# CAP AFF

## Advantage

### CAP SUCKS

#### Capitalism is entering a crisis of overaccumulation: economic stagnation driven by inequality and low consumption is inevitable under capitalism and causes military expansion that culminates in global war with Russia or China.

Robinson 21 [Robinson, William I., prof. sociology and global studies @ UCSB: "What are the real reasons behind the New Cold War?" ROAR Magazine, published 5-6-21, [https://roarmag.org/essays/new-cold-war-crisis-capitalism/?fbclid=IwAR2RzXn0SMlPSiLfXcXNtTcDIybQa6GxH\_eodUmyEww2i59lh5qHpZpcwhk]//AD](https://roarmag.org/essays/new-cold-war-crisis-capitalism/?fbclid=IwAR2RzXn0SMlPSiLfXcXNtTcDIybQa6GxH_eodUmyEww2i59lh5qHpZpcwhk%5d//AD) //LK [RCT 11/30/2021]

The US is launching a New Cold War against Russia and China in an attempt to deflect our attention from the escalating crisis of global capitalism. The announcement on April 15 by President Biden that this administration was expelling 10 Kremlin diplomats and imposing new sanctions for alleged Russian interference in the 2020 US elections — to which Russia replied with a tit for tat — came just days after the Pentagon conducted military drills in the South China Sea. These actions were but the latest escalation of aggressive posturing as Washington ramps up its “New Cold War” against Russia and China, pushing the world dangerously towards international political and military conflagration. Most observers attribute this US-instigated war to rivalry and competition over hegemony and international economic control. These factors are important, but there is a bigger picture that has been largely overlooked of what is driving this process: the crisis of global capitalism. This crisis is economic, or structural. One of chronic stagnation in the global economy. But it is also political: a crisis of state legitimacy and capitalist hegemony. The system is moving towards what we call “a general crisis of capitalist rule” as billions of people around the world face uncertain struggles for survival and question a system they no longer see as legitimate. In the United States, the ruling groups must channel fear over tenuous survival away from the system and towards scapegoated communities, such as immigrants or Asians blamed for the pandemic, and towards external enemies such as China and Russia. At the same time, rising international tensions legitimate expanding military and security budgets and open up new opportunities for profit making through war, political conflict and repression in the face of stagnation in the civilian economy. All around the world a “people’s spring” has taken off. From Chile to Lebanon, Iraq to India, France to the United States, Haiti to Nigeria and South Africa to Colombia, waves of strikes and mass protests have proliferated and, in many instances, appear to be acquiring a radical anti-capitalist character. The ruling groups cannot but be frightened by the rumbling from below. If left unchallenged, the New Cold War will become a cornerstone in the arsenal of US rulers and transnational elites to maintain a grip on power as the crisis deepens. THE CRISIS OF GLOBAL CAPITALISM Economically, global capitalism faces what is known in technical language as “overaccumulation”: a situation in which the economy has produced — or has the capacity to produce — great quantities of wealth but the market cannot absorb this wealth because of escalating inequality. Capitalism by its very nature will produce abundant wealth yet polarize that wealth and generate ever greater levels of social inequality unless offset by redistributive policies. The level of global social polarization and inequality now experienced is without precedent. In 2018, the richest one percent of humanity controlled more than half of the world’s wealth while the bottom 80 percent had to make do with just five percent. Such inequalities end up undermining the stability of the system as the gap grows between what is — or could be — produced and what the market can absorb. The extreme concentration of the planet’s wealth in the hands of the few and the accelerated impoverishment and dispossession of the majority means that the transnational capitalist class, or TCC, has increasing difficulty in finding productive outlets to unload enormous amounts of surplus it accumulated. The more global inequalities expand, the more constricted the world market becomes and the more the system faces a structural crisis of overaccumulation. If left unchecked, expanding social polarization results in crisis — in stagnation, recessions, depressions, social upheavals and war — just what we are experiencing right now. Contrary to mainstream accounts, the coronavirus pandemic did not cause the crisis of global capitalism, for this was already upon us. On the eve of the pandemic, growth in the EU countries had already shrunk to zero, much of Latin America and sub-Sahara Africa was in recession, growth rates in Asia were steadily declining, and North America faced a slowdown. The writing was on the wall. The contagion was but the spark that ignited the combustible of a global economy that never fully recovered from the 2008 financial collapse and had been teetering on the brink of renewed crisis ever since. Even if there is a momentary recovery as the world slowly emerges from the pandemic, global capitalism will remain mired in this structural crisis of overaccumulation. In the years leading up to the pandemic there was a steady rise in underutilized capacity and a slowdown in industrial production around the world. The surplus of accumulated capital with nowhere to go expanded rapidly. Transnational corporations recorded record profits during the 2010s at the same time that corporate investment declined. The total cash held in reserves of the world’s 2,000 biggest non-financial corporations increased from $6.6 trillion in 2010 to $14.2 trillion in 2020 — considerably more than the foreign exchange reserves of the world’s central governments — as the global economy stagnated. Wild financial speculation and mounting government corporate, and consumer debt drove growth in the first two decades of the 21st century, but these are temporary and unsustainable solutions to long-term stagnation. THE GLOBAL WAR ECONOMY As I showed in my 2020 book, The Global Police State, the global economy has become ever more dependent on the development and deployment of systems of warfare, social control and repression simply as a means of making profit and continuing to accumulate capital in the face of chronic stagnation and saturation of global markets. This is known as “militarized accumulation” and refers to a situation in which a global war economy relies on perpetual state organized war making, social control and repression — driven now by new digital technologies — in order to sustain the process of capital accumulation. The events of September 11, 2001 marked the start of an era of a permanent global war in which logistics, warfare, intelligence, repression, surveillance and even military personnel are more and more the privatized domain of transnational capital. The Pentagon budget increased 91 percent in real terms between 1998 and 2011, while worldwide, total state military budgets outlays grew by 50 percent from 2006 to 2015, from $1.4 trillion to more than $2 trillion, although this figure did not take into account the hundreds of billions of dollars spent on intelligence, contingency operations, policing, bogus wars against immigrants, terrorism and drugs, and “homeland security.” During this time, military-industrial complex profits quadrupled. But focusing just on state military budgets only gives us a part of the picture of the global war economy. The various wars, conflicts and campaigns of social control and repression around the world involve the fusion of private accumulation with state militarization. In this relationship, the state facilitates the expansion of opportunities for private capital to accumulate through militarization, such as by facilitating global weapons sales by military-industrial-security firms, the amounts of which have reached unprecedented levels. Global weapons sales by the top 100 weapons manufacturers and military service companies increased by 38 percent between 2002 and 2016. By 2018, private for-profit military companies employed some 15 million people around the world, while another 20 million people worked in private security worldwide. The private security (policing) business is one of the fastest growing economic sectors in many countries and has come to dwarf public security around the world. The amount spent on private security in 2003, the year of the invasion of Iraq, was 73 percent higher than that spent in the public sphere, and three times as many persons were employed in private forces as in official law enforcement agencies. In half of the world’s countries, private security agents outnumber police officers. These corporate soldiers and police were deployed to guard corporate property, provide personal security for TCC executives and their families, collect data, conduct police, paramilitary, counterinsurgency and surveillance operations, carry out mass crowd control and repression of protesters, run private detention and interrogation facilities, manage prisons and participate in outright warfare. In 2018, President Trump announced with much fanfare the creation of a sixth military service, the “space force.” The corporate media duly towed the official line that this force was needed to face expanding threats to the