

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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DSA IN SOLIDARITY

LABOR STRATEGIES POST **JANUS**

HITTING CAPITAL
WHERE IT HURTS MOST

UNIONISM 101





ON THIS LABOR DAY 2018,
COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS OF AMERICA, DISTRICT I

• **SALUTES DSA** •

ON YOUR AMAZING ELECTORAL WORK IN 2018.

We celebrate these tremendous victories - now on to more in November!



Dennis Trainor
D1 Vice President

Bob Master
Assistant to the VP

Gladys Finnigan
Assistant to the VP



From the National Director

The Unions Make Us Strong

By Maria Svart

Welcome to all our new DSA members! If you joined after Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's victory in the New York Democratic congressional primary, it's your first look at *Democratic Left*, and I think it nicely complements our summer issue (which you can find online), which was about electoral power. In August 2017, at our national convention, delegates voted to make building strong unions one of our three national priorities. As democratic socialists, we seek not just a better political system but to democratize our economy as well, which requires building a different kind of power. Labor Day is the perfect time to remind ourselves that workers and our unions must be central to that fight.



We need also to revive the socialist emphasis on the capitalist class. A recent survey found that more than 70% of people blame politicians, not corporations, for our declining standard of living. That's dangerous, because it hides who is really to blame—the ones who *own* the politicians. As we go to press, word has come of the overwhelming rejection of anti-union Proposition A in Missouri, which gives me great hope!

The tepid responses of many unions to the recent anti-union Supreme Court decision of *Janus v. AFSCME* have highlighted the crisis in the labor movement. Guest editors Meagan Day, Don McIntosh, and Stephen Magro have brought together a variety of voices to debate how working people can build power and the role of socialists in the struggle. You can find more articles on the new *Democratic Left* website.

Bill Fletcher explains why workers have a unique power in the capitalist system, and thus why socialists focus on the working class, and why the working class needs socialist organization. Becky Simonsen

points to constant collective action—and identifying and organizing the workplace leaders who alone can make it successful—as the way to build power, while Kim Moody identifies choke points in the flow of the capitalist economy that workers can exploit. Jane Slaughter argues that socialists must take over their unions to turn them toward conscious class struggle. Ella Mahony and JP Kaderbek describe DSA's commitment to solidarity, Alexander Kolokotronis looks at a more directly democratic workplace model in worker cooperatives, and Puya Gerami gives a basic overview of why unions matter. Joe Burns argues that the strike remains the most powerful tool that unions have, and that they should use it. Don McIntosh highlights some exciting labor solidarity work in our chapters.

Labor's anthem, "Solidarity Forever," is more than a hundred years old. Its truth is as relevant today as when it was written: "We can break their haughty power, gain our freedom when we learn/ That the union makes us strong."

ED. NOTE: News came as we went to press that DSA member Rashida Tlaib won the August 7 Democratic primary for the 13th congressional district in Michigan. She will run unopposed in the general election. ❖



Read *Democratic Left* Online

If you like what you see in these pages, go to the new *Democratic Left* website democraticleft.dsusa.org for pieces on labor history, lessons from the West Virginia teachers' strike, and tributes to DSAers who led the way in labor and politics. Find it at dsusa.org.

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Solidarity in the Age of *Janus*

By Ella Mahony

Janus v. AFSCME, which allows non-members to benefit from the gains made by public-sector unions in their workplaces, is now fact. Well-funded right wingers have lost no time in launching campaigns to convince members of public-sector unions to stop paying dues and leave their unions. But what does this decision have to do with DSA? Our members are overwhelmingly young, non-union, and working in the private sector, which is less unionized than the public sector. Why should they care?

For one thing, hollowing out public-sector unions is a way to hollow out public-sector services. As labor rights are weakened, public agencies can be run more like companies, with “lean management” and constant staffing shortages, high turnover, outsourcing, chronic short-term thinking, and a drive to profit from the public. Sanitation workers, teachers, nurses, social workers, and postal workers will all find their ability to serve the public undermined.

The ruling class doesn’t care if we have to return to the subsistence levels we experienced during the dawn of industrial capitalism, before unions wrenched working-class gains from the state.

Capitalism constantly fragments the working class. When our mail doesn’t arrive, the streets are littered with trash, and our kids are struggling in school, it’s easy to blame the postal worker, the sanitation worker, or the teacher. And if we don’t do that, it’s still hard to see what their working conditions have to do with our well-being.

But socialists know that by standing with public-sector unions, we’re not just fighting for the labor rights of the 7.2 million public employees in unions. We’re fighting for a better standard of living for the whole working class.

Janus shows us that solidarity is never the obvious or automatic choice. Instead, it’s an active process. We have to look consciously for the areas where our interests align with others; the ways that capital’s power is undermining *all* our chances at a dignified, healthy, and fulfilling life. From there, we can build unity and a movement for mutual emancipation. ❖

Ella Mahony is a member of DSA’s National Political Committee and an assistant editor at Jacobin magazine.



Congratulations to DSA member Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez upon her victory in the Democratic primary in New York’s 14th Congressional District



Design: Andrea Guinn Photo: Corey Torpie

We look forward to her election on November 6 and to her serving in the House of Representatives as the first Democratic Socialist woman and the youngest woman ever to be elected to Congress.

Long and successfully may she serve our country!

Annie Bernstein and Jules Bernstein

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Democratic Socialist Labor Commission

By JP Kaderbek

At the 2017 DSA Convention, dozens of labor activist delegates presented a resolution calling “for DSA to boldly and unapologetically become an inextricable part of the labor movement.” With no speakers against, the resolution passed, creating the Democratic Socialist Labor Commission, also known as the DSLC.

Why DSA must become inextricably intertwined with the labor movement and how we plan to accomplish that task are two vital questions for our organization.

