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have led to new systems of bureaucratic class domination. The working class remained a subordinate, exploited class.

Nonetheless, in a transformation of society where the working class takes power over social production, it must also break up the old state machine and replace it with a new system of direct popular self-governance. This is also a form of "taking power" in the sense that the new organization of power does not empower any dominating class, but, on the contrary, is a taking of power by the masses themselves, through the organizations of direct democracy, the assemblies in the workplaces and neighborhoods, and the delegates they elect to delegate bodies such as congresses or coordinating councils. The aim is a social structure where people participate in and control decisions to the extent they are effected by them — generalized self-management.

In my exposition of revolutionary syndicalism here, I am trying to lay out what meaning revolutionary syndicalism might have at present. A revolutionary syndicalism for today is not going to be the same as in the '30s or the early 1900s. Syndicalism is not a frozen set of doctrines, but an approach to working class self-emancipation that has evolved over the decades since its earliest beginnings in the Internatonal Workingmen's Association of the 1860s-70s. The ideas of revolutionary syndicalism were developed historically by self-educated worker militants, organizers and some labor publicists or journalists. Certain ideas have remained constant, such as self-managed class unionism and working class independence and the commitment to the goal of a form of socialism based on workers self-management, but the concrete forms of organization or approaches to organizing have varied, and the understanding of the complexity of capitalist society has also developed down through the years as well.

1. A Strategy for Workers Liberation

Capitalism is at its heart an oppressive and exploitative economic system. The core is the class structure, in which the majority are dispossessed of the means of production of goods and services, and must submit to bureaucratic production regimes. These regimes control our labor so as to pump out wealth privately accumulated by the plutocrats at the top of the heap (and paying high salaries to the bureaucratic class of managers and high-end professionals), and backed up by the coercive force of the state. Working people are thus an oppressed class, although it is also internally quite heterogeneous and various sub-groups are oppressed in various diverse ways.

The working class can't be free and can't ultimately ensure well-being for itself unless it can take over the control of the process of production (which includes transportation and distribution and production of services), and the land and all the means of production, becoming masters of production, in control of our own work of and technological development. To do this means dismantling the institutional power of the bureaucratic/managerial and capitalist classes, so that we are not subordinate to any dominating class. As Ralph Chaplin put it in "Solidarity Forever":

> All the world that's owned by idle drones is ours and ours alone.
> We have laid the wide foundations; built it skyward stone by stone.
> It is ours, not to slave in, but to master and to own.

Workers self-management of all of social production is thus a necessary condition for working class liberation. If we don't control production some other class will, and then we're not free. This means there must be a mass worker movement that has the capacity and aspiration to take over the means of production, and continue social production under direct worker's

management. This takeover of production is not all there is to social emancipation but this is very basic in that the working class cannot liberate itself if it doesn't do this.

Also, by "takeover of production" I do not mean that the existing workplaces and techniques of production are continued without change, but with workers replacing management. I also mean that the working class then sets up a system of working class control that re-organizes social production, works to change technology, works to develop worker skills to break down hierarchical divisions of labor, changes production to ensure our species survival through a change in ecological impacts, and in general works to make social production more socially beneficial. Breaking down the present class division between subordinate workers and middle management and professionals also requires major changes in the educational system and the way that learning is linked with social production.

But to achieve its liberation the working class needs to have a strategy. Part of the point to the focus on the struggle between workers and bosses is that this provides a lever for changing society. Workers have the potential to exert power here because the flow of profits to the capitalists requires our cooperation in production. Thus the ability to bring production to a halt is a potential form of power the working class has. Again, to quote Ralph Chaplin:

> They have taken untold millions that they never toiled to earn,
> But without our brain and muscle not a single wheel can turn.
> We can break their haughty power, gain our freedom when we learn
> That the union makes us strong.

class. This is shown by the way the state itself is structured…the concentration of control into the hands of a few — the various politicians, judges, prosecutors, administrators, military and police officials. This bureaucratic class preside over public sector workers in a manner similar to bosses in the private sector.