United States. What went less reported is that a small group of former government officials with deep ties to the aerospace industry had pushed behind the scenes for its creation as a way to hype military spending on satellites and other space systems. In February of this year, the Federation of American Scientists reported that military-industrial complex lobbying is responsible for the decision by the US government to invest at least $100 billion to beef up its nuclear stockpile. The Biden administration announced in early April to much acclaim that it would pull all US troops out of Afghanistan. While US service troops in that country number 2,500, these pale in comparison with the more than 18,000 contractors that US government has hired to do its bidding in the country, including at least 5,000 corporate soldiers that will remain. The so-called wars on drugs and terrorism, the undeclared wars on immigrants, refugees and gangs — and poor, dark-skinned and working-class youth more generally — the construction of border walls, immigrant detention centers, prison-industrial complexes, systems of mass surveillance and the spread of private security guard and mercenary companies, have all become major sources of profit-making and they will become more important to the system as stagnation becomes the new normal. In sum, the global police state is big business at a time when other opportunities for transnational corporate profit-making are limited. But if corporate profit, and not an external threat, is the reason for expanding the US state and corporate war machine and the global police state, this must still be justified to the public. The official state propaganda narrative about the “New Cold War” serves this purpose. CONJURING UP EXTERNAL ENEMIES There is another dynamic at work in explaining the New Cold War: the crisis of state legitimacy and capitalist hegemony. International tensions derive from the acute political contradiction in global capitalism in which economic globalization takes places within a nation-state-based system of political authority. To put this in technical terms, there is a contradiction between the accumulation function and the legitimacy function of states. That is, states face a contradiction between the need to promote transnational capital accumulation in their individual national territories and their need to achieve political legitimacy and stabilize the domestic social order. Attracting transnational corporate and financial investments to the national territory requires providing capital with all the incentives associated with neoliberalism, such as downward pressure on wages, union busting, deregulation, low or no taxes, privatization, investment subsidies, fiscal austerity and on so. The result is rising inequality, impoverishment and insecurity for working and popular classes; precisely the conditions that throw states into crises of legitimacy, destabilize national political systems and jeopardize elite control. International frictions escalate as states, in their efforts to retain legitimacy, seek to sublimate social and political tensions and to keep the social order from fracturing. In the US, this sublimation has involved channeling social unrest towards scapegoated communities such as immigrants — this is one key function of racism and was a core component of the Trump government’s political strategy — or towards an external enemy such as China or Russia, which is clearly becoming a cornerstone of the Biden government’s strategy. While the Chinese and Russian ruling classes must also face the economic and political fallout of global crisis, their national economies are less dependent on militarized accumulation and their mechanisms of legitimization rest elsewhere — not on conflict with the US. It is Washington that is conjuring up the New Cold War, based not on any political or military threat from China and Russia, much less from economic competition, as US- and Chinese-based transnational corporations are deeply cross-invested, but on the imperative of managing and sublimating the crisis. The drive by the capitalist state to externalize the political fallout of the crisis increases the danger that international tensions will lead to war. Historically wars have pulled the capitalist system out of crisis while they serve to deflect attention from political tensions and problems of legitimacy. The so-called “peace dividend” that was to result in demilitarization when the original Cold War ended with the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union evaporated almost overnight with the events of September 2001, which legitimated the sham “War on Terror” as a new pretext for militarization and reactionary nationalism. US presidents historically reach their highest approval ratings when they launch wars. George W. Bush reached an all-time-high of 90 percent in 2001 as his administration geared up to invade Afghanistan, and his father George H. W. Bush achieved an 89 percent approval rating in 1991, right as the US declared the end of its (first) invasion of Iraq and the “liberation of Kuwait.” THE BATTLE FOR THE POST-PANDEMIC WORLD We are currently witnessing a radical restructuring and transformation of global capitalism based on a much more advanced digitalization of the entire global economy and society. This process is driven by so-called fourth industrial revolution technologies, including artificial intelligence and machine learning, Big Data, autonomously driven land, air and sea vehicles, quantum and cloud computing, 5G bandwidth, bio- and nanotechnology and the Internet of Things, or IoT. The crisis is not only economic and political, but also existential because of the threats of ecological collapse and nuclear war, to which we must add the danger of future pandemics that may involve much deadlier microbes than coronaviruses. The pandemic lockdowns served as dry runs for how digitalization may allow the dominant groups to step up restructuring time and space and to exercise greater control over the global working class. The system is now pushing towards expansion through militarization, wars and conflicts, through a new round of violent dispossession and through further plunder of the state. The ruling classes are also using the health emergency to legitimate tighter control over restive populations. The changing social and economic conditions brought about by the pandemic and its aftermath are accelerating the process. These conditions have helped a new bloc of transnational capital, led by the giant tech companies, interwoven as they are with finance, pharmaceuticals and the military-industrial complex, to amass ever greater power and to consolidate its control over the commanding heights of the global economy. As restructuring proceeds, it heightens the concentration of capital worldwide, worsens social inequality and also aggravates international tensions and the dangers of military conflagration. In 2018, just seventeen global financial conglomerates collectively managed $41.1 trillion dollars — more than half the GDP of the entire planet. That same year, to reiterate, the richest one percent of humanity led by 36 million millionaires and 2,400 billionaires controlled more than half of the world’s wealth while the bottom 80 percent — nearly six billion people — had to make do with just five percent of this wealth. The result is devastation for the poor majority of humanity. Worldwide, 50 percent of all people live on less than $2.50 a day and a full 80 percent live on less than $10 per day. One in three people on the planet suffer from some form of malnutrition, nearly a billion go to bed hungry each night and another two billion suffer from food insecurity. Refugees from war, climate change, political repression and economic collapse already number into the hundreds of millions. The New Cold War will further immiserate this mass of humanity. Capitalist crises are times of intense social and class struggles. There has been a rapid political polarization in global society since 2008 between an insurgent far-right and an insurgent left. The ongoing crisis has incited popular revolts. Workers, farmers and poor people have engaged in a wave of strikes and protests around the world. From Sudan to Chile, France to Thailand, South Africa to the United States, a “people’s spring” is breaking out everywhere. But the crisis also animates far-right and neofascist forces that have surged in many countries around the world and that sought to capitalize politically on the health calamity and its aftermath. Neofascist movements and authoritarian and dictatorial regimes have proliferated around the world as democracy breaks down. Such savage inequalities are explosive. They fuel mass protest by the oppressed and lead the ruling groups to deploy an ever more omnipresent global police state to contain the rebellion of the global working and popular classes. Global capitalism is emerging from the pandemic in a dangerous new phase. The contradictions of this crisis-ridden system have reached the breaking point, placing the world into a perilous situation that borders on global civil war. The stakes could not be higher. The battle for the post-pandemic world is now being waged. Part of that battle is to expose the New Cold War as a ruse by the dominant groups to deflect our attention from the escalating crisis of global capitalism. The US is launching a New Cold War against Russia and China in an attempt to deflect our attention from the escalating crisis of global capitalism.

