly dispossessed.

Syndicalism: Derived from the trade union movement, a doctrine by which workers seize control of the economy or capitalist influence of their trade by direct means (general strike). Often non inclusive rooted in the basis of protecting members from outsiders.

Syndicalism has been the major trend within the American revolution for the past 100 years.

Originally, syndicalism proposed that the trade union would grow bigger and more powerful until they took over the organization of industry and in fact became the government. Thus the primitive revolutionaries could only see the question of individual capitalists that had to be struggled against. They never saw the capitalists as a class or understood the role of the capitalist state as the principle weapon of the capitalist class.

Inherent in syndicalism is the idea that the workers of each factory will have to liberate that factory and there was no such concept as responsibility to the class as

Discussion question #3: The working class has traditionally been divided in the past around race and privilege. This has been entrenched in the institutions such as trade unions (and other forms of syndicalism). What forms or ideas are keeping working people at the current level of consciousness? What is it that the leaders of the dispossessed have to do differently to break with these forms?