At the core of DSA’s mission is a vision of an economy that serves the whole of humanity. To realize this vision will require a radical reordering of our society. Throughout history, we have seen that the greatest social transformation comes through the struggle of the organized working class against the ruling class. At its best, this radical transformation is what the labor movement fights for.

But the labor movement cannot be relied on to automatically advance a broad socialist agenda. It’s typical (and understandable) for workers and their unions to focus on their own particular issues (wages, benefits, conditions for work) over demands that benefit the entire class. Workers often perceive their immediate boss, or even the competitor of their boss, as their only opponent.

However, there are moments in that history where the labor movement broadened its horizons, bargaining and even striking for class-wide demands, such as a minimum wage, the shortening of the work day of all workers, and the provision of universal healthcare. In each of these struggles, there has been a common factor that drove the articulation of these class-wide demands: an organized Left integrated throughout the labor movement.

DSA is a long way away from having a presence in the labor movement that can win gains comparable to those of the workers’ movement of the early 20th century. But that doesn’t mean we can’t begin to have an impact. In recent years, militant minorities made up of a handful of socialists have helped lead rank-and-file reform movements in their unions, combat racism, fight for universal programs, and this past year spark a wave of strikes that called for demands far beyond a wage increase.

Socialists have contributed to all this with little coordination and a handful of members, and we can accomplish far more as we grow. The

“We need, in every community, a group of angelic troublemakers.”



—BAYARD RUSTIN

LEO CASEY

DSLC exists to facilitate this growth.

Through the Education Subcommittee, the DSLC will provide materials to help new labor activists and chapters understand the history of the labor movement and how to organize. We will map and analyze our membership nationwide in order to better understand where we have existing concentrations of members in the labor movement and to better communicate with and develop our labor activists.

The Communications Subcommittee will help create and moderate channels for DSA labor activists to stay in contact and collaborate across the organization. Our Leadership Development subcommittee exists to help start and grow labor branches in DSA chapters across the country, to help members deepen their engagement in the labor movement, and to build a bench of labor activists that can lead in their chapters and in the labor movement in their region.

Finally, our Organizing the Unorganized Subcommittee will help give DSA activists the skills needed to expand the labor movement where they are. We look forward to beginning the process of re-embedding socialists in the labor movement and uniting class-conscious socialists and working-class institutions for the battles ahead. ❖

JP Kaderbek is a member of Chicago DSA and an elected member of the DSLC. You can find the DSLC at dsausa.org/labor.



Labor, the Working Class, & Socialists

By Bill Fletcher, Jr.

The connection between socialists and the working class predates Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. With the earliest rumblings of the socialist movement, going back to the French Revolution, socialists focused upon the working class and the poor in the struggle against capitalism and tyranny. What Marx and Engels introduced was a specific way of understanding the working class as a class that could only free itself by freeing society of capitalism.

The working class may have an objective interest in opposing capitalism, but it does not follow that there is an existing socialist consciousness within the class as a whole. The everyday struggles of workers against economic injustice, many of which came to operate within the framework of trade unionism, sought to eliminate the competition between workers engendered by capitalism as a step toward achieving some modicum of economic justice. Unions—as worker organizations fighting for fairness—are necessary because the absolute objective of capitalism is to promote competition between workers and to drive down their living standard in order for the capitalists to expand their profits and ensure social control.

Socialists focus on the working class irrespective of whether it is the majority in any given country. But here is the important qualification. What many revolutionaries appreciated was that when the working class was not the majority, alliances with other oppressed classes were essential. This was especially the question of the relationship of the working class to the peasantry, who, in much of the global South, and up through the early 20th century in the global North, constituted majorities or near majorities.

Lenin framed the task of the working class as one of fighting for consistent democracy. This means that all victims of oppression, whether they are working class or not, must be assisted in their fight for justice. The working class has the challenge of rising above sectoral issues and leading in the building of a larger bloc that can transform society.

What is especially important about the working class is that it brings together people irrespective of race, gender, ethnicity, and so on in a way that most other social settings do not. Peoples that were cut off from one another are brought together by forms of production and work, introducing them to new cultures and new ideas. It is not necessarily a happy coming together. Right-wing populism, for in-



Annie Zhao

stance, is an illness within the working class and middle strata, frequently responding, in a reactionary way, to developing demographic changes.

Socialists additionally recognize the need to transform, in a leftward direction, the official labor movement. This becomes quite complicated precisely

because the official labor movement—*organized labor*—tends to be dominated by an ideology grounded in an acceptance of capitalism, albeit a hoped-for humane variety. Specifically, it is dominated by the ideology of pragmatism.

What is key for all leftists to appreciate is that unions, as well as other forms of labor organization, such as worker centers, can and must be part of the process of social transformation. The nature of these organizations typically makes it impossible for them to be the main instrument of revolutionary change. Unions are united fronts of workers who come together and hold many different political, ideological, and religious views. They are not united on one specific vision. But they can be part of the larger social force that seeks to advance democracy and transformation. Socialists must help to bring that about, while recognizing that they must create a political vehicle that plays the role of a catalytic agent. This political vehicle brings together class and social forces that share a common, strategic interest in an anticapitalist, fundamental, and progressive social transformation.

It is for this reason that the working class needs to be the principal home for the socialist left. ❖

Bill Fletcher, Jr. is the former president of TransAfrica Forum and a long-time trade unionist and socialist. He is the author of “They’re Bankrupting Us” – And Twenty Other Myths about Unions. Follow him on Twitter, Facebook and at www.billfletcherjr.com.



Back to Basics: Organizing 101

Becky Simonsen

Right-wing forces have sharpened their decades-long attacks on the labor movement as they attempt to erase the very idea of the public good. Capitalist elites correctly identify unions as the most effective means for working people to contest their rule and exert democratic control. This year's teacher uprisings against austerity demonstrate the scale and tactics required to combat this assault: direct action, broad-based unity, community mobilization, and visionary demands.