#### Nuke war causes extinction AND outweighs other existential risks

PND 16. internally citing Zbigniew Brzezinski, Council of Foreign Relations and former national security adviser to President Carter, Toon and Robock’s 2012 study on nuclear winter in the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, Gareth Evans’ International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament Report, Congressional EMP studies, studies on nuclear winter by Seth Baum of the Global Catastrophic Risk Institute and Martin Hellman of Stanford University, and U.S. and Russian former Defense Secretaries and former heads of nuclear missile forces, brief submitted to the United Nations General Assembly, Open-Ended Working Group on nuclear risks. A/AC.286/NGO/13. 05-03-2016. <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/OEWG/2016/Documents/NGO13.pdf> //Re-cut by Elmer

Consequences human survival 12. Even if the 'other' side does NOT launch in response the smoke from 'their' burning cities (incinerated by 'us') will still make 'our' country (and the rest of the world) uninhabitable, potentially inducing global famine lasting up to decades. Toon and Robock note in ‘Self Assured Destruction’, in the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists 68/5, 2012, that: 13. “A nuclear war between Russia and the United States, even after the arsenal reductions planned under New START, could produce a nuclear winter. Hence, an attack by either side could be suicidal, resulting in self assured destruction. Even a 'small' nuclear war between India and Pakistan, with each country detonating 50 Hiroshima-size atom bombs--only about 0.03 percent of the global nuclear arsenal's explosive power--as air bursts in urban areas, could produce so much smoke that temperatures would fall below those of the Little Ice Age of the fourteenth to nineteenth centuries, shortening the growing season around the world and threatening the global food supply. Furthermore, there would be massive ozone depletion, allowing more ultraviolet radiation to reach Earth's surface. Recent studies predict that agricultural production in parts of the United States and China would decline by about **20 percent** for four years, and by 10 percent for a decade.” 14. A conflagration involving USA/NATO forces and those of Russian federation would most likely cause the deaths of most/nearly all/all humans (and severely impact/extinguish other species) as well as destroying the delicate interwoven techno-structure on which latter-day 'civilization' has come to depend. Temperatures would drop to below those of the last ice-age for up to 30 years as a result of the lofting of up to 180 million tonnes of very black soot into the stratosphere where it would remain for decades. 15. Though human ingenuity and resilience shouldn't be underestimated, human survival itself is arguably problematic, to put it mildly, under a 2000+ warhead USA/Russian federation scenario. 16. The Joint Statement on Catastrophic Humanitarian Consequences signed October 2013 by 146 governments mentioned 'Human Survival' no less than 5 times. The most recent (December 2014) one gives it a highly prominent place.

Gareth Evans’ ICNND (International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament) Report made it clear that it saw the threat posed by nuclear weapons use as one that at least threatens what we now call 'civilization' and that potentially threatens human survival with an immediacy that even climate change does not, though we can see the results of climate change here and now and of course the immediate post-nuclear results for Hiroshima and Nagasaki as well.

### Plan

#### Thus, the plan: A just government ought to recognize an unconditional right of workers to strike.

#### 1] Status quo labor movements present a key opportunity for liberation, but state violence against strikers prevents it from catalyzing effectively – protections are key.