Revolutionary syndicalism provides the working class with a strategy for directly developing its own counter-power, and a means to build a movement to take over control of social production, replacing the dominating classes. But the change in social organization in a period of social transformation also has to include replacing the state with a new system of popular governance — a form of direct social self-management over public affairs, and also a means for coalescing the changes in a structure that can defend the gains won by the working class in this transformation.

State socialism in both its social democratic and Leninist forms has been historically committed to the idea that socialism is to be achieved through a political party taking control of a state. The social democratic parties in Europe were originally committed to socialism, but their emersion in electoral politics diminished their commitment to fundamental change. By the mid-20th century their politics was reduced to "managing" capitalism…but leaving the capitalists in control of the workplaces & their economic assets. Over the past several decades the capitalist elites have used their assets to engage in a systematic assault on the working classes and the "welfare states" in the various countries where social democracy was once dominant in labor politics.

Revolutionary syndicalism rejects the idea of trying to gain control of state power. A state is an organization that has a top-down structure that makes it well-suited for protecting the interests of a dominating, exploiting class. Public sector workers are subordinate to bosses, and power is concentrated into the hands of a few. In all cases Leninist parties taking state power

The issue of autonomy of the mass organizations means rejection of the Leninist concept of direction by a "vanguard party." After World War 1, the world's revolutionary syndicalist labor organizations initially aligned themselves in support of the Russian revolution. However, when the Russian Communist Party initiated a new revolutiionary labor international in 1921, they insisted upon the unions being "transmission belts" of the party. For this reason, the revolutionary syndicalist unions left the Communist International and its labor affiliate and formed a new International Workers Association in 1922. The basic disagreement was over Leninist opposition to the syndicalist principle of autonomy or independence of the mass organizations.

9. Libertarian Socialism and Popular Power

The aim of revolutionary syndicalism is a self-managed, libertarian socialist society, not just worker self-management of workplaces. This means that the goal of social production is changed from market revenue and enriching owners to production for use, that is, for direct human benefit and well-being.

When the Spanish revolutionary syndicalist union organizations expropriated thousands of companies and put the worker assemblies and elected coordinating councils in charge in 1936, the aim was not to have each former firm now be the private property of workers. As Diego Abad de Santillan said at the time, the CNT was an "anti-capitalist, anti-proprietor movement" and the worker organizations were not to be "proprietors" of their workplaces but "only administators at the service of the entire society."

Syndicalists reject a strategy of trying to build socialism through the state. The state is itself inherently an institution to sustain and protect the interests of a dominating, exploiting

2. Direct Action, Worker Social Power, and Politics

The British writer R. H. Tawney once described capitalist management as "autocracy checked by insurgency." The economic and legal structures of capitalism create a form of workplace despotism but workers can develop forms of social power — power to counter the employers — through collective action and organization. Collective organization and action uses the power of numbers to increase our social power, and thus our ability to bend the will of the employers.

Revolutionary syndicalism emphasizes collective direct action such as strikes for two reasons. First, because of the potential power we have when we disrupt "business as usual" and, secondly, because this is a way to fight for change that we can get our hands on directly.

We see this as the way to fight for enhancements in our life, our dignity and safety, and for social justice. This is a political stance. Revolutionary syndicalism is political because it offers a different type of political strategy for the working class than a politics that emphasizes reliance on political parties and electing government officials.

Sometimes revolutionary syndicalism is accused of being "apolitical." And there are some American syndicalists who talk this way, such as those members of the Industrial Workers of the World who say they want to "keep politics out of the union." But this is not an accurate picture of the IWW's history since the IWW's revolutionary direction, its emphasis on self-managed class unionism, and its resolute independence of political parties is a type of labor politics. In the early 20th century syndicalists who said they were against "politics" meant they were against a labor politics that relied on political party leaders and looking to elections of Left politicians for social change. But the politics of political parties and electing

politicians is not the only sort of politics there is. There is also a politics of direct participation, direct protest, of mass struggle.

3. Class Formation

The development of worker social or collective counter-power is crucial to the process that Marxists call "class formation." This is the more or less protracted process thru which the working class develops from an objectively oppressed and exploited class into a class that has developed the capacity, will and aspiration — the forms of organization, practices of solidarity, and political insights — to effectively challenge the dominating classes, and pose the real possibility of replacing capitalism with self-managed socialism. To put this another way, the objective oppression and exploitation of the class does not automatically generate a subjective aspiration for change or the organizational capacity to bring that about.