The strikes recapture the basic strategy that labor leftists have pursued to build organization through workplace struggle. This approach was developed by left-led unions during their prime in the 1930s and now persists in the most militant organizations across the country (chronicled in Jane McAlevey's recent *No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age*), including my own union, 1199 New England. Strongly influenced by the orientation of its radical founders, 1199 NE continues to link the fights for labor and civil rights and use a robust methodology to organize the racially diverse healthcare workforce.

At the heart of this method is an understanding of power. Under capitalism, bosses derive their power from their ability to extract profit from the services that workers provide to earn a wage. Because bosses depend on everyone to keep the business of healthcare running, workers build power when they forge enough unity to create a crisis for their employers by hindering or stopping the flow of work. Crucial, unity is only achieved by identifying and recruiting rank-and-file leaders, who exist organically in every workplace, to lead their coworkers in coordinated campaigns.

This contest for power between workers and bosses unfolds through continuous struggle. Organization is strengthened in struggle, no matter how small or large—a march on the boss, a petition, a rally, a strike—because each fight is an opportunity to activate more members, recruit more leaders, and create greater unity. Because the healthcare industry is bound up with government policy and funding, this strategy requires confrontation with the state as well as with individual employers.

Several recent victories sustain this organizing model. In 2015, thousands of our private-sector nursing home members in nearly 30 facilities overwhelmingly voted to strike. After hundreds of members took to the capitol each week, we secured

Ithaca NY DSA

stands with *Democratic Left* &
all working for a socialist future.



A selection of the videos we produce:

 ithacadsa.blogspot.com

Announcements of our actions and partnerships:

 facebook.com/IthacaDSA

funding for a \$15-per-hour starting rate alongside raises and defined-benefit pensions. This year, workers caring for individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities replicated this strike strategy, causing legislators to almost unanimously enact a bill raising wages to \$15 per hour—affecting all workers in the industry. Despite the legal constraints of the open shop, our public-sector members have applied the same philosophy. Our home-care members recently won a historic contract guaranteeing workers' compensation for the first time and significant raises. Our state employee leaders have spent years preparing for the expected decision in *Janus v. AFSCME* by speaking with coworkers about the war that the wealthy few are waging on the working class.

But even the most radical unions alone cannot unclench the grip of capitalism. In DSA, we look beyond the vision in our unions toward a truly democratic society. However, we in DSA can learn from the strongest labor organizing methodologies: that is, to focus on identifying and recruiting organic leaders, on keeping direct action central, and on connecting diverse struggles through an overarching vision of rights and dignity. Deliberate attention to the details of organizing—what the great Ella Baker called “spadework” and Charles Payne described as the “slow, respectful, work that made the dramatic moments possible”—will help us grow and build our movement, brick by brick. ❖

Becky Simonsen is a lead organizer at District 1199, The New England Health Care Employees Union/SEIU and a member of Central Connecticut DSA.



Hit the Global Supply Chain

By Kim Moody

In late 1936, members of the newly organized United Auto Workers (UAW) struck several General Motors plants to win union recognition. A month later, GM still hadn't budged. But in February 1937, workers in Flint, Michigan, occupied Chevrolet Plant 4. In less than two weeks, one of the most powerful corporations on earth capitulated.

What made the Flint plant occupation so powerful was Plant 4's strategic position: This one plant made all the engines for Chevrolet, and its occupation shut GM plants throughout the country. The Flint victory set off a wave of sit-down strikes and union victories across the country.

Today's just-in-time (JIT) supply chains that produce and deliver goods only in time to be used in production or sold (as opposed to stockpiled) are even more vulnerable. In 1998, when two UAW locals in Flint struck GM, they closed down 25 assembly plants and hundreds of suppliers, from Canada to Mexico. GM's JIT delivery system meant assembly plants soon lacked key parts, and suppliers had no place to send their parts and no room to store them. In 2014, when members of the Longshore Workers (ILWU) "worked to rule" during contract negotiations, they stopped imports and exports to and from the West Coast for weeks and cost retailers \$7 billion.

Logistics—the movement of goods through a supply chain—has grown rapidly in the last couple of decades. Information technologies such as bar codes, GPS, electronic data interchange, and radio frequency identification now track and guide the movement of goods and workers rapidly and reliably.

Intermodal ground transport by truck and rail increased fivefold in ten years, from 43 billion tons in 2002 to 214 billion in 2012. And the last 20 years have seen a doubling of the warehouse workforce to 840,000, a doubling of the number of warehouses to 17,000, and a doubling of the dollar amount of freight.

All this movement of goods requires vast sunk capital investments. The roads, rails, ports, airports, and railroad intermodal yards that make up supply chains can't be picked up and moved abroad or anywhere else.

These transportation networks converge to form huge "logistics clusters" of warehouses, intermodal yards where trucks unload to trains and vice versa, and information technology. In the United States,

there are 61 such giant clusters, employing 3.2 million mostly blue-collar workers—and that doesn't include railroad, postal, construction, utility, or IT workers. With numerous fixed costs, these clusters are vulnerable to expensive disruptions, including worker actions.

Supply chains are also networks of labor. For all the technology in modern business, when the hand and mind of labor are removed, things stop. Even Amazon's famous Kiva robot becomes so much dead capital and fixed cost when the "fulfillment center" worker to whom it delivers a product isn't there to receive it.

Where are the pressure points?

In the 1970s and 1980s, big manufacturers moved plants out of cities like Detroit and outsourced aspects of production to suppliers "out on the interstate" to get away from concentrations of blue-collar workers and their unions. But to move parts and goods from those suppliers, as well as imports, they had to concentrate thousands of workers in logistics clusters.