Grevatt 21 (Grevatt, Martha. “Striketober!” Workers World, 20 Oct. 2021, <https://www.workers.org/2021/10/59666/.)//LK> [Accessed 11/28/21]

Before the month is half over, October 2021 already has a nickname: #Striketober! Kellogg workers have been on strike since Oct. 5. On Oct. 5, 1,400 workers at four Kellogg’s cereal plants went on strike to block the company’s concessionary demands. They are members of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers (BCTGM), which recently struck Frito Lay and Nabisco. That adds up to strikes at three Fortune 500 companies, involving thousands of workers, by a union with under 65,000 members. Kellogg’s wants to cut health care benefits, pensions, holiday and vacation pay, cost of living raises and union jobs — and, adding insult to injury, take the union label off cereal boxes. The company wants a two-tier system whereby future workers will pay more for health care and will not collect a pension when they retire. Kellogg strike, Battle Creek, Mich. As the union explains, “A two-tier system is a devious way for employers to slowly, but surely, take power from union members, their contract and their union. The company is trying to divide the workforce by asking the current workforce to sell out the next generation of Kellogg workers.” (bctgm.org) These workers have put in long hours of hard work throughout the pandemic. That a small union would take on Kellogg’s and two other Fortune 500 companies in a few months’ time is indicative of a new mood of militancy in the working class. Health care workers are on the move. More than two dozen California hospitals have experienced strikes and 24,000 members of United Nurses Associations of California/Union of Health Care Professionals have overwhelmingly approved a statewide strike against Kaiser Permanente. Nurses in Worcester, Mass. — on strike at St. Vincent Hospital – have been out since March 8. In Buffalo, N.Y., 2,000 health care workers followed suit at Mercy Hospital on Oct. 1. Alabama coal miners have been on strike since April 1 against Warrior Met — and, indirectly, against major Wall Street stockholder BlackRock, the world’s largest investment firm. Metalworkers struck two factories in Cabell County, West Virginia; over 400 are still out at Special Metals. Warrior Met coal strike, begun in April, is still on. Workers tell John Deere: ‘No more tiers!’ Another 10,000 workers began a strike Oct. 14 against John Deere, hitting 14 plants in Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Colorado and Georgia. This strike is the first in 35 years against the agricultural and construction equipment company. Over 90 percent of United Auto Workers members at Deere rejected the first contract presented to them. John Deere strikers in Milan, Ill. The media emphasize the company’s offer of 5 to 6 percent raises. But in a six-year contract, this amounts to 1 percent or less per year, while annual inflation is running at 5 percent. The two-tier pay scheme in place since 1997 — still paying “post-1997” workers substantially less — remains intact. Now Deere wants a third tier with future workers ineligible for pensions. This same company is poised to make nearly $6 billion in profits this year — an all-time record. The rank and file aren’t having it. Two strikers, speaking on a zoom call with rank-and-file UAW activists, complained of “disrespectful” management and the mistreatment of workers deemed “critically essential” because they manufacture farm equipment. Community support has been “overwhelming.” 10,000 John Deere workers are on strike. In a tight labor market this year, Deere employees have logged hours of mandatory overtime. From a strike standpoint this means two things: one, workers are angry; two, many workers have savings and can withstand the hardships of a long strike. United Farmworkers’ solidarity with John Deere strike. The difficulty finding workers may have been a factor in recent negotiations between the film and television industry and the International Association of Theatre and Stage Employees. Some 60,000 IATSE members were set to begin a countrywide strike Oct. 18, lifting the total number of current strikers to over 100,000. Members are now voting on a new contract with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers. The union says, “We went toe to toe with some of the richest and most powerful entertainment and tech companies in the world, and we have now reached an agreement with the AMPTP that meets our members’ needs.” There could still be a strike, which would bring Hollywood production to a halt if the workers vote no. Many are concerned that the issue of breaks between work shifts is not adequately addressed. Unorganized workers show courage and creativity Many actions of unorganized workers — often atomized or with only a handful of coworkers — are still of an individual character. Millions of workers have been leaving their jobs, a record 4.3 million in August. The lowest-paying jobs are seeing the highest number of quits. But organized group quits are becoming a trend. From fast food restaurants to dollar stores to trendy microbreweries, workers are leaving their jobs together and posting signs saying the place is closed because “we all quit.” Other workers are using their power at the point of production to demand changes — not only in compensation and working conditions but in corporate policy. Amazon white-collar workers have walked out over the company’s contribution to the climate catastrophe. McDonald’s workers have stopped work to protest sexual harassment. Transgender workers at Netflix are threatening a walkout over the continued streaming of an anti-trans comedy special. In a groundbreaking development, the Amazon Labor Union at the company’s JFK8 facility in Staten Island, N.Y., announced plans to file for a union representation election with the National Labor Relations Board. A number of unions, including the Teamsters, are planning a huge unionization drive at Amazon. The power of the working class to resist capital is amplified in a tight labor market. But capitalism has faced a generalized systemic crisis for decades. At a dead end, it is driven to squeeze as much productivity from workers as possible and at the same time cut labor costs to the bone. If companies are paying higher wages, they are getting it back, and then some, by making workers work harder and longer. How can our side win? The current uptick in strike activity and workplace resistance reflects the sharpening of class antagonisms. The big question is, how can the workers tip the scales in their favor? A popular slogan on picket lines is “One day longer, one day stronger!” This expresses the determination of the strikers to hold out as long as it takes to win their demands. But as a strategy, it has been proven inadequate against an aggressive capitalist class determined to maximize exploitation with a heavily militarized state at its disposal. Too often, striking unions obey a court injunction

limiting the number of pickets and strikebreakers who are able to cross the picket line. Workers eventually go back to work with a weak contract — or, worst case scenario, they are permanently replaced. The fraction of unionized U.S. workers has hovered around 10 percent, even though polls show workers favor unions by a substantial margin. It will take a broad, global, class-wide movement to turn the tide in labor’s favor, for both organized and unorganized workers. As Workers World Party First Secretary Larry Holmes explains: “From a genuine Marxist perspective, as the changes in the productive forces bring more workers across the planet into contact with each other, class-wide solidarity becomes not only more practically possible, it also becomes more necessary. Indeed, without greater political and strategic solidarity, the capitalist ruling class will use technology and globalization to isolate and atomize the working class. “It is in this context that we should understand the importance of mass working class solidarity, which means workers who are not directly affected by a particular struggle, organizing themselves to support other workers anywhere and everywhere who are at the center of a particular struggle, be that struggle small and local, large and global.”

#### 2] Specifically, micro-work strikes collapse the tech industry – that spills over

Jones 21 (Phil Jones is a researcher for the think tank Autonomy. He regularly writes for publications such as the London Review of Books, the Guardian, the New Statesman and Novara Media). Work Without the Worker: Labour in the Age of Platform Capitalism. Verso Books, 2021. // LHP AB

One might reasonably speculate that such promises account for why these sites have seen no mass walkouts, no acts of data sabotage or algorithmic disruption, only a crowd so quiescent that accounts of the surplus as atavistic seem entirely misplaced. For this reason, one might wonder whether microwork offers a route to trouble capital at all. It is evident that – taken by sufficient numbers – strike action would ripple across the system as a whole. AI projects would sink as venture capital stagnates; algorithms would make unwanted decisions and dangerous mistakes. Even on a smaller scale, a strike by content moderators would instantly swamp user feeds with violent and pornographic images. But disruption on this scale is smothered before it can catch light. A message of solidarity from content moderators to Facebook employees, who chose to walk out after the firm failed to stop President Trump from using the site to incite racist violence, encapsulates the risks such workers face: We would walk out with you – if Facebook would allow it. As outsourced contractors, non-disclosure agreements deter us from speaking openly about what we do and witness for most of our waking hours… In contrast to the official Facebook employees, NDAs also prevent us from voicing concerns and contributing to the public discussion about inevitable ethical challenges connected to the job. We would walk out with you – if we could afford it. At the moment, content moderators have no possibility, no network or platform or financial security – especially when we are atomized in pandemic and remotely micromanaged – to stage an effective walkout without risking fines, our income and even our right to stay in the countries where we live and work.3 Paralysed by legal and software architectures that replace bodies with avatars, crush conflict with account closures, or else gag users with NDAs, workers stand at a growing pressure point unable to make a move.

