

Make the Rich Pay for the Crisis!

The bold action of the #OccupyWallStreet protesters, inspired by the movements in Egypt, Greece, and Wisconsin, is capturing the imagination of millions of workers and youth around the world who are dissatisfied with the status quo. It shows that there exists in this country a layer of committed left-wing activists who are ready to challenge the injustices of capitalist society.

The post-war prosperity of capitalism only delayed the inevitable crisis of the system. But now the crisis is here with a vengeance. On the basis of events and their own experience, the consciousness of millions of ordinary people is catching up by leaps and bounds with the reality of life under this exploitative and unequal system. As active participants in the movement, we in the Workers International League would like to add our perspectives and ideas to the vigorous discussions taking place in NY and around the country.

First of all, we firmly believe that action must be combined with clarity of theory, analysis, and a political program to unite and mobilize the movement. We say: make the rich pay for the crisis of their own system! The richest 1% in this country own more than the bottom 95%. They will not give up their economic and political power without a fight, including an ideological fight. Those of us who wish to win that fight must challenge not only the capitalist system, but the ideology of its defenders. We must explain what socialism really is, not what the rich claim it is! Contrary to the lies and propaganda of the ruling class, the ideas of Marxism are a vital resource that we use to analyze society for the purpose of changing it for the better. The rulers of this country are always demonizing, discounting, and condemning Marxism. This alone is proof that there must be something about it that they don't want people to know about. We say: check it out and make up your own mind!

Many people searching for a solution to the crisis seek to "reinvent the wheel" in search of an as yet-undiscovered "revolutionary agent." However, we believe that the revolutionary agent today is the same as it was when Karl Marx was around in the 1800s: the working class. This is not due to some romantic idea about what it means to be "working class." It is because the workers—and especially those workers organized in unions—have the power to stop the machine. Not a wheel turns, not a light shines, and not a penny of wealth is created without the working class! If we are serious about bringing about real change, we must link up with the labor movement. New York's powerful Transit Workers Union Local 100 has voted to side with the occupation. This is a giant step forward. But voting is not enough. They must now mobilize the membership to increase the numbers down on Wall Street, and use their authority to push other unions to do the same!

The mainstream media would have us believe that the Arab Spring was the result of a few Facebook and Twitter feeds, combined with a mass concentration of protesters. But we have to ask: can such an approach alone actually lead to the overthrow of the capitalist system? Can this tactic alone end big business' dominance over politics and economics? In fact, it was wave of massive labor strikes that prepared the grounds for the Egyptian revolution. It was the power of the working class, not social media in and of itself, that brought down the tyrants in the Arab world. And yet, despite these heroic movements, the old regimes remain largely in place, and with them, the capitalist system, which is the root cause of the unemployment, austerity, and misery we all face. Something more is needed.

It is not enough to demand the reinstatement of Glass-Steagall as some in the General Assembly have suggested. There are organic links between finance and industrial capital, the system cannot merely be regulated. Reforms such as labor and environmental protections won in the past by the workers must be defended and

expanded, but we cannot limit ourselves to mere reforms within the framework of the existing system. We must dare to demand a complete overhaul; new and rational society based on workers' democracy: socialism.

The crisis is the inevitable result of capitalism itself, not merely its corruption. We in the WIL believe that as long as the capitalists class has political power, they will use it to retain their hold on economic power. Only socialism and workers' democracy, based on public ownership and administration of the commanding heights of the economy, can begin to address the problems facing humanity.

Protests are important in that they attract much-needed attention to a cause. But as long as the rich continue exploiting workers daily, their system keeps rolling along. They make money on the backs of the workers. Direct action, no matter how heroic, if isolated from the broader working class, is not enough to lead to victory. In order to win this fight, what is required is the power and collective action of the working class. So what then is the role of activists? We must be organized and oriented toward the working class and the youth, appealing to the most advanced layers. We should take these protests and the ideas of revolutionary socialism back to our high schools, colleges, unions, workplaces, and neighborhoods.

Some people honestly believe that American capitalism can be reformed into a "kinder, gentler," system. But as the crisis continues to unfold, it will become increasingly clear that this is not possible. As this happens, more and more people will become interested in politics. Because, far from abstaining from politics, young people and workers need more participation in politics, not less! Not the "politics" of the Republicans and Democrats, who both represent the interests of the capitalists, but politics that can truly challenge that dominance. This is why we fight for socialist ideas. This is why we call on the unions to break with the two parties of big business and to form a mass party of labor that can channel the tremendous energy of the labor movement and youth into real political change.

Many in the movement reject having any kind of leadership. Others want to "build the movement" without first arming it with a political program. We believe leadership is indeed necessary, but that it must not be self-appointed or appointed from above. It must be directly elected, accountable, recallable, and represent the democratic will of the majority. As for building the movement, we believe the movement can only be built if it puts forward a clear set of ideas that can rally and enthuse people around it. A movement for movement's sake will end up dissipating like steam without a piston box. However, even a basic program calling for jobs for all, universal health care and education, affordable housing, and demanding that the rich pay for the crisis of their system, would help channel all that energy into productive ends.

Let's make sure that we achieve the change that we came here to try and bring about. A serious problem demands serious solutions. The Workers International League is actively helping to build and spread this movement. We are eager to discuss with everyone who wants to learn more about the ideas we outline in this leaflet, the ideas of socialism and Marxism, and to work together to take this movement forward.



Contact us and join us in the struggle for a better world!

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