Eighty-five percent of these logistics workers are concentrated in such major metropolitan areas as Chicago, Memphis, southern California, Fort Worth, and Louisville. These are the Detroits of today.

There are, to be sure, barriers to organizing. Many logistics workers are "independent contractors" or temporary workers with no job security, and there is a lot of turnover in the workforce. On the other hand, many of the truckers who make up about 40 percent of the logistics workforce are union members. So are the United Parcel Service, railroad, and U.S. Postal Service workers who move things in and out of these clusters and along supply chains. The power of disruption and solidarity is there. ❖

Kim Moody is a founder of Labor Notes and author of On New Terrain: How Capital is Reshaping the Battleground of Class War where these ideas are developed in more detail.



Ray Bruwelheide



Put Socialist Politics to Work

By Jane Slaughter

Socialist politics go nowhere without a deep base in the labor movement, but we need a different kind of labor movement from the one we have now. DSAers are discussing how we can help build a labor movement that is all about class struggle. A movement where workers are collectively standing up for themselves and learning about power and how to confront it is the best incubator for new socialists.

As Kim Moody wrote in *The Rank-and-File Strategy* in 2000, what's lacking in the United States is "a sea of class-conscious workers for socialist ideas and organizations to swim in." Our job is to help foment class struggle, to create that sea.

That can happen when workers fight management on wage cuts, speed-up, harassment, discrimination, and even the union's right to exist. But to do those fights well, union members often must take over and transform their unions. That's because many unions today aren't so good at fighting. Since the Supreme Court's *Janus* decision, leaders have shown little understanding of what it will take to right a foundering ship.

One of the most visible examples of this strategy is Teamsters for a Democratic Union, founded in 1976. TDU runs candidates for union office, and they're credible because TDU puts its energy into fighting against concessionary contracts, supervisor harassment, and pension robbery.

Likewise, the Caucus of Rank-and-file Educators (CORE) in the Chicago Teachers Union started out in 2010 by doing the work the local should have been doing—fighting school closings. That work propelled CORE into office, where the new leaders set about organizing members in every school to speak up on the job. That led to the local's winning its famous 2012 strike, which inspired teachers across the country to form caucuses in their own locals and to found a national grouping, UCORE, that crucially aided the teacher strikes in West Virginia and Arizona this year.

To build this fight-from-below, some DSAers are getting jobs in multiracial workplaces that show potential for ferment. These include teaching, health-care, and logistics.

Of course, union jobs are a small minority of all jobs. But a union provides a structure for fighting back that just isn't there in a non-union workplace. We're better able to organize the majority who need a union when we transform existing unions into

ones capable of taking on that task. Unions led by reformers have often made organizing the unorganized one of their top priorities. The New York State Nurses Association, for example, grew from 37,000 to 42,000 members after a reform slate took office and started taking organizing seriously. Chicago teachers are now welcoming formerly non-union charter teachers into their local.

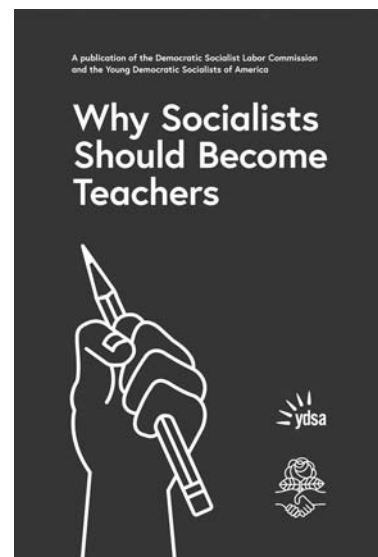
Consider the advantages of a union job that matches your talents, and of choosing one together with fellow DSAers: The pay is decent, and the work itself may be fulfilling, too. All your political work isn't shunted off to nights and weekends; you can be talking with your co-workers every day. There's no mismatch between your political life and what you do to keep body and soul together.

Still another advantage is that your work will be grounded in the everyday reality of your fellow non-socialist Americans. As Moody wrote, "The left with its highly theorized, often moralistic politics, and the worker activists with an un-theorized pragmatic outlook are often like trains passing in the night." Getting a job in the working class means not getting passed by. It means putting your work in the heart of class struggle. ❖

Jane Slaughter is a former editor of Labor Notes and co-author of Secrets of a Successful Organizer. She belongs to Detroit DSA.



See this new YDSA/DSLC pamphlet for more on the Rank-and-File Strategy and much practical advice. Look for it at dsausa.org/labor and email dslc@dsausa.org or tweet at [@dsa_labor](https://twitter.com/dsa_labor) to learn more.



Bring Back the Strike

By Joe Burns

The red state rebellion of teachers has once again demonstrated the incredible power of collective action. Ignoring legal restrictions on their right to strike, tens of thousands of teachers in so-called red states struck anyway, forcing reactionary politicians to the bargaining table. In doing so, they upended decades of bipartisan neoliberal attacks on public education, won concrete gains for tens of thousands of teachers, and mobilized a new generation of teacher activists.

Those looking for a way to revive the labor movement after decades of defeat and decline can't ignore the importance of the strike weapon. Previous generations of trade unionists considered the strike to be essential to collective bargaining. The strike was how unionists forced employers to recognize their unions and was the key ingredient in the creation of a powerful labor movement from the 1930s through the 1970s.

At the height of the Great Depression, with unemployment well into the double digits, workers didn't just withdraw their labor; they knew that to be effective, a strike had to cripple production. In one of the great upsurges of U.S. history, more than 400,000 workers engaged in sit-down strikes in 1937 alone, and millions more engaged in mass picketing—effectively blockading plants.

Socialist and communist activists played a key role in the upsurge and contended for power at the heights of national unions. Capital, however, is ruthless and relentless. Corporations used their influence in the courts and the legislatures to attack and undermine the right to strike. The Taft-Hartley Act outlawed some of labor's greatest solidarity acts and worked to drive left-wing leadership out of the labor movement.