The more general that AI becomes to producing and circulating bodies and things, the more fragile capital is to disruptions affecting the flow of data. But the more machine learning suffuses the labour process, smoothing tensions through surveillance and gamification, the less likely disruptions become. As algorithmic control suffocates worker action before it can take a breath, too readily is the shout of the crowd sublimated into the gentle hum of software code. Such inertia is not unique to microworkers but displays the wider torpor of today’s worker movement, unable to move against a system no longer reliant on labour to anything like the degree of the postwar period. In the twilight of industrial growth, bargaining power has diminished, union membership has declined and, as the aborted democratic efforts of Bernie Sanders and Jeremy Corbyn suggest, conditions necessary for something like a mass labour party – dependent as it is on a now largely defanged worker movement – have all but vanished. Platforms have moved into the space evacuated by worker power and have reasserted capital’s dominance over labour in ways reminiscent of the early industrial period. It is hard not to conclude that this ‘late-capitalist triage of humanity’ has foreclosed all avenues for labour. 4 Unities without Unions Defined by superfluity, exclusion and informality rather than a wage, microworkers pose a particular challenge to labour organisers, whether looser worker associations or the more typical institutions of organised labour. Everything from the international geography of microwork to the pools of surplus labour on which platforms draw makes their organisation an uphill struggle. Monthly or annual models of union membership run up against microwork’s temporal dynamics, with workers joining sites daily and some staying for only brief periods. With ‘contracts’ between microworkers and requesters lasting mere minutes, sometimes only seconds, wages are so volatile that membership fees are likely unaffordable. Even if unionization were financially viable, unions so often relate to their members through identities of a professional or occupational nature, to which microwork offers only an unequivocal negation. One finds no clearly demarcated occupations, no sectors or vocations, only the loose array of odd jobs so typical of our low-growth economy. New unions like the Independent Workers of Great Britain (IWGB), which organises workers by precarious contract rather than occupational status, offer rays of light against this bleak backdrop. But even if such unions were the rule rather than the exception, microwork often takes place in slums, camps, prisons and occupied territories, places where unions fail to reach and organising ranges from dangerous to criminal activity. Even outside of these more extreme spaces, workers tucked away in bedrooms and internet cafes remain invisible to one another and to the institutions that might otherwise organise them. Workers are geographically dispersed, rarely if ever brought together in physical space. On labour platforms where action has been effective, meeting in town and city centres has been a central tenet of organisation. As Callum Cant, a key organiser on Deliveroo, explains: Deliveroo began to further increase the labour supply… More riders started working every evening, but the number of orders stayed the same. That meant that we worked less, earned less and spent more time at the zone centre. As we stopped going drop to drop, everyone started to get to know each other. I got used to starting work by joining a crowd of between five and thirty workers waiting at the cyclists zone centre.5 Attempts to discipline workers by flooding supply only served to bring together an otherwise fragmented workforce and provide the grounds from which to organise. Such face-to-face meetings seeded a swell of wildcat strikes in Brighton, London, Southampton, Newcastle, Oxford, and other British cities.6 Yet, this chain of events is hard to imagine being set in motion by those who encounter each other only as online avatars. Organisation thrives on a public dimension that microwork sites prevent, not only by geographical distance but software frontiers that limit worker contact. Such barriers restrict organisation to the less than ideal terrain of online forums. Users of TurkerNation and MTurkGrind, as well as Turker-themed Reddit threads, engage in small-scale, nonantagonistic action such as raising funds for fellow workers.7 Such action has been most effective when aimed at the architectures of specific sites. Pushing back against one-sided review systems, Turkers have developed Turkopticon, a website and browser plug-in that overlays the worker’s screen and allows them to write reviews about requesters and publish them in real time.8 The simple fact of the tool’s existence – letting requesters know they might be rated – itself acts as a deterrent against wage theft and other misdemeanours. But while the plug-in helps to discipline requester behaviour, it is not built to transform the platforms themselves. Alone it carries little potential as a tool for mass mobilisation, even if it does show that workers can collectively organise. Built to modulate requester behaviour rather than to unleash worker power, its role remains more reform than revolution. The impact of efforts to make platforms behave better has been as limited as other attempts to tame capital’s nastier elements. In a 2011 letterwriting campaign, workers on Mechanical Turk wrote to Jeff Bezos asking him to raise the price of their labour and improve the site’s functions. The letters sought to show Bezos – and the rest of the world – ‘that Turkers are not only actual human beings, but people who deserve respect, fair treatment and open communication.’9 In one letter, the CEO was told in no uncertain terms: ‘I am a human being, not an algorithm.’10 Hosted on We Are Dynamo, a forum set up for and by workers to organise on the site, the campaign remains the only action Turkers have successfully organised. During the forum’s limited period of operations members could post campaign ideas and vote on those of others, giving workers a means to mobilise around popular suggestions. It aimed, in the words of its architects, to create ‘publics that are just large enough to take action – unities without unions’, standing in for more traditional labour institutions that had so far ignored the site or were otherwise unable to represent its users.11 But We Are Dynamo did not last long. The site relied on Mechanical Turk to host tasks verifying the status of new members as real ‘Turkers’. Once Amazon realised what was happening, it immediately closed Dynamo’s account, cutting off the forum’s source of new members.12 That We Are Dynamo was so quickly defeated indicates the Sisyphean task such workers face as they attempt to organise collectively. The letter campaign still represents the sole action taken by Turkers. And though effective at drawing media attention to those working on the platform – arguably a first step toward more robust forms of action – the campaign’s result was to humanise rather than organise workers. The limits of such action mirror the limits of an atomized workforce, forced to meet through informal online means, and unable for lack of power or money to turn action into something more durable. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that no such campaigns have appeared around sites such as Playment and Appen. To condemn such tools on these grounds, though, would be naive, for at the very least they raise to consciousness a common collective struggle. Where the tactics of traditional unions have signally failed to meet the challenges of a digital world, forums and plug-ins have been leveraged into new forms of worker association, even under the menacing shadow of disabled accounts, bad reviews and NDAs. Whether these associations can translate a nascent digital militancy into a proper movement still remains to be seen.

#### The aff collectivizes micro workers

Dufresne 21 (Dufresne, Anne, and Cédric Leterme. “App Workers United.” The Left in the European Parliament, European Parliamentary Group, Jan. 2021, [https://mirador-multinationales.be/IMG/pdf/study\_empl\_version\_finale\_en.pdf. //](https://mirador-multinationales.be/IMG/pdf/study_empl_version_finale_en.pdf.%20//) LHP AB)

In response to the question raised by this study of how to fight effectively against the degraded status imposed upon workers by the platforms and the business model they are propagating, we have provided an answer based on the strategies used by the workers themselves and their representatives. **Platforms** such as Uber (2009) or Deliveroo (2013) **are now found in all major cities across Europe and all around the world. With all of the arrogance of multinationals operating outside of the law, they have flouted national social rights, plundered social security funds, and stolen data from those they refer to as their “collaborators”, who are essentially performing ‘naked’ labour, deprived of any rights whatsoever.** We define platform work as “naked labour”: it means poorly paid, with working hours that are too long and unstable, weak or non-existent social protection, largely fictitious “autonomy” and individualisation/fragmentation of labour relations that undermines the possibilities for organisation, representation and collective mobilisation. **These characteristics are not unique to platform work, but their cumulative and extreme nature is specific to it.** As is the large-scale collection and exploitation of data by the platforms, which are the only ones to be able to decide on and benefit from their use. **This social upheaval and large-scale data abuse occurs with the application posing as the sole commercial intermediary, shirking** the role and **responsibility of employer-platforms and which have become socially and societally irresponsible. Yet governments are allowing these predatory platforms to set themselves up. Illegality is becoming enshrined in law, informal work is becoming commonplace.** Amid this climate of legalising outlawed platformpractices and the urgency ofthe battle over platform workers’ future status, this study considered it important to study two strategies being used in the struggle: collective action and legal action which turn out to be complementary. In conclusion, for each of these two strategies, we extract the essential lessons and challenges, before opening up another, broader challenge:the need to redefine the very contours of the digital economy. Towards transnational collective action and new digital employment rights A first key lesson relates to the genuine achievements of the first strategy in the study directly targeting platforms: the progressive construction of a new collective “glocal” player. **Whilst the immediate results of the numerous mobilisations described may seem fragile and limited, the fact that they even exist and are multiplying has above all enabled new collective actors to invent and reinvent new ways of acting and mobilising at different levels. We have seen how, at local level, platform workers are resorting to direct action and switch-off strikes with demands for concrete improvements in terms of pay or work organisation.** The trigger for the strikes is mostly the drop in “rates”. The collectives and unions also have some new weapons in their arsenal, such as media coverage, to try to push the platforms to negotiate. **They have also been developing new alliances with a wider front of precarious workers,** where collective organisation can think in terms ofsupply chains(with IT technicians, orthe permanentstaff working in customerservice, for instance), potentially **paving the way for a new “cybertariat**”. At European level, the European Couriers’ GA highlighted two main cross-cutting demands: data transparency and a minimum hourly wage. Aside from the two flagship themes mentioned above, four other categories of demands emerged: those relating to employment status, collective representation, working conditions in the stricter sense of the term, as well as more “political” issues such as broadening the reach to include other sectors and categories of workers. On his side, the international coordination Allianza UnidXs Charter includes the following demands: recognition of the work of digital workers, accident and life insurance, a “decent” wage, the elimination of the classification system, an end to arbitrary deactivation, and universal social insurance. The overlaps between the two charters, European and international, suggest that the common theme is precisely that of abolishing performance appraisals, which in fact reveals the intensification of work that is very specific to platform work. This demand is included as part of a more general demand: that of the transparency of applications and the reappropriation of the algorithm, essential claims today. There is still the big challenge of coordinating demands between countries in order to identify a real common substratum of demands, supported by proposals for coordinated action. In addition to the coordination of demands, **it is also the specifically digital nature of platform work which must now be taken into account in the demand for new “digital labour rights”, with, firstly, the consequences of “algorithmic management” on working conditions and, secondly, the place and role of data in the business model of platforms.**

