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Contents

In this issue

by Jack Barnes 3

Their transformation and ours

*Socialist Workers Party
Draft Resolution
February 2005* 19

Capitalism's long hot winter has begun

by Jack Barnes 99

Appendix

Crisis, boom, and revolution

*1921 reports by V.I. Lenin
and Leon Trotsky*

The world economic
crisis and the tasks
of communists
by Leon Trotsky 213

A very unstable
equilibrium
by V.I. Lenin 267

Index 299

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[Excerpt]

**THEIR TRANSFORMATION
AND OURS**

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OUR TRANSFORMATION

40. Since the closing years of the 1990s, renewed resistance in the workplace to the brutal effectiveness of the employers' antilabor offensive has led to the beginnings of important changes in the combativity and self-confidence of pockets of working-class militants. Members of the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists—working and building unions today in industries such as meatpacking, coal, and garment and textile, where the bosses' offensive has been among the fiercest for the longest—are among the workers taking the lead in learning to organize and use union power. Over the past half decade, we've been involved in such vanguard fights in packinghouses in the Midwest, the Point Blank Body Armor factory in Florida, and the Co-Op mine in Utah.

41. The seeds of labor's transformation that are being planted within this sea change in working-class politics are germinating at the same time that the trade unions in the United States continue to weaken, as they do throughout the imperialist countries. While still-atomized groups of workers are gaining greater experience, solidarity, and confidence through unionization efforts and strikes, the basic defensive institutions of the working class, as a result of the treachery of the class-collaborationist trade union officialdom, have been rendered less capable today than at any time since the early years of the

Great Depression of successfully organizing and fighting the bosses and their government institutions.

The labor movement remains hobbled by the decades-long class-collaborationist course of an officialdom focused on its own routines, its own daily creature comforts, and its own retirement benefits, as well as mergers solely designed to bolster the latter two, at least for the union tops. The unions continue to shrink as a percentage of the working class. They are bound hand and foot by the policies of these misleaders, who identify the interests of labor with those of capital—factory by factory, company by company, industry by industry—as well as through subordination of the unions to the election and reelection of capitalist, most often Democratic Party, politicians. Workers searching for effective tools with which to fight find themselves swaddled in bourgeois ideas advanced by union officials—reinforced by schools, churches, and the media—and often overlaid with the flotsam and jetsam of dead-end leftism picked up by “labor leaders” willy-nilly over the years from petty-bourgeois radicals.

42. At the same time, *labor remains at center stage of U.S. politics*. In face of ongoing employer attacks, and no matter how weak the labor movement has become, workers reach toward organizing unions and trying to use them to defend wages and job conditions against such assaults.

The employing class, even with its unrelenting offensive on the factory and industry level, still cannot radically alter relations between capital and labor, as they must do in order to reverse the downward pressures on rates of profit. Yet they continue to fear launching a social and political fight that takes a chance on spreading resistance and leading to a new intensity, unity, and solidarity of workers' struggles.

As these deep contradictions work their way to the surface, the postponed class battles will come.

43. Class-struggle-minded militants such as those who have been engaged in the UMWA organizing drive in Huntington, Utah, set an example of determination and solidarity for others. The decisive step in transforming such resistance into forging a broader vanguard of the working-class movement is the recognition by militants, as they gain class-struggle experience through such fights, that their initial victories, both small and large, will not be maintained or secured unless they *extend union power to other plants, mines, and mills in the industry and region.*

As a result of the Co-Op miners' struggle, the organization of Western coal has begun. It will advance, however, only as cadres of that fight and those influenced by them actively reach out to other mines and miners—union and nonunion—to strengthen the UMWA in Utah and also in Colorado, Wyoming, New Mexico, and elsewhere in the West. The same is true for workers who are leading fights in Midwest packing, in garment shops, textile mills, or wherever else the lines of resistance in the working class have and will spread.

44. Learning how earlier generations of workers gained experience in union combat—forging a class-struggle leadership in the process and, over time, winning increased numbers of workers to revolutionary conclusions—is necessary to strengthen the ability both of party cadres and other militants to take part effectively in struggles already unfolding, as well as those that lie ahead. Members of the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists who are an integral part of working-class resistance have advanced this understanding by introducing fellow

militants to *Teamster Rebellion* by Farrell Dobbs, as well as organizing systematic classes on it in party units. The task ahead of vanguard workers today—captured well in the chapter title “The Struggle Widens” in *Teamster Power*, the second in the four-volume series—underlines the importance of systematically reading and discussing not only the first book but also *Teamster Power*, *Teamster Politics*, and *Teamster Bureaucracy*.

Read and absorbed together, the four-volume Teamster series describes how a growing workers vanguard put itself to the test in widening union combat, experienced inevitable differentiations, and advanced toward proletarian political consciousness: the capacity to think socially and act politically in the interests of the working class, independent of the employers, their political parties, and the capitalist state.