By the time of the employer anti-union offensive of the 1980s, decades of anti-labor judicial decisions meant that labor was fighting with its hands behind its back. Despite heroic effort, many strikes in the 1980s were busted, and unions were crushed.

By the 1990s, many in labor abandoned the strike for efforts such as organizing the unorganized; corporate campaigns led by union staffers to shame corporations; and social unionism, which emphasizes

the need for unions to forge ties with community groups. All these are essential elements, but none can substitute for the power of a production-stopping strike based on solidarity. We need to revive the strike.

None of this is to say that reviving the strike will be easy. For the millions of workers engaged in once highly unionized landlocked industries such as trucking and groceries, we will need new militant tactics. For workers in production or other industries susceptible to outsourcing overseas we will need to utilize international solidarity. But one thing is clear: without a strong strike, we cannot have a powerful labor movement. As striking teachers recently demonstrated, when workers are in motion incredible things can happen.

What This Means for Socialists

For those who have not been part of a strike, it is an incredible experience. For striking workers, the constraints of daily employment cease, which usually leads to incredible energy on the picket line. Power relations in society are exposed as the courts and corporate media line up against us. People are forced to choose. As the old labor song asked, "Which side are you on?" Socialists, whether in unions or not, can play a key role

by developing community support and helping to directly support striking workers, as many in DSA did during the 2016 Verizon strike.

Socialists and the labor movement need each other. To revive the strike, labor will need to violate judicial injunctions, confront the repression of the state, and reject the neoliberal framework that has governed labor relations for decades. That will take socialists, socialist ideas, and solidarity in local communities. A strong, militant labor movement—uncompromising in its struggle against capital—is key to developing a powerful socialist movement. ❖

Joe Burns, national bargaining director for the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, is the author of Reviving the Strike: How Working People Can Regain Power and Transform America.



Colleen Tighe

Build Socialist Enterprises

By Alexander Kolokotronis

Under capitalism, your boss can fire you, but you can't fire your boss. Under socialism, workers and their representatives hire and control capital. If there are bosses—in a looser, administrative sense of the word—workers can fire them. The workplace is democratic and directly responsive to the needs of those who do the work.

Examples of such enterprises exist today. They are called worker cooperatives. Today and in history, socialists have articulated and explored similar concepts such as workers' self-management, workers' councils, and workers' control. Others in more business-oriented contexts refer to such enterprises as democratic employee-ownership.

Worker cooperatives are enterprises that operate according to one worker, one vote. This can mean anything from workers themselves periodically electing a board of directors to small workers' collectives deciding overall enterprise matters together. It is common to hear of capitalist firms where the ratio of highest-to-lowest paid workers is over a thousand to one. Among the largest worker cooperatives such ratios rarely exceed eight to one. Besides far more equitable pay ratios, in worker cooperatives those who do the work have a voice. And more than a voice, they exercise decision-making power in their capacity as workers.

The largest worker cooperative in the world is Mondragon in Spain. Founded in 1956, Mondragon is directed by 80,000 worker-owners. It is one of the largest firms in Europe. Spain itself possesses approximately 20,000 worker cooperatives. In Italy, 40 percent of the gross domestic product of the northeast Italian region of Emilia-Romagna is made up by cooperatives of various kinds. In Japan, the Seikatsu Consumers' Club Cooperative comprises 600 worker cooperatives, with more than 17,000 worker-owners. From the 1950s until its fall in 1990, Yugoslavia possessed a full-fledged system of workers' self-management. During this period, Yugoslavia's economic system was often presented as a third way between U.S. capitalism and the Soviet command economy.

By contrast, the United States has approximately 300 worker cooperatives. Since the 2008 financial crisis, there has been growing interest in creating more.

A number of cities have turned to worker-cooperative development as a means of addressing income inequality and growing wealth disparities.



Since 2014, New York City's municipal government has invested approximately seven million dollars in the development of worker cooperatives. The city's worker-cooperative sector has almost quadrupled from 20 worker cooperatives to nearly 80.

Jackson, Mississippi, has reignited interest and hopes for municipal socialist strategy, with cooperative development being a cornerstone of Cooperation Jackson's Jackson-Kush Plan.

What can democratic socialists do to build the worker cooperative sector? Many might say, "Start a worker cooperative," but the financial and emotional costs of starting a new business can be heavy. Another route is to promote the conversion of existing enterprises into worker cooperatives. The United States is in the midst of a new employment crisis, but one not at the hands of multinational outsourcing or the introduction of advanced technology. More than two million baby boomer business owners are retiring over the next ten years. With few buyers and few inheritors, twenty-five million people could be unemployed. Democratic socialists can use this demographic development as an opportunity to convert such businesses into worker cooperatives. Instead of 25 million workers unemployed, democratic socialists can create policies and conduct direct outreach that translates into 25 million workers taking direct control over the means of production. ❖

Alexander Kolokotronis is a member of Central Connecticut DSA. He is currently a political science Ph.D. student at Yale University and has worked in worker cooperative advocacy and startup development.



Kitchen Table Socialism

Talking Union

By Puya Gerami

What are unions and why do they matter? Put simply, a union is an organization of workers acting collectively to defend and advance their common interests. Most people in capitalist society must sell their capacity to work to employers in exchange for the wages necessary for survival. Bosses cement their authority by sowing division among workers in desperate competition for jobs.

Challenges to this structural inequality are possible only when workers act together and strategically deploy their strength in numbers in and beyond the workplace. Workers may engage in a variety of collective actions, but the strike remains their most potent weapon. Ceasing production or service en masse jeopardizes the capitalist accumulation of profit.

Unions operate within the constraints of a capitalist system and are not inherently socialist institutions. But democratic socialists understand their potential as vehicles for social change.