Acting on the law: Towards new statuses for platform workers? **The second strategy** highlighted in the study **is “Acting on the Law”. It shows just how topical and important the battle over status is: a long-term process which largely conditions everything else.** After a disappointing start, the case law on reclassification has increasingly moved towards recognizing platform workers asfully-fledged employees, with a lot of favourable decisions(specially in Spain) over the last five years in the eight countries concerned in Europe106. The judgements are based on the fact that, even if formally the platform claims to have only an intermediation role from one individual to another, the judge notes that it actually exercises control over the courier, with numerous indications of subordination: the situation of platform workers, geolocalised, unable to set the price of their services, forced to respect working time restrictions, carry pre-determined equipment, likely to be “disconnected” by the platforms… This situation looks very different from that of real self-employed workers. The legal action undertaken by the couriers with a view to obtaining jurisprudence that is favourable to workers has been supported by the trade unions in each one of their countries. They are legally well armed and often have previous experience from other sectors, as the problem of bogus selfemployment arose long before the platform economy. This favourable case law, together with the media’s lens being shone on collective actions by couriers or drivers, has given a boost to the ongoing debates and legislative initiatives at State- and EU level around legislations specifically framing the legal status of platform workers. **In this context, a majority of governments support the “uberisation” of society and are participating in the unravelling of labour law.** So how can we fight on the legal front in a context of progressive legalisation by money or by the law of hitherto outlawed companies? **In the United States, Uber's Proposition 22**, which carries the status of the digital self-employed, **was imposed by referendum** and thanks to the funds injected into the campaign by the transport multinationals, contradicting the government of the state of California, which had succeeded in imposing wage-labour (salariat). **In Europe, third statuses** **with** both **disadvantages**: the subordination of wage-earners and the nonprotection of the self-employed **are the norm** in many Member States. Only the Spanish model seems to be holding fast against this strong trend and defending unconditional employment against any form of precarious status. **This is** also **what** Leila **Chabi**, a member of parliament from the political party La France Insoumise, **is advocating by bringing forward a draft directive that defends the idea that platform workers are salaried workers as such**. Collective AND legal action **In order to transform these accumulating social forces** (on the basis of favourable reclassification decisions and social mobilisation) into bargaining power or political victories, collectives, **trade unions and their allies will have to continue** the battle. This study reveals the eminently complementary nature of the two strategies being analysed: **collective AND legal action**. **The existing mobilisations being taken at different levels (local, national, European and international) support indeed the legal and political struggles favourable to platform workers. Today, it is indeed the struggle’s gathering pace and the building of a powerful collective actor that will open up the opportunity for a workers' victory in the ongoing battle over status. And conversely, it is by building on the victories of favourable case law, by extending this fundamental conquest to other possible future political victories that collective action can be strengthened.** **In this difficult context, the future of the Spanish law that defends unconditional wage-earning is therefore important not only for Spanish workers, but also because it can serve as a model in the political battle overthe future directive set to take place in the European institutionsin 2021.** The legal battle may run for a long time. **However, the legal victories so far and the debate that is just getting underway at European level testify to the accuracy and perseverance of the historical struggles in winning (back) the right to have rights.** Vigilance towards the contours of the digital economy Last but not least, a final challenge relates to a major oversight in the strategies currently being deployed to defend platform workers: the taking into account of broader developments affecting the functioning of the digital economy as a whole. As we have seen, platform work is part of broader changes taking place with the platformisation of economies and societies. Starting around the beginning of the 2000s, platformisation has progressively led to the forming of vast digital monopolies with their powerlargely being derived from a relative legal and regulatory vacuum on a whole series of key issues, beginning with the question of data. Against this backdrop, the main digital lobbies and their State-level backing are seeking to lock down their advantages and their business modelthrough international trade negotiations on “e-commerce” (Leterme, 2019). The most recent example of this offensive was at the WTO, with its eighty or so members launching controversial negotiations on this subject in 2019. The outcome of these negotiations may have a lasting effect on the possibilities to resist the growing power of digital platforms, through clauses such as the free flow of data across borders, a ban on data localisation measures or even the protection of source code and algorithms. If they came to pass, these clauses would render futile the platform workers’ efforts to achieve better control of their data or to improve the transparency of algorithms, for example (ITUC, 2019). At the same time, the European Union has also begun its own efforts on reforming the digital economy with its Digital Services Act. The overall prospectsforthe text, which is essentially aimed at the competitive functioning of the digital economy, does not bode well for the EU’s capacity to tackle the crucial challenges for platform workers, and workers in general, such as the socioeconomic rights linked to data or the legal status of platforms (Just Net Coalition, 2019). As we can see, whilstthese international and European developments do not directly concern platform workers’ working conditions, they are still laden with potential consequences for their current and future strategies. Thisrequiresfar more vigilance on these issues, but also (and most of all) the forming of alliances with other actors and/or sectors (which are multiplying all the time) that are mobilising to change the current course of the “digital transition” (JNC, 2019)

#### 3] Strikes represent a school of war for class struggle – even if unions are bad, we need to preserve the possibility of grass roots labor organizing

Smith ’11 [Sharon, author of Subterranean Fire: A History of Working-Class Radicalism in the United States (Haymarket, 2006) and Women and Socialism: Class, Race, and Capital (revised and updated, Haymarket, 2015). July 2011. “Marxism, unions, and class struggle: The future in the present,” <https://isreview.org/issue/78/marxism-unions-and-class-struggle/index.html>] pat

Shifting the balance of class forces is, of course, of immediate urgency for the U.S. labor movement. But for Marxists, a new era of class struggle also provides a path to working-class revolution—by preparing workers not only to overthrow the system but also to rule society collectively. Marx stated clearly in the German Ideology, “[T]he revolution is necessary therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew.” Marx and Engels regarded class struggle as the means through which the working class advances from a class “in itself” to a class “for itself,” as a necessary precondition for their own self-emancipation. As Marx wrote in The Poverty of Philosophy, “Economic conditions had first transformed the mass of the people of the country into workers.… The mass is thus already a class as against capital, but not yet for itself. In the struggle, of which we have noted only a few phases, this mass becomes united, and continues itself as a class for itself. The interests it defends become class interests.” The tremendous class solidarity expressed in Madison in February and March marked a leap forward in establishing a working class “for itself”—including union and non-union workers from the public and private sector, students and supporters from all over the U.S. committed to defending public sector unions in Wisconsin. Engels argued that unions, and the strike weapon in particular, are “schools of war” that train workers in class struggle, as a necessary precondition to their own self-emancipation: These strikes, at first skirmishes, sometimes result in weighty struggles; they decide nothing, it is true, but they are the strongest proof that the decisive battle between bourgeoisie and proletariat is approaching. They are the military school of the workingmen in which they prepare themselves for the great struggle which cannot be avoided.… And as schools of war, the Unions are unexcelled. Draper added to this formulation, “The trade-union movement is a school or training ground of the proletariat in a less warlike sense too, including that of preparing cadres of workers capable of administering society. Engels pointed out that ‘the working people, in the management of their colossal Trade Societies’ also prove themselves ‘fit for administrative and political work.’” Thus, while unions exist to negotiate better terms for workers under capitalism, the additional goal for revolutionaries is always to strengthen the fighting capacity of the working class, with the aim of expanding and deepening revolutionary leadership among rank-and-file workers. As such, each phase of struggle—whether a victory or a defeat—marks a particular moment in the revolutionary process. This is not a wooden formula, but involves shifting strategies and tactics appropriate for every stage of the class struggle, which will be discussed further below. Negotiating the terms of exploitation At their best, unions are indispensible vehicles for the class struggle. But since their essential function under capitalism is to negotiate the terms of exploitation on behalf of their members, their preservation depends on the continuation of capitalist class relations. As Tony Cliff and Donny Gluckstein argue, “The improvement of workers’ conditions within capitalism—not the overthrow of capitalism—is the common guideline of trade union activity in normal times. In reality unions tacitly accept the framework set by the system and tend either to exclude political issues from discussion or to support reformist political parties that do not challenge the present order of society.” At various points in Marx and Engels’ lifetimes, unions led the class struggle far forward; at others, they restrained the movement. In times of union retreat, Marx and Engels complained bitterly about the state of the trade unions. As Engels wrote in 1871, “The trade union movement, among all the big, strong and rich trade unions, has become more an obstacle to the general movement than an instrument of its progress.” The Russian revolutionary V.I. Lenin echoed Marx and Engels’ changing attitudes toward trade unions. But he too was reacting to the historic role of the unions themselves, reflecting their vacillation. In 1899, Lenin wrote, “Every strike brings thoughts of socialism very forcibly to the worker’s mind, thoughts of the struggle of the entire working class for emancipation from the oppression of capital.… This is the reason that socialists call strikes ‘a school of war,” a school in which the workers learn to make war on their enemies for the liberation of the whole people.” Just three years later, Lenin’s polemic What Is to Be Done? described the politics of trade unionism in singularly negative terms: “There is much talk of spontaneity. But the spontaneous development of the working-class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology...for the spontaneous working-class movement is trade-unionism…and trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie.” Yet three years after that, during the 1905 revolution, Lenin returned to his earlier argument, commenting that “the working class is instinctively, spontaneously Social-Democratic [socialist].” The commentary above appears contradictory but represents Marxists’ theoretical understanding of the contradictory role played by trade unions in day-to-day class relations. A second aspect of the role of unions limits their explicitly political role under capitalism. Unions represent (or seek to represent) all workers of a particular trade or within a particular industry—the more workers a union can organize into one organization, the stronger its ability to wield its economic power through strikes and other workplace actions. So a bigger and broader union reduces competition between a larger section of the working-class. But this economic strength imposes political limits on unions. As Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky pointed out, The trade union embraces broad masses of workers, at different levels. The broader these masses, the closer is the trade union to accomplishing its task. But what the organization gains in breadth it inevitably loses in depth