WSA refers to this process of "class formation" in the following paragraph in *Where We Stand*:

> "The working class does not develop the capacity to liberate itself overnight. Through a more or less protracted process, the working class can break through fatalism and longstanding habits of going along with hierarchy, overcome internal divisions (such as along lines of race or gender), and develop the skills and self-confidence, solidarity, and organizational strength needed to mount a fundamental challenge to the dominating classes."

So long as people are isolated and don't see people supporting each other and actually exhibiting collective social power, they will be more inclined to think "You can't fight City Hall",

embraced struggles in the broader community, such as the mass tenant strikes of the CNT in Barcelona in 1931 and of the Mexican CGT in Vera Cruz in the '20s.

Moreover, in my description of class unionism I've said that it means that worker unionism needs to seek out wider links in building a class-wide struggle against the dominating classes and their institutions. This also means building alliances with organizations in the community such as in minority communities, tenant organizations or environmental justice organizations. The revolutionary syndicalist unions in Spain, CNT and CGT, nowadays put a significant emphasis on building a larger working class social bloc in the struggles against the plutocracy and their institutions, seeking out links with ecologists, housing squatters, and the *indignados*, the Spanish equivalent of Occupy.

Just as capitalist society has been built up with various forms of oppression, or systematic inequality, not just the class or economic structure, an alliance of social movements to transform the society needs to address all these various forms of social inequality. This means the mass workers movement needs to fight against racism and sexism inside and outside the workplaces.

8. Autonomy of Mass Organizations

A principle of self-managed class unionism is working class autonomy…independence from employers, politicians, political parties, and the government. The problem is that being dependent on elections and parties tends to get in the way of a working class movement deciding on and developing its own course, and its own agenda for social change. It becomes limited by what is acceptable to people in bureaucratic or capitalist positions in society. The movement tends to become focused around particular Leaders and their role in the state.

practice of democratic self-management of organizations, people would be likely to fall back into old habits, and defer to politicians, "professionals of representation," new leaders and bureaucratic systems.

The Spanish revolutionary syndicalist movement in the '20s and '30s placed great emphasis upon preparation and capacitacion – building in ordinary people the knowledge, the skills, the capacity to run their own movements, to be organizers themselves, and encouraged the discussions within the working class about the kind of society we want, how we want to liv. A key institution that Spanish anarcho-syndicalists built was theateneo or center for popular education, which conducted literacy classes, study groups, cultural events and educational activities that were aimed at building the capacity for being an agent of change.

7. "Workerism" & Working Class Politics

Class struggle does not only take place at the point of production. The system of class oppression originates there but extends thru-out the society — and there are class conflicts that emerge also in areas of consumption — as against landlords, to defend public services like public transit and education. Just as worker struggles against employers have often developed into conflicts with the institutions of the state — police, courts, etc — this is true also for these other class conflicts in the broader society. This means that working class politics can't be reduced to only the politics of worker unionism in the workplaces.

The struggles in the workplaces, and the culture of worker solidarity and direct struggle sometimes leads to a mindset called "workerism." An objection to syndicalism has been that it tries to reduce class politics to workerism. Although this has sometimes been a feature of syndicalism in the past, there have also been situations where syndicalist unionism has

"I'm on my own," and make decisions accordingly. To the extent that people see more people acting in solidarity with each other, building links between different movements and parts of the population, and successfully pushing back, they will be more open to more ambitious ideas about changes in society. The extent to which people take the possibility of change seriously depends on how realistic they think such aims are, and this depends on the social power they think may be available to fight for such changes. WSA refers to these changes in mindset thru collective action in Where We Stand this way:

> "The economy would grind to a halt without our work. This is the source of the collective power of the working class. Large-scale solidarity such as general strikes builds in the working class a sense of our ability to change the society."

The importance of workers acting "in union" with each other, creating collective organizations for resistance to management, as a way to build power, is highlighted in another stanza from "Solidarity Forever":

> When the union's inspiration through the workers' blood shall run,
> There can be no power greater anywhere beneath the sun;
> Yet what force on earth is weaker than the feeble strength of one,
> But the union makes us strong.