How have socialists contributed to the development of the labor movement in the United States?

From Haymarket to Lawrence to Flint, socialists have proved crucial actors in the most significant U.S. labor uprisings. Before he became the voice of the Socialist Party of America (SP), Eugene Debs led a quarter of a million railway workers on a strike against the Pullman Company that captivated the nation. A decade afterward, he joined fellow radicals to found the Industrial Workers of the World, which pioneered industrial unionism and solidarity across the color line.

Amid the Great Depression, members of the SP and the burgeoning Communist Party played an indispensable role in the construction of the Congress of Industrial Organizations. These radicals advocated multiracial, multiethnic unionism and built the most progressive organizations in the land. Acquiescing to the Second Red Scare of the late 1940s and 1950s, labor leaders' disgraceful decision to purge radicals inflicted lasting damage on the vitality of labor unions.

Later, radicals participated in the wave of public-

employee organizing during the postwar era, and New Left activists helped generate rank-and-file reform insurgencies beginning in the 1970s. Recently, socialists have bolstered renaissance teacher unionism in Chicago, West Virginia, and Massachusetts.

What is the crisis facing unions?

Union density has reached its lowest point since the 1920s—barely one out of ten Americans are members. With private-sector organization decimated, nearly half of all union members are government employees. In addition, over half of all union members reside in just seven states.

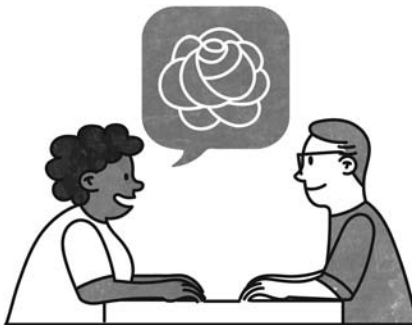
More alarming than the decline in union density is the decline in strike activity. Several hundred major strikes occurred annually prior to the 1980s, whereas last year featured a total of seven major ones—the second-lowest number in more than half a century (the lowest was 2009).

These patterns are not the result of inevitable changes in the global economy; they are the result of the ruling classes' deliberate project to strangle workplace democracy.

The ascendancy of what is called an “open shop” has been a keystone of this effort. In a majority of states, private-sector workers are now allowed to refuse to join or fund their union, even though they continue to benefit from the gains made by the union. This is a direct threat to unity and a prime opportunity for employers to divide and conquer. The recent Supreme Court ruling in *Janus v. AFSCME* mandates the same for the entire public sector.

In this terrifying moment, however, signs of hope surround us. The astonishing teacher strikes, spreading across states where labor law is most prohibitive and unions are weakest, confirm the enduring value of mass struggle. How we as democratic socialists might shape and support a revival of working-class power in the 21st century is one of the central questions confronting DSA. ❖

Puya Gerami is education director at District 1199 New England, a graduate student in history at Yale, and a member of Central Connecticut DSA.



Hallie Jay Pope

DSA Chapters Support Labor

By Don McIntosh

***D**SA members around the country are working to build power in their unions, and those not in unions are showing solidarity by supporting the struggles of organized workers. Here's some of what DSA members are doing. —DM*

At the national level, the **Democratic Socialist Labor Commission (DSLCL)**, established by a 2017 convention resolution, serves as a community within DSA for members who are active in the labor movement in whatever capacity. By the end of 2017, more than 600 DSAers had joined the DSA Labor Activists Google Group. In January, group members nominated and elected a nine-member steering committee. To ensure diverse representation, five of the nine spots were reserved to rank-and-file union members and four to women, people of color, and LGBTQ individuals, and no chapter could have more than one member on the steering committee. Steering committee members have convened by phone every two to four weeks since then and met in person for the first time July 21-22. The commission held a nationwide conference call the week after the U.S. Supreme Court's anti-union *Janus v. AFSCME* decision. DSLCL also worked with national DSA staff to develop the labor movement component of regional leadership trainings. (For more information, see DSLCL member JP Kaderbek's article on p. 5 and visit dsausa.org/labor.)



In **Central Connecticut DSA**, a labor working group turned out members to support a walkout at

the Stamford Hilton hotel, where UNITE HERE Local 217 members are struggling to win their first union contract.



In **East Bay DSA**, a labor committee with about 30 active members has kept busy turning out members for strike solidarity actions, including the AT&T Mobility strike and a strike by City of Berkeley municipal workers. During AFSCME Local 3299's strike at the University of California, DSA support resulted in an invitation to conduct picket line teach-ins about Medicare for All and rent control. The committee is now developing a rapid response network that will train members in strike etiquette, train picket captains to coordinate turnout, and use mass texts to get the word out quickly. To orient DSA members who aren't active in labor, committee members organized a presentation at the chapter's Socialist Night School. The committee also raised funds to send people to the national Labor Notes conference and has sponsored an ongoing series of socials.

Along with the rest of the chapter, they're working on the State Assembly campaign of union member and Richmond City Council member Jovanka Beckles and on the campaign to pass Proposition 10, a ballot measure which would repeal restrictions on local rent control ordinances.



In **Metro DC DSA**, a labor working group organized a training for federal workers about how



More than 50 delegates and alternates gathered at the summer conference of Young Democratic Socialists of America (YDSA) in Minneapolis in early August. Photo: Alicia Valenti.

not to get in trouble under the Hatch Act, which restricts political activity by federal workers. They're also part of a chapter-wide effort to challenge incentives being offered to non-union Amazon for its much-hyped "HQ2." Members are getting educated about worker co-ops and about the threat of postal privatization. And they're preparing to support a possible strike by Metro subway workers.