. Opportunistic, nationalist, religious tendencies in the trade unions and their leadership express the fact that the trade unions embrace not only the vanguard [most militant workers] but also heavy reserves. The weak side of the unions therefore comes from their strong side. For this reason, unions cannot be transformed into revolutionary formations. This historic political role can only be fulfilled by explicitly revolutionary political organizations and parties. The trade union officialdom Cliff and Gluckstein, with the benefit of more recent experience, elaborated on the role of trade union officials: To believe that pressure from below can force union leaders on to a revolutionary path is to misunderstand the nature of the bureaucracy, to spread illusions in it, and to blunt workers’ consciousness and action. Trade union leaders may be induced to obey some wishes of the rank and file, but they will never be able to substitute for the collective action of the masses. The self-activity of the workers is therefore paramount. Marx and Engels (and other Marxists since) frequently directed their frustration at trade union leaders. Indeed, Marx and Engels repeatedly complained about craft union leaders who refused to broaden the union movement beyond their particular trades. “It seems to be a law of the proletarian movement everywhere that a section of the workers’ leaders should become demoralized,” wrote Engels in 1869. “The leadership of the working class of England has wholly passed into the hands of corrupted union officials and the professional agitators,” echoed Marx in 1878. If unions function to negotiate the terms of exploitation under capitalism, then union officials act as the negotiators for their members. Their class position is thus itself contradictory. Full-time union officials are not workers themselves, and the contracts they negotiate on behalf of their members do not affect their own salaries and working conditions. If the contract agrees to layoffs, union leaders still keep their jobs. If wages are slashed or a speedup imposed, union officials will maintain the same salaries and working conditions as before. Thus union leaders are neither workers nor capitalists, but mediators between the two. In the absence of pressure from below, they are likely to adapt to pressure from above. As German revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg described, The specialization of professional activity as trade-union leaders, as well as the naturally restricted horizon which is bound up with disconnected economic struggles in a peaceful period, leads only too easily, amongst trade-union officials, to bureaucratism and a certain narrowness of outlook.… There is first of all the overvaluation of the organization, which from a means has gradually been changed into an end in itself, a precious thing, to which the interests of the struggles should be subordinated. From this also comes that openly admitted need for peace which shrinks from great risks and presumed dangers to the stability of the trade unions, and further, the overvaluation of the trade-union method of struggle itself, its prospects and its successes. To be sure, the business cycle imposes some objective limits to unions’ ability to negotiate favorable terms for workers under normal conditions of capitalism. During the boom phase of the economic cycle, capitalists are far more likely to grant union demands, while in periods of recession—and high unemployment—the tables are reversed. This certainly contributes to the pattern of advances and retreats in the class struggle. But the decline of wages and union membership over the last three decades cannot be explained by the business cycle, as the current “recovery” demonstrates all too clearly. This decline can only be explained by the scale and duration of the neoliberal assault on the working class and the conservatism of the entrenched U.S. labor bureaucracy. The conservatism of the U.S. labor bureaucracy in recent decades is distinguished not only by union officials’ demonstrated abhorrence of struggle, but also by labor’s long-standing ties to the Democratic Party, a self-proclaimed pro-capitalist party. Both Clinton and Obama, for example, made significant campaign promises to unions that were quickly broken upon taking office. Neither Clinton’s promise to ban the use of permanent replacements of striking workers, a favorite strategy of corporations in defeating unions, nor Obama’s pledge to pass the Employee Free Choice Act, enabling “card check” voting in union recognition, ever saw the light of day. Yet support for the Democrats has continued unabated even as union membership and wages reached a crisis point over the last decade. Each election year Democratic Party candidates can continue to count on unions’ massive political and financial support for their campaigns, while delivering little or nothing in return. The reluctance of top union officials to challenge the status quo is certainly reinforced by their enormous salaries, which equal those of many corporate executives. As Nelson Lichtenstein wrote, comparing U.S. and European union officials, unions in the U.S. grew to employ The largest and best-paid stratum of full-time salaried officers in the labor movement world.… Functionary worker ratios in the United States were something like one in three hundred at the end of the 1950s, while the European average was about one full-time office holder per two thousands unionists. The U.S. had sixty thousand full-time union officers in 1960, compared to just four thousand in Great Britain.38 As Mark Brenner reports in Labor Notes, union officials “earning more than $100,000 a year tripled between 2000 and 2008, the latest year with complete data, and the number earning more than $150,000 also tripled.… In 2008, nearly 10,000 union officials or staff brought home salaries greater than $100,000, costing a total of $1.2 billion.” Indeed, five of the top union officials “received more than half a million dollars just in salary, and everyone in the top 15 earned more than $400,000.” Brenner also noted, “Officials earning more than $150,000 found themselves among the richest 5 percent of American households. Meanwhile, the typical union member earned $48,000 in 2008; the overall average U.S. income was $40,000.”39 The weight of this past weighs heavily on the labor movement today, even as the working class becomes ripe for struggle. Theory and practice Union workers will be key to turning the tide, and a union orientation must be central in formulating a political perspective today. Socialists must participate in their unions, however ossified their union bureaucracy or undemocratic their practice.40 As Lenin advised revolutionaries in Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder, You must be capable of any sacrifice, of overcoming the greatest obstacles, in order to carry on agitation and propaganda systematically, perseveringly, persistently and patiently in those institutions, societies and associations—even the most reactionary—in which proletarian or semi-proletarian masses are to be found. The trade unions and the workers’ co-operatives (the latter sometimes, at least) are the very organizations in which the masses are to be found. Union democracy is of paramount importance, with the aim of strengthening the fighting potential of the unions’ rank-and-file members. But there is no predetermined series of stages that must be passed through to accomplish this goal. Nor do union leaders’ formal politics necessarily determine their role in the class struggle. Mineworkers leader John L. Lewis, judged by his formal politics—a staunch Republican and anti-communist—might have seemed an unlikely candidate for spearheading the struggle for industrial unions in the 1930s. Yet Lewis recognized that the American Federation of Labor (AFL), in refusing to organize unskilled workers, was holding back organized labor from growing. He led a split within the AFL, effectively unleashing the strike wave that built the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). Lewis intended to run the CIO in the same top-down manner as he did the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). But the scale of the class struggle often prevented Lewis from reigning in rank-and-file workers leading strikes and factory occupations on the ground, particularly in the auto industry in 1936 and 1937. Marxism provides the theoretical foundation for understanding the vacillating character of trade union officials. Below, Cliff and Gluckstein lay out the basis in practice for “common action between a revolutionary party leading sections of the rank and file, and the trade union bureaucracy—both the left wing and sometimes the right”: This common action can be useful in developing the working-class struggle, for although even the most left elements of the bureaucracy remain unreliable and unstable, a temporary alliance of revolutionaries with them can weaken the hold of the bureaucracy as a whole. A revolutionary party must know how to exploit the division between left and right bureaucrats, between those who are prepared to make militant speeches (even if they will not act upon them) and those who are openly wedded to conciliation at all times. Through using this division the independence, initiative and self-confidence of the rank and file may be strengthened, on one condition: the party must make clear that the rank and file cannot trust the left officials or put their faith in radical rhetoric. The party must always remind trade unionists that even if bureaucrats put themselves at the head of a movement of insurgent workers, they do so in order better to control that movement. An alliance with left bureaucrats is only a means to broad action. Even the best and most radical speeches should never become a substitute for the action of the mass of workers themselves. Such an alliance, like every other tactic in the trade union field, must be judged by one criterion, and one criterion only—whether it raises the activity, and hence the confidence and consciousness of the workers.43 Trotsky made the same point, writing about Britain, “With the masses—always, with the vacillating leaders—sometimes, but only so long as they stand at the head of the masses.”44 This begs the question: should socialists run for union office to replace these “vacillating leaders?” This question is answered in Cliff and Gluckstein’s formulation above, which bears repeating here: all trade union tactics should be measured by “one criterion only—whether it raises the activity, and hence the confidence and consciousness of the workers.” In a revolutionary period, when a majority of workers are already exercising their fighting capacity and revolution is on the agenda, the answer is straightforward, since revolutionary union leaders can easily act in sync with the revolutionary movement. But in less tumultuous times, this decision is far more difficult. Over the last three decades many of the labor movement’s most dedicated radicals have taken on leadership positions in trade unions, and their efforts have born some important results—even in the absence of a significant rise in class struggle. Due to widespread and insistent pressure from antiwar union activists, for example, the 2005 AFL-CIO Convention voted in favor of a resolution calling for a “rapid” return of all U.S. troops from Iraq—reversing many decades of uncritical support for imperialism in the U.S. labor movement. Socialists cannot be indifferent to the election of reform slates in union elections and must actively support any and all other concrete steps toward winning union democracy. Nevertheless, it is also the case that holding a full-time union office always brings forth substantial pressure to compromise with employers. This pressure from above can easily lead to conservatism even among the most well-meaning union leaders, particularly without the counterbalance of pressure from the rank and file below. Because above all, revolutionary leadership is not measured by title, but by deed—in ensuring that the most militant workers are able to organize and lead the struggle from below, with or without the agreement of the existing union officials. If this group of militants remains a minority among the union’s membership, then strengthening their confidence and influence might well prove the most effective tactic, which would certainly not be accomplished by taking full-time leadership positions. Helping to cohere this militant minority can be achieved in a number of ways, from forging alliances with other workers willing to stand up for union rights in individual workplaces to standing with those who vote no on a concessionary union contract. Even if the membership vote for a contract is 90 percent in favor and just 10 percent opposed, socialists could be far more effective in focusing on cohering, and expanding the influence of, this small but militant minority than on formal union leadership positions. Cliff and Gluckstein also described the necessary discipline imposed upon members of a revolutionary party working inside unions: [T]here must be collective control by the party over the individual and his or her subordination to the party cell in the workplace or the local party branch.… [T]he struggle for the election of any official should supplement and not supplant the activity of the workers. Elections in the union should enhance the power of the rank and file, and not substitute for it. The importance of perspectives Marxist theory provides a starting point, but only a starting point, for socialists in unions today. There is no formula for applying the Marxist method in individual unions at specific points in the class struggle that lie ahead. Unions do not negotiate in a vacuum and union leaders alone do not dictate the future of the class struggle. Strategies and tactics need to be determined in practice, and adapted to the many factors that determine the balance of class forces—which are not static, but ever-changing—at any given moment. Those sectarians who at all times view the “treachery of the union bureaucracy” as the key obstacle to advancing the class struggle (accompanied by incessant calls for a “general strike” no matter what the actual state of class relations) have strayed far from the Marxist method. As Luxemburg articulated in the Mass Strike, written shortly after the 1905 Russian revolution, If, therefore, the Russian Revolution teaches us anything, it teaches above all that the mass strike is not artificially “made,” not “decided” at random, not “propagated,” but that it is a historical phenomenon, which, at a given moment, results from social conditions with historical inevitability. It is not, therefore, by abstract speculations on the possibility or impossibility, the utility or the injuriousness of the mass strike, but only by an examination of those factors and social conditions out of which the mass strike grows in the present phase of the class struggle—in other words, it is not by subjective criticism of the mass strike from the standpoint of what is desirable, but only by objective investigation of the sources of the mass strike from the standpoint of what is historically inevitable, that the problem can be grasped or even discussed. Strategies and tactics must be determined through an assessment of both objective and subjective factors at each particular phase of history. James P. Cannon, founder of the U.S. Trotskyist movement, described the importance of this process as follows: “The first point is the question of perspective. Where are we going, what are the factors in the situation, and what is the general trend? Clarification on this point is necessary first.”50 Anticipating the future direction of the class struggle is crucial to developing a perspective. In the same article, Cannon laid out the importance of the Communist Party’s trade union resolution adopted in May 1928—which anticipated “the growing industrial depression and its radicalizing effects upon the workers” years before the rise of industrial unions during the Great Depression. Cannon continued, with remarkable accuracy, The resolution predicts a growing unrest of the workers and sees a prospect of big struggles, particularly in fields where the workers are unorganized, such as the automobile, rubber, textile and meatpacking industries. Great masses of workers are employed in these industries, they are fiercely exploited, the existing trade unions offer them no protection, and their mood for struggle is growing. These factors determine our orientation. The only possible line for the Communist Party in the present situation is to calculate upon a growing unrest of the workers and an increasing will to struggle and to put the main emphasis and center of gravity in its trade union work on the organization of the unorganized and the preparation for strikes. Recognizing when the time is approaching for a surge in class struggle is essential to preparing for its arrival. The outbreak of class struggle in Wisconsin, and indeed throughout the Midwest, marks the opening battle of a future era of class conflict. It takes place in the context of a protracted and severe economic crisis that began with the onset of the Great Recession and still shows no sign of significant rebound, despite the restoration of corporate profits. The excesses of neoliberal policy caused the financial meltdown of 2008, yet neoliberalism persists. The corporate class will continue its assault on workers until the class struggle forces a shift in the balance of class forces. There will be many challenges, victories, and defeats ahead of us. These are inevitable in the revolutionary process, during which the revolutionary party prepares itself to lead the self-emancipation of the working-class—while the working class prepares itself to not just overthrow the system, but also to rule society in the interests of the vast majority of humanity.