4. The Two Souls of Unionism

Looking at the kinds of unions that exist today it can be difficult to convince people — even committed radicals — that

unionism can be a force for revolutionary change. Here it is important to keep in mind the historical circumstances that have shaped the kind of unionism that exists in the USA today, and to look at the range of forms that unionism has taken in history and in different countries, as this helps to give us a better picture of what unionism can be.

The basic idea of a "union" is an organization workers form to check industrial autocracy: to force management to go along with what we want or to force them to avoid what we don't want them to do. But there are two historical tendencies or "souls" to unionism, and these distinct directions have been expressed at various points in labor history. There has been, on the one hand, the tendency to autonomous, grassroots workshop unionism, controlled by workers themselves. And, on the other hand, the tendency towards bureaucratic unionism, with paid hierarchies outside the workplace, made up of people who no longer work the job, do not experience the direct control of management. WSA describes the development of the American business union form of bureaucratic unionism this way in *Where We Stand*:

> "After World War II, control of the American unions by a hierarchical structure of paid officers and staff became entrenched. Unions limited their focus to narrow economic issues, and routine bargaining, sector by sector. The general strikes and pitched battles of the years before World War 2 were a fading memory. The labor bureaucracy's monopolization of relations with the employers tended to make the members dependent on them. Workers came increasingly to regard the union as an external service agency. There was less emphasis on the workers' own action "in union" with each other."

industry in western Louisiana and east Texas — in a region where this lack of racial segregation was a violation of the law. This resistance to racism took place at a time when racism was very strongly entrenched. And this resistance was itself a direct expression of class unionism.

6. "The emancipation of the working class must be the work of the workers themselves."

This principle was enunciated by Marx in his draft principles for the International workingmen's Association in 1864. Revolutionary syndicalists accept this principle but in a quite literal way.

For the working class to be able to take over the system of social production, there needs to be a history, a practice, of struggle of workers in workplaces that foreshadows this change in control, in the sense that there is a movement which challenges management for control, and develops a commitment to collective, democratic decision-making, to self-managing its own struggles.

In the course of develping this practice, and as part of the motivation for it, the movement needs to also develop the aspiration to replace the capitalist system, and its industrial autocracy, with collective self-management, generalized throughout the society, not limited just to the workplaces.

Without an organized mass movement of this kind, it's hard to see where the social force would come from with the cohesion, aspiration and capacity to carry out a transformation to a worker-managed economy.

The ambitious change we propose for society is certainly not going to happen thru a spontaneous rebellion. Even if there were a massiv social rebellion, without the development of a conscious movement for self-management and a developed

eral strike for the eight-hour day in 1886 was a class-wide struggle against employers in general, for example.

American business unionism has always consisted of national unions that tend to be focused on isolated, sector by sector battles of workers. To the extent they concern themselves with larger class questions, this tends to get kicked up to the leaders who engage in lobbying and ask members to vote for Democrats for their solution, not united action with other members of their class.

WSA hints at this concept of class unionism in *Where We Stand* in this language:

> "The type of unionism that we advocate is self-managed by the members, works to spread solidarity and link up with workers in other countries, encourages mass participation, fights against all forms of inequality and discrimination, and rejects any idea of "partnership" or "common interests" with the bosses."

Class unionism is based on class solidarity, encapsulated in the slogan "An Injury to One is an Injury to All." If this is to be real it means that the injuries that are due to diverse forms of oppression or mistreatment experienced by various sub-groups (such as along lines of race, sex, immigration status) of the working class cannot be ignored, and struggles of people in these groups need to gain support from the broader movement. To put this another way, the class movement needs to be anti-racist and anti-sexist.