New York City DSA has what may be the largest labor branch of any local chapter, with more than 160 members, and as many as 90 people turning out to branch meetings, which now alternate monthly with Labor-Notes-style trainings. (Labor Notes is a nonprofit that publishes a monthly magazine and provides training and networking events for union activists.) DSA-affiliated teachers played a key role in a rank-and-file campaign that won six weeks of fully paid parental leave for NYC public school teachers. Branch members helped get local unions to endorse the Right to Know Act campaign, which helped pass municipal legislation requiring police to inform people of their right not to consent to a search and to identify themselves and provide a reason if they stop a person under some circumstances.

Labor branch members were part of the all-hands-on-deck effort for DSA member Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to win the 14th congressional district primary in June. They're doing the same for DSA member Julia Salazar, a former domestic worker and now UAW union member who's running for State Senate in a September 13 state primary. DSA volunteers collected more than 500 signatures in a one-day "Labor for Julia" canvass to help qualify Salazar for the ballot. The branch also sponsored a fundraiser for Teamsters for a Democratic Union, held a Labor School for all of NYC-DSA, and has regularly turned out solidarity pickets to support union struggles. At a citywide convention in May, delegates passed a resolution encouraging DSA members to get jobs in unionized workplaces and become active union members.



In **North Texas DSA (Dallas, Texas)**, a labor working group led by young union members organized a training attended by over 60 union members; showed up in large numbers to Dallas school board meetings in support of an American Federation of Teachers union campaign to win raises for underpaid school support staff; and helped gather signatures to qualify a November ballot measure that could mandate up to eight paid sick days a year for workers in Dallas.



In **Sacramento DSA**, a labor committee serves as a network for the dozen or so chapter members who are engaged in the union movement or looking to unionize their workplaces. They've worked to build a relationship with the Sacramento Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO, tabling at its Labor Day event, holding forums for young workers, and co-sponsoring a forum featuring California labor historian Fred Glass. They also formed a study group to read and discuss the labor strategy book *No Shortcuts*, by Jane McAlevey. They organized an August Labor Notes "troublemakers school," following the curriculum of the book *Secrets of a Successful Organizer*, by Alexandra Bradbury, Mark Brenner, and Jane Slaughter. And they signed up more than 150 DSA members to a "flying squad" that can turn out to do picket line support and raise DSA's visibility in the labor community.



In **South Sound DSA (Tacoma, Washington)**, a labor working group worked with the Pierce County Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO, to develop and promote a half-day workshop in April about how to organize in a post-*Janus* world. About 60 union members from more than a dozen unions attended, learned about the history of anti-union "right-to-work" campaigns, and gathered afterward at a pub for fellowship. ❖

Don McIntosh is a reporter for the Northwest Labor Press, an independent labor union publication based in Portland, Oregon.



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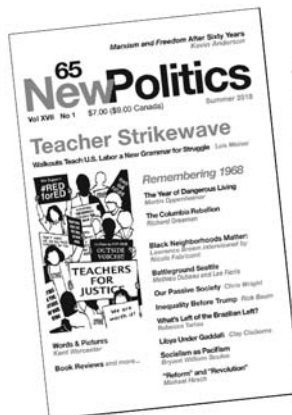
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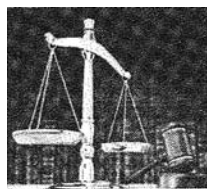
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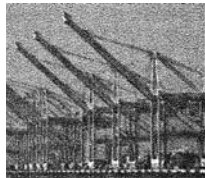
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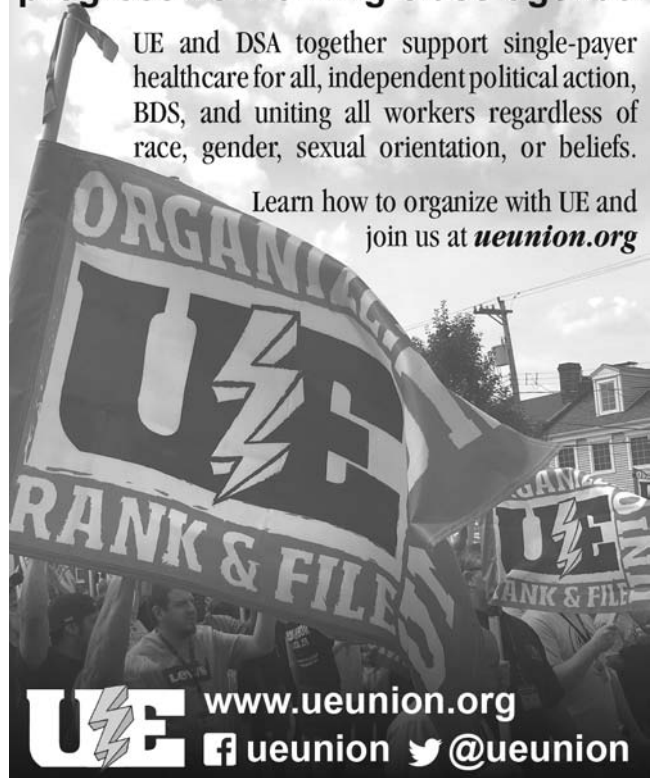
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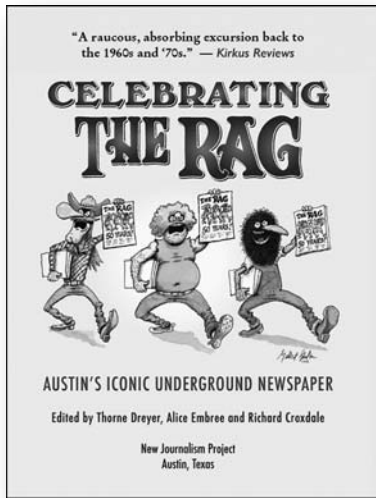
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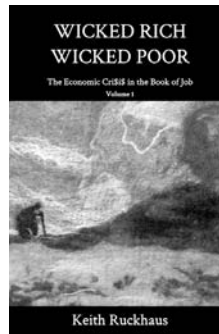
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Though set in the Haight Ashbury in the sixties, the novel *Summer of Love: Happenstance* reads like a parable or an allegory. Pitting socialism against capitalism, it examines how man's behavior relates to what he considers morality in general, an age-old question. If inadequate for

continued existence, can it be challenged? Are we to have a future? If so, what will it entail? Examine the possibilities for yourself. Socialism appears to be the only possible solution, a dialectic necessity.