#### 4] Communist organizing requires collective struggle and the establishment of centralized organization to inform both theory and practice – only the party and the vanguard can provide for the needs of the masses.

Kuhn ’18 [Gabriel, Austrian-born writer and translator living in Sweden. Among his book publications is “All Power to the Councils! A Documentary History of the German Revolution of 1918-1919”. March 2018. “Don't Mourn, Organize! Is Communism a Pipe Dream—or a Viable Future?” <https://brooklynrail.org/2018/03/field-notes/Dont-Morn-Organize-Is-Communism-a-Pipe-Dreamor-a-Viable-Future>] pat

The forms of organization this requires must go further than the affinity group but stop short of the vanguard party. Affinity groups do not answer the demand for mass organizing that mass societies require. But neither do vanguard parties. They attempt to lead the masses, not organize them, and that’s a big difference. The party model might in general be insufficient for mass organizing today. The networks that movementism gave way to are perhaps more appropriate, but only if they can overcome the assumption that the looser the connections are, the better. This assumption is wrong. Loose connections might suit the needs of an ever more flexible market economy, but not of effective political organizing. To “have contacts” is not enough; you need to do something with them. And you need to stay committed to the projects you initiate. I will try to flesh this out by listing the aspects I consider most important in organizing today. 1. We need to leave sectarianism behind. The left is weak and each additional division weakens it further. In a 2011 article titled “Movement, Cadre, and the Dual Power,” Joel Olson made a simple, yet very important observation: “We believe that the old arguments between communists and anarchists are largely irrelevant today.” This must be our point of departure. 2. We need theory that is adapted to our times. It must overcome the false contradiction between “class struggle” and “cultural struggle.” There is a fruitful debate about a “new class politics” in the German-speaking world. Sebastian Friedrich, one of its main proponents, drew these conclusions in an article published by Counterpunch: A new class politics does not relegate gender, race, and imperial legacy to issues that are supplementary to class relations. These issues, and the struggles they imply, are an integral part of class relations. In fact, feminist, anti-racist, and anti-colonial struggles are the base on which effective unified class struggles must be launched.… A new class politics must clarify where and how the specific experiences of workers based on gender, race, citizenship, and other factors converge. It must reveal the overlapping interests of workers as members of the class. This makes common struggles possible. 3. We must not rely on the “objective forces” identified by historical materialism. Subjective forces are important for change. It is easy to underestimate how much neoliberalism shapes the lives even of people opposed to it. In the Global North, political activism has become a leisure activity that people engage in or not, depending on their mood, the identity they are trying to create for themselves, or the road of “self-improvement” they have chosen. In almost all cases, it is secondary to professional careers and personal comforts. Under such circumstances, it is difficult to get anything done. There is nothing wrong with being “voluntaristic.” Radical change is dependent on people wanting radical change, no matter how much Marxists still insist on economic realities determining individual consciousness and, therefore, individuals’ capacity for political action. An organization’s efficiency relies on the individual qualities of its members, that is, responsibility, reliability, and accountability. Making Things Concrete If we want communism to be more than a pipe dream, we have to be willing to face reality, even if it confuses, challenges, or even frightens us. We cannot ignore struggles that refer to communist ideals, simply because they aren’t the struggles we’d like to see. If our enthusiasm for communism remains limited to lecture halls and conference rooms, it won’t be anything the powerful will lose sleep over. The struggle that currently receives most attention among communists of all stripes in the Global North is the one in Kurdistan. In Rojava (Syrian Kurdistan), forces affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, PKK, have established a direct-democratic council system, based on the “democratic confederalism” conceived by the imprisoned PKK leader Abduallah Öcalan. Öcalan describes democratic confederalism as “a non-state political administration or a democracy without a state,” and cites Murray Bookchin’s “libertarian municipalism” as a major influence. There are people who celebrate this as a form of anarchism. But as an observant friend of mine noted, an anarchism that is imposed by a leader is a strange kind of anarchism. Besides, there are reports from the ground that challenge the libertarian narrative. The editors of Lower Class Magazine, an online project dedicated to “low budget underground journalism,” travel regularly to Kurdistan and have the following to say: The Western left sees Rojava as the realization of a democracy “from below”: communes, councils, a confederation; no hierarchies, no party, a spontaneous mass project. Anarchists and “libertarian” communists wax lyrically about the dawn of a direct-democratic Shangri-La. […] Yes, the change in Rojava comes “from below. It is based on the power of the people, no doubt. Communes and councils are at the heart of decision-making, that is true. But as essential is the following: None of this would be happening if it wasn’t for a vanguard

leading the way. The revolution in Rojava proves that Leninist vanguardism is correct, not false. Another European journalist visiting the region noted that the cadres of the People’s Protection Units, YPG, relate to the councils of Rojava in the same way the Bolshevists related to the councils of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, there are troubling pragmatic alliances, which have included collaboration with the U.S. military. Yet the people behind Rojava Solidarity NYC sum up the situation well: Rojava, an autonomous region in Northern Syrian, the largest revolutionary territory of the 21st century, has projected anarchist and communist ideas to the forefront of political discourse and into the pragmatic and messy reality of everyday life. … From communal relationships to the councils and self-defense units, we can assess numerous potential routes by which we can create liberated communities at home, while learning from their possibilities and pitfalls. Rojava won’t be the answer to our problems. No single struggle ever is. But the developments in Rojava challenge us to discuss real-life strategies for radical change. It is easy to focus on shortcomings, but if this is all we ever do, where will it get us? Councils are essential for communist projects. Their power, which is based on the direct involvement and active participation of the masses, is curtailed as soon as political interest groups, such as parties, assume control over them. This conviction separated historical council communism, represented by figures such as Otto Rühle and Anton Pannekoek, from the Bolsheviks. Pannekoek wrote: The councils are no government; not even the most central councils bear a governmental character. For they have no means to impose their will upon the masses; they have no organs of power. All social power is vested in the hands of the workers themselves. Unless we want the transition to communism to entail enormous human suffering (which would be utterly absurd), we need to consider the fact that billions of people will need to be fed, sheltered, nursed, provided with access to clean water, and so forth. To produce according to the needs of the people rather than the needs of profit requires enormous efforts in planning, especially if current living standards are to be upheld. (Living standards don’t equal standards of consumption—the standards of consumption in the Global North cannot and should not be upheld, since they are unsustainable.) Furthermore, we must collectively dispose of industrial and nuclear waste, weapons of mass destruction, and ticking environmental bombs. None of this is possible without a level of centralization, no matter how visceral the reactions are that the word might provoke in some circles. Only a council system can combine the centralization required by the complexity of modern societies with participative democracy. Centralization requires formal structures. Participative democracy requires these structures to be transparent. They need to be bottom-up rather than top-down, and delegates must be directly responsible to their constituencies. The council system is the only administrative framework to provide that. Romanticizing particular struggles rarely does any good, no matter how council-based they are—or claim to be. If radicals in the Global North fail to address concerns with respect to struggles in the Global South, it is not respectful but condescending. To escape into the intellectual poverty of cultural relativism doesn’t help. We can only evolve from critical engagement. But real-life struggles are our starting point. It makes little sense to demand struggles for communism if we shy away from engaging with the ones that exist. Arundhati Roy put it simply after spending time with Maoist Naxalites in the forests of central India, an experience she chronicled in the book Walking with the Comrades. She said: “I went in because I wanted to tell the story of who these people are.” This informs revolutionary theory and, in turn, improves revolutionary practice. Most importantly, it is crucial for saving communist struggles from betraying their own principles. Everyone can watch failure unfold. The challenge lies in helping to prevent it.

## Framing

#### The Role of the Judge is to be a propagandist. Studies prove debate is inevitably implicated in the context of propaganda – voting aff aligns with a model predicated on communist base-building.

Greene and Hicks ‘6

[Ronald Greene, former Chair of the Critical and Cultural Studies Division of the National Communication Association, and Darrin Hicks, communication studies at the University of Denver. 2006. “Lost convictions: Debating both sides and the ethical self-fashioning of liberal citizens,” <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09502380500040928>] pat

Concurrently, the Army Information and Education Group, which would become the core of the Hovland-Yale Communication and Persuasion Group, led by Carl Hovland, was conducting experiments testing the relationship between inducement and internalized attitude change. In 1953, Hovland, Janis, and Kelley published their highly influential book Communication and Persuasion, which established a positive relation between verbalization and the intensification of belief and predicted that being forced to overtly defend a position discrepant from one’s own private beliefs would result in the internalization of the overtly defended position. This prediction was further supported by the forced-compliance and cognitive dissonance studies of Festinger (1957) and his colleagues at Stanford. For decades, the ability to understand the merits of opposing arguments had been championed as one of the prime pedagogical benefits of intercollegiate debate training. However, in the fall of 1954, Hovland’s and Festinger’s studies coupled with the anti- Communist rhetoric of Schlesinger, which would, much to Schlesinger’s dismay, come to underwrite McCarthy’s witch hunts, would be articulated in such a way that debate’s ability to train students to take the other’s perspective might be framed as a threat to national security. The fear that defending the diplomatic recognition of ‘Red China’ would turn American youth into Communist sympathizers saturated the debating both sides controversy with an anxiety over the virility of ‘democratic faith’. Those choosing to defend the virtues of intercollegiate debate and the practice of debating both sides were careful not to question the basic tenets of the anti-Communism that constituted the ideological core of Cold War liberalism. Democracy, if it were to survive the seductive appeal of totalitarianism, had to become a fighting faith, a faith born out of and tested in social and political conflict. Debate, in particular the format of debating both sides of controversial issues embodied the sort of political conflict that could engender sound conviction, rational decisions, and a committed youth impervious to Communist propaganda. Moreover, debate provided the antidote to communist propaganda. Baird concluded, ‘[c]ollege debate teams are the last groups in this nation where Communist propaganda has any chance of making headway’ (1955, p. 7). No student wishing to win the debate, Burns argued, ‘would take the affirmative on the grounds that we must love the Chinese or that they are merely agrarian radicals’ (p. 7). Burns, so confident in the anti-Communist sentiment of the majority of students, contended that no student would dare argue in favour of Communism but ‘pitch his [sic ] case on the argument that recognition might help pull China out of the Moscow orbit, that it might help build a firmer anti-Communist alliance, that it might make peaceful coexistence possible. He [sic ] would, in short, be directing our attention to the very questions that all American’s might well be debating’ (p. 7). For Schlesinger, however, the ground of the anti-Communist consensus Baird believed to be evident in ‘the majority of students’ was unstable.

#### The standard is maximizing expecting well being.

#### 1] Actor specificity

#### ---A] Aggregation – every policy benefits some and harms others, which also means side constraints freeze action.

#### ---B] No act-omission distinction – choosing to omit is an act itself – governments actively decide not to act so there is no omission