For about a decade the Industrial Workers of the World was able to maintain an organization of workers on the docks in Philadelphia which was based on an understanding between the white and black longshoremen…a sharing of control within the worker organization. During World War 1 the IWW also built a single union of white and black workers in the timber

This type of unionism begin to develop historically once the basic revolt of workers has imposed the unions on the employers, and forced concessions, especially ongoing collective bargaining with the employer. But this type of unionism tends to undermine the counter-power of workers, since it tends to concentrate control over struggles and negotiations into the hands of a paid hierarchy, who fear risks to their organization if workers engage in autonomous, direct struggle that threatens to go beyond the bounds that are allowed by capitalist legality. Thus the union bureaucracy is trapped in a contradiction they can't solve. They can't stem the decline of the past 40 years, because only disruptive mass action such as strikes and direct worker solidarity could develop sufficient counter-power. As long as they stay within the legal cage that the laws and courts enforce, they have little power to reverse their decline.

The alternative is to rebuild worker counter-power through the re-assertion of the other "soul" or tendency in historical unionism…the tendency to grassroots, rebel, independent worker organization. I think one of the first radical thinkers to explicitly lay out this understanding of the contradictory or "two souls" character of mass unionism was Antonio Gramsci during his syndicalist years after World War 1. At that time his Socialist Party Group worked closely with the anarcho-syndicalist Turin Libertarian Group to build the radical shop stewards movement in the Turin metal working industry. This was modeled to some extent on the British World War 1 shop stewards movement — also a syndicalist movement — and was based on workplace assemblies independent of the bureaucratized FIOM (Metal Workers Federation) union. Shop steward councils were elected that were independent of the union, and brought together in the assemblies people from the various unions in the plants into a single united body. This program was then taken over by the Italian Syndicalist Union (USI) (a union formed in 1912 on the platform of the American IWW) and then extended to Milan, Genoa and other areas.

At that time the Italian social democratic union federation (CGL) had already developed a practice of collective bargaining with employers and had a bureaucracy of paid officials, and Gramsci noted the preoccupation of these officials at maintaining their ongoing relationships with the employers, including their tendency to discourage mass direct action and revolt.

Thus we can understand revolutionary syndicalism as the proposal to build and nurture the independent, self-managed workshop unionism tendency, that is, for mass worker organization that is independent, worker controlled, and works to broaden solidarity.

5. Self-managed Class Unionism

I use the term "self-managed class unionism" to refer to the type of worker unionism that syndicalism proposes. By "self-managed" I mean that workers directly control their struggles themselves, and they directly control the formal organizations they create. This is what WSA says about self-managed unionism in *Where We Stand*:

> "For unions to be self-managing, this starts with the importance of the general meetings of the members to make decisions. To prevent the organization becoming dependent on a small number of people, executive committee posts should have term limits. This needs to be combined with a systematic approach to training members in all the tasks needed in running a union.

Full-time paid officials no longer suffer the daily indignities of subordination to the bosses. The often high salaries of union bureaucrats in the USA separate union officials from the conditions of life of union members and encourages officials to look at the union as their personal ticket out of the working

class. We believe that the number of paid officials in the labor movement should be kept to a minimum. Local unions should avoid paid officers as much as possible. If workers feel that a paid officer is needed in a particular case, their pay should be limited to the average wage level of the workers….Genuine self-management of a union goes beyond the formal structure and also depends on active participation and education of members."

Self-managing struggles in some cases has led syndicalists to propose autonomous forms of organizing a struggle outside the unions. Two examples of this from Spain are: (1) The 1980s struggle at Puerto Real, against shutdown of a shipyard, in which the CNT (a revolutionary syndicalist minority) was successful in persuading the workers to form an independent assembly and strike committee to conduct the struggle, independent of the various unions; and (2) the 2006 struggle of the bus drivers in Barcelona for two-days off per week, which was conducted through several strikes by an independent assembly and strike committee, formed on the initiative of the CGT and another "minority union".

In this latter type of situation the union is a kind of militant minority organization that works to mobilize the larger mass of co-workers (including those who may have been less active before) to engage in a common struggle through directly democratic means.

"Class unionism", as "Big Bill Haywood defined it, "attempts to unite all the workers against all the capitalists."

This form of unionism may be built on struggles of workers against their employers, but does not limit itself to improving the circumstances of a particular group of workers at a particular employer, in isolation from the struggles of the working class in general. Class unionism becomes visible in situations where unions and masses of people engage in general strikes against the state, or against all the employers. The national gen-