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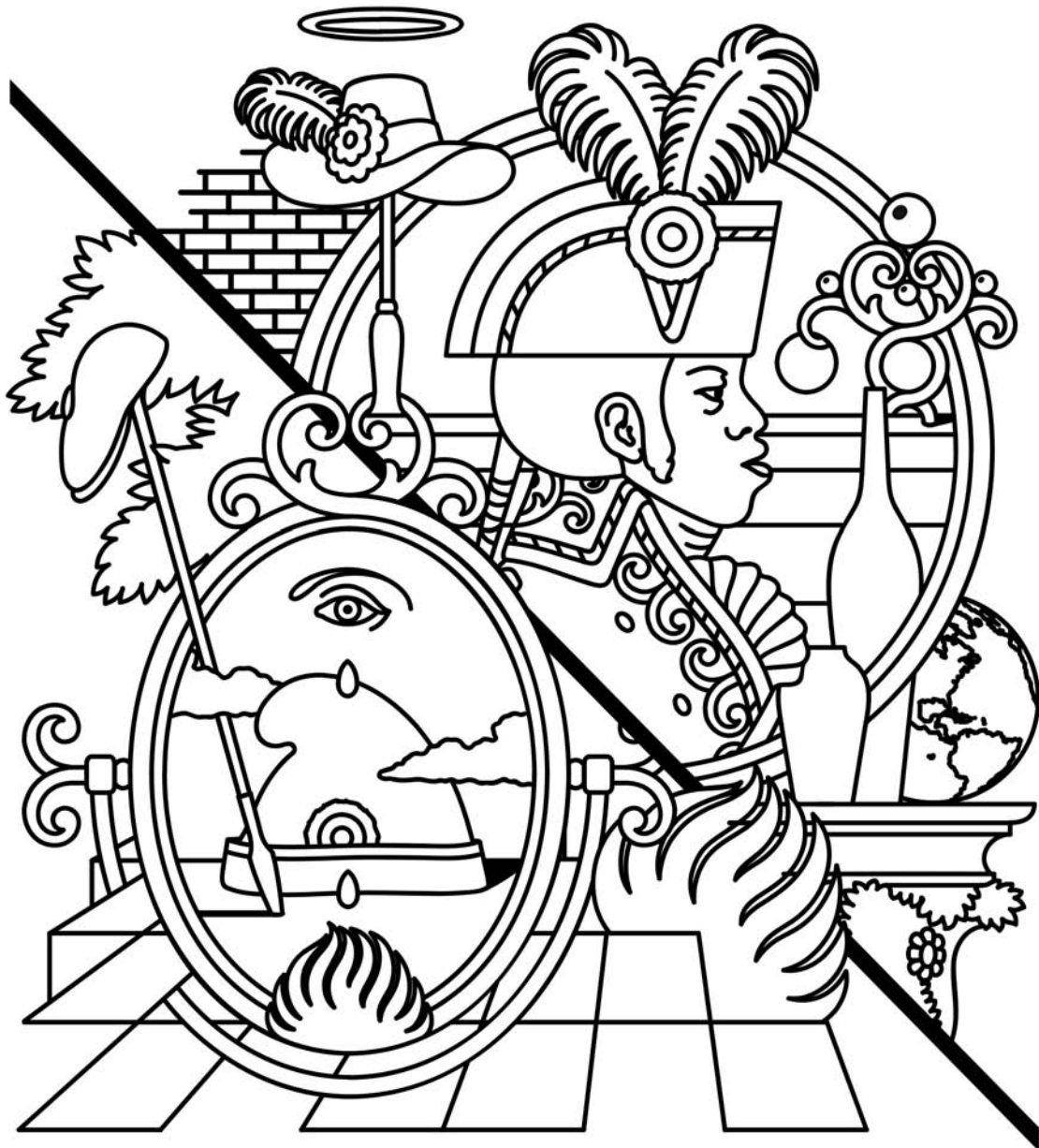


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Susan Weissman, PhD, author of *Victor Serge*, called it a “political, dialectical page turner.”



Anthony Saidy, a retired physician in California and DSA member, sojourned four times as a chess master in the USSR. His classic work, *The March of Chess Ideas*, is now available as an app from www.epluschess.com.

1983, a Dialectical Novel, Seagull Press. Date of publication: July 1, 2013. Price: \$9.95. 204 pages, Library of Congress Control Number: 2013934590, ISBN 9780989086202.

Censure Donald Trump!

In 2017, DSA member Jules Bernstein began an online Petition campaign seeking the Censure (Reprimand) of Donald Trump by both the House of Representatives and the United States Senate.

At the January 28, 2018 meeting of the National Political Committee (NPC) of the Democratic Socialists of America, the NPC endorsed the Censure Donald Trump Petition campaign and encouraged DSA members to sign and circulate the Petition.

Since its inception, the Petition has accumulated more than 50 substantial grounds for Trump's Censure. Many of these would also serve as bases for Trump's impeachment.

These grounds will be found at censuredonaldtrump.com. The Petition drive has already received over 60,000 signatures.

DSA National Director Maria Svart declared that the Petition drive "is an important step forward in efforts to turn U.S. politics around; help restore democracy and the rule of law; fight Trump's authoritarianism, sexism, racism and nativism; and educate and mobilize the people against Trump's lawlessness."

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